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CONNECTING CLASSROOM AND COMMUNITY:

Music in Primary Level Education in Ireland

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CONNECTING CLASSROOM

AND

COMMUNITY:

Music in Primary Level

Education in Ireland

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Abstract

This thesis explores the role of music education in primary level education in Ireland. Since the introduction of the New Revised Music Curriculum in 1999 there has been an increase in the profile of music education at primary level. Principals and teachers have become more aware of the importance of enhancing the provision of and access to music education in schools and creating equal opportunities for children to participate in music. The renewed interest in providing access to music education at primary level has also led to a number of extra-curricular developments. Arts organizations, local community groups, music teachers, and musicians have become more involved in music education programs through various extra-curricular projects and initiatives.

This study focuses on the classroom as the locus of the schooling system. It focuses on fieldwork conducted in two primary level schools in Cork, namely Scoil Choilmcille and Togher Boys School. By entering the environment of the classroom, the research presents an understanding of the role of music at primary level and it highlights how music is 'unique' in the way it makes connections between the classroom, the school community and the wider community outside of the schools.

This investigation of the primary school system argues that there are two approaches to the provision of music education at primary level in Ireland: the formal curricular based teaching, implemented by the classroom teacher, and the informal, extra-curricular work, involving the classroom teacher and various members of the school community and the wider community. It reveals that there are three main agents involved in the co-ordination of music at primary level: the classroom teacher, the music curriculum co-ordinator and the music specialist.

Through observations and discussions with the people at the centre of the classroom, this research provides an understanding of the ways in which music education can be provided and how connections between school and community can be strengthened.

Introduction

My research is concerned with the ways in which music, education, and community are interwoven in Irish academic discourse and educational policy. The complex mosaics of the Irish education system and Irish society challenge a simplistic understanding of the place and role of music in the Irish education system. Examining literature on the development of education, communities of music and Irish society, this research also considers the experiences of people within the classroom, the primary space of study in this research.

Within the study, there is a particular focus on understanding the musical culture of classrooms in the primary level education system. Throughout this work, the classroom is located at the centre of the research. The classroom, as the functional space for teaching and learning, is frequently considered as the principal, and often singular, location of both teachers and children. It functions as a primary site of learning, teaching, interaction and communication. This study focuses on the classroom as the locus of the schooling system where children and teachers interconnect. By entering the environment of the classroom, the research presents an understanding of the musical culture of the classroom. I propose that music education is 'unique' within the school structure. It is this uniqueness, together with the challenges of developing music as a curricular subject, and the role of music in connecting a variety of

communities, that generate the themes of study that are presented in this dissertation.

This investigation of the primary school system argues that there are two approaches to the provision of music education at primary level in Ireland: the formal curricular teaching, implemented by the classroom teacher, and the informal, extra-curricular work, involving the classroom teacher and various members of the school community and the wider community. This study provides an insight into the musical lives of both children and their teachers through an exploration of the classroom experience of both formal curricular provision and informal non-curricular activities.

This study presents the classroom as a locus of the schooling system and acknowledges the importance of focusing on understanding the musical culture of classrooms through the experience of the teachers who work within the classroom space. In a study related to music and children in education, Patricia Sheehan Campbell uses a similar methodology (Campbell 1998). Campbell acknowledges the importance of teachers and in particular their thoughts on the provision of music.

> The music children and teachers have within them, as well as their thoughts about music, are starting points for

> understanding their knowledge, their values and their needs (Campbell 1998, 5).

Campbell also emphasises the role of the teacher in the overall development of music within the education system.

> Their voices should help as much as the voices of others to determine something of an educational plan, a way in which a musical education can be in touch with the lives and experiences of people involved (Campbell 1998, 5).

Throughout this study, emphasis is placed on documenting the roles of the main agents involved in the provision of music education at primary level education in Ireland. Through observations and discussions with the people at the centre of the classroom, this research provides an understanding of the ways in which music is provided and coordinated at primary level and how connections between classroom practice, the school community and the wider community can be strengthened.

A historical overview of the Irish education system indicates an increase in the profile of music education in Ireland over the past ten years with revised curricula introduced at both primary and secondary level. The principal written histories of the Irish education system do not focus on music, but rather on an overview of the most significant changes, particularly with reference to structures and management (McElligott

1966; Dowling 1968, 1971; Akenson 1970; Coolohan 1981; Ó Buachalla 1988; Farran 1995). The introduction of the new primary level curriculum in 1999 is significant because it is part of a process whereby principals and teachers have become increasingly more aware of the importance of enhancing the provision of music education in schools and the creation of equal opportunities for children to participate in music (Pine 1998; McCarthy 1999; Heneghan 2004; Stakelum 2005).

The renewed interest in providing access to music education at primary level has also led to a number of extra-curricular developments. Arts organizations, local community groups, music teachers, and musicians have become more involved in music education programs through various extra-curricular projects and initiatives (Supporting Arts in Education 2003; Arts in Schools Directory 2004; Arts-in-Education Directory 2007). Curricular and extra-curricular activities can be complimentary and can raise standards of musical activities in both school and society (Norton 1931). Many of these programs aim to create equal opportunities for all children to participate in music.

A number of key reports have focused on the role of the arts and music in Irish education: Provision for the Arts (1976); The Place of Arts in Irish Education (1979); Deaf Ears (1985); Music Education National Debate (1996); The PIANO Report (1996); A National System of Local Music

Education Services (2003). Reports published by The Breaking the Cycle Scheme in Urban Schools (2000) and Bridging the Gap Project (2001-2006) refer to music in an exploration of issues of access to education and inequalities in the Irish education system. A number of other reports consider particular music-based, arts-in-education projects in specific socio-geographical locations: The South Dublin Education Project (2000); Dingle Education Project (2000). Many of the reports discuss the lack of provision for the arts in Ireland, however, none have explored the current role or practice of music at primary level while taking into account the experiences of those *within* the classroom context. The emphasis, rather, is often on extra-curricular activities organised by the wider community and there is a failure to explore current teaching practices and the possibilities of increased provision and access to music within the classroom.

Music can function to create links between a classroom, school and community. Everitt argues that simultaneous involvement in both school and community music activities enhances the music activities of both communities (1997). Similarly, Arthur Haas recognises the role of music as a link in drawing the school and community closer together (1954). David Walker extends the role of the music teacher to encompass possibilities of community development (1982). To date, there has been little discussion in the literature on the role or presence of music-centred

community involvement in schools in Ireland. In related literature the interrelationship between community and the place of religion in schools is explored (Prendergast *et al* 2003). In an overview of community arts in Ireland entitled *An Outburst of Frankness* (Fitzgerald *et al* 2004) the authors attempt to gather together a wide range of views dealing with the history, theory and practice of community arts in Ireland but little attention is paid to the role of community in the context of education.

One of the principal critiques of the development of policy and discourse on the arts in Irish education has been the absence of a specific discourse concerned with classroom teachers and their current music teaching practices. The absence of specific literature concerning the connection, through music, between the school community and other communities highlights the need for further understanding of the area. This dissertation aims to explore the reciprocal connections between music and community within the classroom setting, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between the curricular-based work and extra-curricular activities of the classroom teacher, and the programs that are instigated by the wider community.

The dissertation is laid out in a number of sections. Chapter one locates the subject area of this thesis by exploring developments in music education at the primary level in Ireland. The chapter continues by

exploring the literature surrounding the concepts of music and curriculum, with particular focus on the role of both in the context of primary level education.

Chapter two discusses a number of sources on the history of education and the history of music education in Ireland. The chapter continues with a description of the Irish primary education system. It focuses on the history of music education since the introduction of the state system in 1831 and the developments that led to the introduction and implementation of the New Revised Primary Curriculum in 1999. It continues with an examination of the development and implementation of the New Revised Curriculum (1999) through an exploration of in-service training and whole school planning in the context of music education.

Chapter three discusses the fieldwork methodology of the thesis focusing on the methods used throughout the fieldwork and how these methods were informed by concepts and methodologies that are central to the field of Ethnomusicology.

Chapter four is based on ethnographic data gathered from fieldwork in two primary schools in Cork city Togher Boys School and Scoil Choilmcille. I begin this chapter by identifying the various agents

involved in the management of primary level education in Ireland. I continue by exploring the roles and responsibilities of these agents within the development and implementation of the curriculum. I then consider some of the experiences I had in the classroom and I discuss some of the themes that emerged through the interviews with teachers.

Chapter five focuses on the provision of music in Togher Boys School and Scoil Choilmcille. I discuss the types of musical activities that I encountered within the classroom environment and how music is co-ordinated and organised at classroom and whole school level. In this chapter, I provide insights into the role of music in primary level education.

The final chapter outlines the various systems of music education at primary level in Ireland and focuses on the roles of the various agents involved. The chapter examines the successes and challenges of involving outside teachers and musicians in the provision of music at classroom level. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the various agents and systems of music education could collectively combine and draw on resources to increase and enhance the provision of music education at primary level in Ireland.

The overall aim of this dissertation is to present an understanding of the musical culture of the primary level classroom in Ireland. I aim to provide insight into the contemporary schooling system in Ireland by examining the management of primary level schools and the development and implementation of the New Revised Curriculum. Through classroom observations and discussions with teachers I explore how music is currently organised and co-ordinated throughout the system and I consider the successes and challenges of developing music as a curricular subject within the system.

Chapter 1

Education, Culture and Society:

Music Education in Modern Ireland

Our Musical Introductions

From a young age, we are all exposed to various types of musical sounds in our environment. In addition to these informal experiences of musical sounds, there exists a variety of formal systems and institutions where young people can also experience music. Children are exposed to musical learning through various experiences such as attending pre-school, instrumental music lessons, or learning from a teacher, member of the family or local musician. These introductory experiences are arguably one of the most significant factors in determining our relationship with music and culture (McCarthy 1999). In Ireland, many of our first encounters with music in a formal context occur in primary school. Music is one of the official subjects in the New Revised Primary Curriculum (1999). The music curriculum proposes that music is for all teachers and children. The principal aim of the curriculum is the provision of musical learning for all children throughout their primary schooling years. However, the primary level classroom and school environment present many opportunities for informal experiences of music that can also inform attitudes towards music and a child's subsequent learning experience. Primary level education is particularly significant because, in terms of total attendance as a percentage of the population, it is the most inclusive level within the Irish education system. The primary education system aims to provide each child with the opportunity to participate in a learning environment with the greatest

possible diversity of subjects, regardless of the student's social or economic background.

The Role of the Teacher in the Transmission Process

One of the most important aspects of the musical experience anywhere is the process by which it is taught and learned. This process, often referred to as the transmission of music, can occur in a variety of contexts using various media. Teachers play a central role in the transmission of music at primary level education in Ireland. How teachers themselves come to know and value music is important as they facilitate the learning of music in the classroom. The important role played by the teacher in the transmission of music is widely discussed in the literature on music education (Swanwick 1988; Hennessey 1998; Glover & Young 1999; McCarthy 1999; Jorgensen 2003; Wade 2004; Campbell 2004). According to Campbell, all music has been learned and transmitted, directly or indirectly, by a 'knowledgeable maker of the music' (2004, 5). Music-making, she continues, 'strongly reflects how it has been learned, and is informed by the particulars of its transmission - the what, who, why, when, where, and how of music's teaching' (2004, 5). Campbell highlights the important role teachers play in developing students' 'conscious attention to sonic surroundings and musical matters that are "out there," alive and evident in local communities as well as preserved in recordings from around the world' (2004, 3). Referring to teachers as

'agents' of musical education, Estelle Jorgenson (2003) argues that teachers selectively transmit traditional beliefs and practices and frame new ones. Campbell presents the teaching profession as a highly skilled workforce with particular, and wide-ranging, skills.

> Those who can, teach. More than just another career option, the teaching of music is a rare and honourable calling. Teachers in elementary and secondary schools, or in universities are privileged to be living their lives with the balance of music and people (2004, 4).

How educators and members of society view the role of music in education has an impact on our education system. If musical activity is considered by the people involved in education as an important and valuable experience for all children, the system will reflect this value.

Towards an Understanding of the Concept of Music

The concept of music and the value of musical experience is variously defined by scholars of music. John Blacking defined music as 'humanly organised sound' (1973). Bonnie Wade takes this a step further, referring to music as not only a thing or a category of organised sound but as a process (Wade 2004, 3). Christopher Small also argues that music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that 'people do' (Small 1998, 2). He coined the term 'musicking', referring to music as a process or activity of 'making music'.

> To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing (Small 1998, 9).

David Elliot has written extensively about the concept of music and has developed a philosophy centred on the idea of music education as 'praxial' (Elliot, 1995). Elliot argues that a full understanding of the nature and significance of music involves more than an understanding of pieces, or works, of music. He proposes that music involves processes-and-products (actions-and-outcomes) intertwined. Praxial is meant to convey the idea that 'music' pivots on particular kinds of human doing-and-making that are purposeful, contextual and socially-embedded (Elliot, 1995). His philosophy highlights the importance of conceiving 'music' as a particular form of action that is purposeful and situated and, therefore, revealing of one's selfhood and one's relationship with others in a community. Praxial emphasizes that music ought to be understood in relation to the meanings and values evidenced in actual music making, music listening and musical outcomes in specific cultural contexts (Elliot, 1995).

Many definitions of music are informed by an understanding of the concepts of musical ability and musicality. In some cases, musical ability

is viewed as a gift, with, or without, which one is born. In other instances, it is viewed as something that is inherent in all human beings. Campbell outlines these two views.

> At one end of a spectrum, some societies expect people who make music to be specialists, born into the role or endowed with a special capacity. At the other end of that spectrum, in some societies it is assumed that the practice of music is a human capacity and that all people will express themselves musically as a normal part of life (2004 b, 1-2).

The Concept of Intelligence: An Exploration

Our understanding of the concept of musicality is often informed by our understanding of the concept of intelligence. The concept of intelligence has been variously defined and referred to in the field of education. Intelligence has been defined as a singular entity, which people possess in varying quantities (Drudy & Lynch 1993). It has been viewed as a possession: something that one either has or has not. Others believe that it can be measured according to intelligence tests (Jensen 1969; Benson 1987). Howard Gardner, a cognitive psychologist based at Harvard University, has developed a theory, referred to as the multiple intelligence, or MI, theory (Gardner, 1993). Gardner argues that many human 'intelligences' are common to all cultures. He proposes that everyone has some capabilities in each of these intelligences, with some

having more ability in certain areas than others. Gardner has identified musical intelligence as one of seven intelligences.[1]

What is defined as intelligence or ability has a profound influence on what is considered as legimate knowledge in schools. Drudy and Lynch state that, 'If we do not define musical intelligence as being on a par with mathematical or linguistic intelligence, for example, then we will not accord it equal status with these in schools' (1993, 228). John Blacking (1973) argued against an exclusionary view of musicality and believed that musical ability is inherent within all people. John O'Flynn (2005) argues that, although the ability to be musical is shared by virtually all members of the human race, this does not mean that we are equally musical. He suggests that these differences arise from our diverse cultural practices. O'Flynn suggests that these differences arise from the value that is placed on music by family, teachers and local community members.

> Differences in how musical or not we are can also arise from cultural experiences: the more music is valued and practised in the family, community, school and wider society, the more

[1] For a full exploration of the MI Theory see Howard Gardner's *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (1999) and *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1993).

> likely it is that our individual musical sides will develop and flourish (O'Flynn 2005, 191).

The Educational Value of Music

How music is valued as an educational subject is crucial to the development and promotion of musical activity in schools. Several studies have highlighted the value of participation in musical activity for young children, providing evidence of how learning in and through music can enhance their educational experiences and achievements. The most significant research was undertaken at Project Zero in 1999, at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where leading educational researchers were invited to examine the impact of the arts on young people. The findings of the various studies are documented in a report entitled *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* (1999). This report reveals that learners can attain higher levels of achievement through their engagement with musical activities. Success in these activities became a bridge to learning, and eventual success in other areas. One of the critical research findings showed that learning in and through the arts can help 'level the playing field' for young people who come from disadvantaged backgrounds (1999). The findings also reveal how music, as a tool for teaching and learning, as well as an additional subject within the school day, can help learning in other subject areas, and how music nurtures development, cognitive, social, and personal competencies for children. The *Bridging The Gap Evaluation Report* (2004)

documents similar findings through case studies of arts projects in schools in Cork city. The project evaluation reveals that music projects are an effective way of promoting educational inclusion in primary schools. Anthony Everitt and François Matarasso have explored the benefits and possibilities of greater participation in the arts from social, cultural and professional perspectives (Everitt, 1997; Matarasso, 1997). Studies such as these outline the value of music from various perspectives and inform not only the development of policies and models for music education, but also the value that is placed on music within the classroom setting by teachers, principals and community members, involved in the teaching of music in schools.

Ireland: A Contemporary Profile of Schools

The geographical location of schools and the social and cultural conditions in which the classroom is located can influence the provision of music in schools throughout Ireland. In the past three decades, Ireland has gone through a period of significant economic and social change. The dramatic changes have been a focus of a number of studies across a wide range of disciplines including sociology (Clancy et al, 1986), history (Daly 1981; Brown 2004; Ferriter 2004), geography (Carter and Parker 1988; MacLaughlin 1997), economics (Daly 1981; O' Grada 1993) and politics (Lee, 1989). Ireland's admission to the United Nations in 1955, and membership of the EEC from 1973, has had a significant impact on both

society and the economy. Between 1973 and 1991, Ireland received fourteen billion euro from the European Community for the development of Ireland's infrastructure and industry (Paseta 2003). This financial gain for the economy has led to changes in the Irish society (Paseta 2003; Brown 2004; Ferriter 2004; Cleary et al 2005).

In line with the experience of many other European countries, Ireland's economic success has resulted in a large number of non-nationals from countries such as Poland, Lithuania and Slovakia now working and living here. This has brought about a change in Irish demographics and resulted in expanding multiculturalism, particularly in the Dublin, Cork and Limerick areas. It was estimated in 2006 that 10% of the Irish population were non-national residents. The vast majority of the new arrivals were citizens of Poland and the Baltic states (Central Statistics Report, 2006). The changing demographics of the country challenges traditional perceptions of identity and culture. In terms of education in Ireland, one of the greatest challenges facing schools is their ability to cater appropriately for the existing and newly arrived people of different ethnicity (Boyle 2003). These changes have challenged traditional teaching practices and subject matter, especially in subjects such as language and religion (Prendergast et al 2003). In the current changing social landscape the desire to create an equitable education system remains central to all agencies involved in the provision of education.

Evidence of this is articulated in many government and non-government reports and project documentations. [2]

The Profile of Music Education in Ireland

In light of the recent social, economic and cultural changes in Ireland, there has been an increase in the profile of music education in Ireland. The new music curriculum aims to facilitate a system that gives all children access to musical activities. The development of the curriculum, understood as guidelines for content and practice, has been an important step for music education at primary level. The new revised curriculum, accompanied by in-service training, has raised the profile of music education at primary level and re-emphasised the importance and educational value of music as a subject for all children.

Since the 1960s, the Irish Arts Council has published a number of reports that deal extensively and specifically with the provision of music education in Ireland. The majority of these reports reveal the lack of provision of music education in Ireland and advocate for the creation of an equitable music education system where every child has an

[2] Recent landmark government actions with a major focus on equity issues include the following: The Education Welfare Act 2000; The National Children's Strategy in 2000; The Children's Act 2001; The Youth Act 2001; The Development of RAPID and CLAR programmes and The National Access Plan 2004 –2006. A number of projects such as The Early intervention Programmes; Breaking the Cycle; Giving Children an Even Break and the Bridging the Gap project have been developed by various educational agencies and organisations to promote inclusive education.

opportunity to participate in music.[3] While none of these reports specifically focus on the concept of musicality, there is an underlying belief that participation in music is a basic right for everyone. The number of music projects in primary level schools in Ireland that are currently funded by the Arts Council gives weight to this belief.

Many of the most significant ground-up developments in music education at primary level in Ireland relate to music as an extra-curricular activity. Music activities feature in the lives of students and teachers outside the classroom. As such, music often creates a link between the bounded community within the classroom, the school community and other communities nearby. As schools aspire to increasing musical activities for children, they often choose to collaborate with other agents outside the school. In some cases, local musicians or music teachers visit the school and work with particular classes to teach instrumental programs. They often work in collaboration with the classroom teacher. These developments do not yet feature in the formal or official structures for the provision of music education at primary level in Ireland.

Arts organizations, local community groups, music teachers, and musicians have also become more active in the development of music

[3] See Arts Council Reports: 1976, 1979, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1989.

education programs. Organisations such as The Arts Council and Music Network, and venues such as Cork Opera House, The National Concert Hall (Dublin), and The Linenhall Arts Centre (Mayo) have recently expanded their programming to involve local schools through outreach programs and concert series. A number of professional ensembles have also been working on performances that cater specifically for schools.[4] These performances provide an opportunity for children to experience live music.

In 1999, The Revised Music Curriculum replaced the Curaclam Nua na Bunscoil (The New National School Curriculum), which had been in place since 1971. Although the curriculum guidelines are administered centrally, from the Department of Education and Science, the philosophies, methodologies and contents of the curriculum are implemented by the principal and classroom teachers at school level, through the development of whole school planning and classroom planning. In order to fully understand how music features as part of this process it is important to acknowledge and examine the various types of curricula and curricular processes. It is also important to acknowledge the role of these processes in education and how they impact on the development of subjects within the classroom setting.

[4] Some examples of this are The Cork Pops Orchestra conducted by Evelyn Grant, The Music in the Classroom series, The Vogler Quartet in Sligo and The Connections Project. These workshop and concert series provide an opportunity for children to experience music in the context of a live performance.

The Concept of Curriculum in the Context of Primary Education

The concept of curriculum has featured as an important aspect in the field of education studies. While the term 'curriculum' is often associated with a 'syllabus', 'timetable' or 'lesson plan', a brief examination of the literature reveals many definitions and uses of the concept, suggesting a much broader understanding and use of the term. Relating to this, Child writes,

> The curriculum represents the interaction of all the activities aimed at assisting pupils in reaching specified objectives, devising appropriate content, arranging educational experience for presenting the content, and evaluating the processes of learning which have taken place, along with testing the suitability of the content in relation to the stated objectives (2004, 432).

The complexity in attempting to define or think about what the term 'curriculum' might mean is magnified by the fact that there are many different dimensions to the curriculum process itself. To emphasize the more complex meaning, the term 'curriculum process' is often used as a synonym for 'curriculum' (Child 2004). Neagley and Evans (1967) propose that the curriculum process is all of the planned experiences provided by the school to assist pupils in attaining the designated learning outcomes to the best of their abilities. Hirst (1968) describes the

curriculum process as a 'programme of activities' (1968, 42) designed so that pupils will attain, so far as possible, educational ends or objectives. The curriculum process is an essential part of a teacher's work because it involves planning what to teach, how to teach and how to evaluate the outcome of teaching.

There are many different types of curriculum in schools, including the official curriculum, taught curriculum, hidden curriculum, nul curriculum, formal and informal curriculum. The official curriculum can be defined as 'a planned course of study' (Kelly 2004, 6). The official curriculum is an explicitly stated programme of learning, perhaps incorporating a national curriculum that has been sanctioned by the government. The taught curriculum is the curriculum that takes place in the classroom. The taught curriculum can vary in each classroom as the official curriculum is adapted to take into consideration the individual school and classroom settings. The taught curriculum is designed with the intention of 'appropriately challenging children and matching their learning needs' (Pollard et al 2002, 8). In Ireland, this is done through a process of whole school and classroom level planning.

The notion of hidden curriculum was first outlined clearly by John Dewey (1938, 48). Dewey referred to the importance of the collateral learning of attitudes that occur in schools. He defines the hidden

curriculum as 'all of those socialising practices that are not included in the official curriculum but that contribute towards the reproduction of our culture' Dewey (1938, 48). The hidden curriculum refers to what students learn indirectly at school. Pollard explains that it is what is '"picked up" about such things as the role of the teacher and the role of the learner' and about 'attitudes towards learning and school' (Pollard et al 2002, 8). Pollard stresses that the hidden curriculum has a powerful influence on pupils, as social roles are learnt within this context. The hidden curriculum emphasises the link between schooling and environment, education and society. Kelly (2004) also highlights the significance of the hidden curriculum, explaining that the attitudes and values of the teacher are transmitted in the learning.

The idea of the 'null' curriculum was first described and defined by Eisner (1985, 1994). Since it is physically impossible to teach everything in schools, many topics and subject areas must be intentionally excluded from the written curriculum. The null curriculum refers to these areas that are 'not intentionally taught' in schools. Discussing this, Eisner argues that, in some cases, 'what schools do not teach may be as important as what they do teach' (Eisner 1994, 97). Concerning the 'null curriculum', Eisner believes that when certain subjects or topics are left out of the official curriculum, school personnel are sending messages to

students that certain content, areas and processes are not as valuable as others.

Within the field of education and curriculum studies there is often a distinction made between the 'formal' and the 'informal' curriculum (Kelly 2004). The formal curriculum usually refers to the activities that are timetabled as part of the planned curriculum. The informal curriculum (often referred to as extra-curricular) can refer to activities that take place within the classroom setting, during lunchtime or after school. It can also refer to activities that take place outside the classroom such as travelling to a different school or venue. These extra-curricular activities are often organised by classroom teachers, school principals and visiting tutors.

One of the most significant developments in the Irish primary curriculum was the introduction of the process-based concept of education – referred to in the Irish curriculum as child-centred education. The first introduction of this idea came about in 1971, with the development of the New Revised Primary Curriculum. The concept is further articulated in the New Revised Primary Curriculum document (1999), which states, as its main objectives, that primary education should 'celebrate the uniqueness of a child' and 'ensure the development of the child's full potential' (New Revised Primary Curriculum 1999, 14). An examination

of the aims and objectives outlined in the New Revised Primary Curriculum further reveals that the notion of promoting equal opportunities for all children is central to primary level education in Ireland.

Summary

This chapter highlights the increased profile of music education at primary level in Ireland. I have outlined the recent formal, curricular revisions in music education and the informal, extra-curricular involvement of community organisations and agents in primary level music. Both of these systems aim to increase the provision of music education for all children.

In this chapter I have discussed the role of the classroom teacher in the transmission and promotion of music at primary level. I have highlighted how the concepts of music and musicality provide insight into the value placed on music at primary level education in Ireland. I have also discussed a number of definitions of the term curriculum and how this can provide an understanding of teaching and learning within primary education.

Chapter 2

Music, Education & Schooling:

Primary Education in Ireland (c1500-

Present)

The Field of Music Education in Ireland

In this chapter, I explore the historical and contemporary sources on the history of education and the history of music education in Ireland. The sources combine to contribute to our understanding of the contemporary music education system, the historical context of music at primary level, and the historical developments that brought it to this point. The chronological description of the Irish primary education system presented here focuses on developments that led to the introduction and implementation of the most recent revised curriculum in 1999. The chief musicological and historical sources that have formed the basis for this chapter are now discussed.

Musicological Sources

There are a number of key sources that focus on the history of music education at primary level in Ireland. The following three sources form the basis for the historical narrative presented later in this chapter: *The Music in Ireland Series* (1952), edited by Aloys Fleischmann, *Music in Ireland 1848-1998* (1998), edited by Richard Pine, and Marie McCarthy's *Passing it on – The Transmission of Music in Irish Culture* (1999).

The Music in Ireland Series (1952), edited by Aloys Fleischmann, is an important landmark in the history of music education in Ireland. The

series provides an account of music in Ireland, focusing on the contemporary provisions of music education in 1952. It features contributions from a variety of people involved in various aspects of musical life in Ireland in the 1950s. A number of these contributions are of particular interest as they provide insight into both the role and the provision of music in a number of educational contexts. Donnchadh Ua Braoin provides an account of music in primary level schools of that era (1952). Seán Neeson contributes an account of the provision of Irish traditional music at primary level. Members of the Department of Education outline the organization of music in the schools. Another chapter is dedicated to a discussion of teacher training in Ireland. Collectively these accounts provide a snapshot of music education at primary level in 1952.

Many of the contributors to the *The Music in Ireland Series* highlight the lack of music education at primary level. Neeson observes that although there is adequate provision of music on the national syllabus, the teaching of music and the adaptation of the syllabus at school level is insufficient (Neeson 1952, 54). Neeson highlights two main problem areas: the lack of provision for music in the teacher training schools, and the absence of teaching resources focused on music. Ua Braoin argues the need for more training courses and training staff in order to increase the provision of music in schools (Ua Broain 1952, 37). Ua Braoin

suggests that in order for music to fully develop within the system more work must also be done to raise the profile of music in Ireland and to develop the wider public's interest in music.

Music in Ireland 1848-1998 (1998), edited by Richard Pine, features published articles taken from The Thomas Davis Lectures Series, which was broadcast on RTÉ Radio 1 in early 1998. The book contains many interesting contributions on the subject of music education. It features a historical overview of music in Ireland from 1848 to 1998 providing an updated perspective on many themes that featured in Fleischman's earlier work (Fleischman 1952; Pine 1998). This overview traces some of the important developments in Irish society and examines the impact of these changes on music, generally, and on music in education, specifically.

In *Passing it on – The Transmission of Music in Irish Culture* (1999) Marie McCarthy provides an extensive account of the relationship between music and culture in nineteenth and twentieth century Ireland with a particular focus on the role of music in the construction of identity. McCarthy discusses the connections between music and culture in Ireland, focusing primarily on the transmission of music in Irish culture. McCarthy's discussions and representations of various primary sources provide an account of music education at primary level in Ireland. Her

account deals with the development of music education since its formal introduction in 1840.

Historical Studies in Education

One of the most significant accounts of the history of Irish education is John Cooholan's *Irish Education – history and structure* (1999). Cooholan doesn't deal specifically with music but he provides an extensive survey of the history of education at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. His account deals with the changes in the Irish education system since the introduction of the National State Education System in the 1890s. Outlining these developments across the various levels of education, Cooholan discusses the relationship between the social and cultural events in Ireland and examines their impact and significance in terms of the structure and management of the Irish education system.

Two important studies that explore the relationship between Irish society and education in Ireland are *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002* (Brown 2004) and *Schools and Society in Ireland* (Drudy and Lynch 1993). In the former, Brown discusses how the Irish government aspired to bring about vast changes to the Irish economy throughout the 1960s. Brown highlights how education was seen as an 'important investment to the economy in Ireland' (2004, 235). Drudy and Lynch argue that education has played an important role in Irish society. They suggest

that the education system, through the diverse structures and practices, plays a crucial part in the socialisation and transmission of cultural values.

In *The Hedge Schools of Ireland* (Dowling 1968) and 'For Want of Education: The Origins of the Hedge Schoolmaster Songs' (Henigan 1994) Dowling and Henigan provide a valuable historical account of hedge schools in Ireland. Both accounts outline the development of the hedge school system and the types of teaching and learning that occurred. Dowling's account demonstrates how the social and political changes in Ireland affected society and, in particular, the education system. Henigan's account reveals that although music education was not a prominent part of the teaching within the schools, many hedge schoolmasters wrote new songs while teaching in the hedge schools. Henigan makes particular reference to a number of songs that are thought to have originated from within the hedge schools.

Education Reports Debates and Gathering

A number of research studies and reports have been written as a result of the involvement in education of a variety of different music agencies in Ireland, in particular, the Arts Council of Ireland. Since the late nineteen seventies, The Arts Council has produced a number of reports that focus

on the provision and the role of music education in the Irish education system.

In 1976, The Arts Council published the report, *Provision for the Arts* (J.M. Richards). This landmark report discusses national provision of music education, the involvement of local government and the role of the arts in education. In 1979, The Arts Council published the report *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education*. This report examines the role of the arts in Irish society. It notes the absence of a high value being placed on the arts in Irish society in general and in the education system specifically. Ciarán Benson opens the report with the statement that 'The arts have been neglected in Irish education' (1979, 6). Similar conclusions were found in The Deaf Ears? report (1985), that 'Young Irish people have the worst of all European "musical worlds"'(1985, 50). The neglect of the arts in the Irish education system has continued to be reiterated in many reports published by the Arts Council (The Arts Council: 1976, 1979, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1989). The direct involvement of the Arts Council in music education through these reports has provided a further source of debate and discussion around the arts in Irish education. The findings from the Arts Council reports are frequently used as a focal point in discussions and writings on education in Ireland.

The Music Education National Debate (MEND: 1996) and Crosbhealach an Cheoil - The Crossroads Conference (1996, 2004) provided valuable opportunities for the discussion of music education in Ireland. MEND was established as a direct response to the findings of 'The Deaf Ears?' report (1985). The MEND report provides a comprehensive discussion of music education in Ireland, documenting some of the exchanges that occurred during the debate. Many of the discussions that deal with the concept of access and provision of music education in Ireland are particularly relevant to this study.

A number of contributors to Crosbhealach an Cheoil - The Crossroads Conference, (Vallely et al 1996) also discuss aspects of the music education systems in Ireland, more specifically the role of Irish traditional music in Education (Barry Burgess, Caoimhín Mc Aodh) and the institutionalisation of Irish traditional music (Thérèse Smith). The second Crossroads Conference (2004) focused on the theme of education, highlighting the importance of music education in the development and transmission of Irish traditional music in Ireland.

Although there is a dearth of literature that focuses directly on the development of music education at primary level in Ireland, the above sources contribute to an understanding of the history of music education within the primary education system. The following section draws upon

some of these sources to help construct a narrative of the history of music education at primary level in Ireland.

Ireland – Music – Education

A historical narrative of the Irish education system may be constructed by tracing our knowledge of education from the earliest forms of schooling, through the foundation of the formal education system in 1831, to the contemporary challenges facing the education system. The development of music as a subject within the primary education system is part of the development of the formal education system in Ireland. The education system itself has been strongly influenced by the complex history of the nation and state, an understanding of which informs our understanding of education in Ireland. A historical narrative that concurrently examines the development of education and the combined political and socio-economic conditions of the state provides a greater understanding of the connection between the classroom and its location in the wider community.

Education has played an important role in Irish society since the late 1400s. Frequently referred to as 'the land of saints and scholars,' in popular discourse, Ireland has a reputation as a country that values learning. Some of the earliest references to schooling systems in Ireland are of the bardic schools, which developed around the early part of the

third Century and the monastic schools which were set up around the mid 400s.

The bardic schools were pagan in origin but after the rise of Christianity (c500s) their function was purely secular (Dowling 1971). Often referred to as 'schools of poetry' (Dowling 1971), the schools were set up by the Celts and were heavily influenced by their culture and their 'Gaelic social system' which consisted of three levels: the nobles, the men of learning and the workers (Dowling 1971, 18). The primary aim of the bardic schools was to train poets, historians and lawyers in Irish law, history and poetry (Dowling 1971, 9). Accounts of this system of schooling indicate that not everyone could attend these schools and that access was linked to the tribes that existed in Ireland around that period. With the coming of Christianity to Ireland around the late 400s, the old bardic schools co-existed with a new system of education developed by early monks. Monastic schools were founded all over Ireland, with Armagh (450AD) and Clonmacnoise (544AD) being the earliest ones set up. It is thought that the education that took place in these schools was primarily for those who indicated that they would join religious orders, although there is some evidence to suggest that lay pupils were also allowed attend some of these schools (Dowling 1971).

The monastic schools, which were originally based on a European model of education, were directly linked to the development of monastic settlements in Ireland. After the dark ages, Irish monks reintroduced these schools to the European mainland. Secular and religious subjects were taught, including the study of the Scriptures, Classics, General Literature and Science (Joyce 1908).

The bardic schools and the Irish monastic schools played an important part in the dissemination of learning throughout Ireland (Joyce 1908; Corcoran 1928; Dowling 1971). Although it is believed that the Irish monastic schools fell into decline at the end of the eight century due to the Norman invasion in Ireland (Dowling 1971), there is evidence to suggest that both the bardic school and the monastic schools systems co-existed from approximately the fifth to the mid seventeenth century (Joyce 1908).

A Gaelic education system (Corcoran 1928) existed in Ireland from the early 1500s to approximately the 1650s. This system consisted of lay schools that developed in Ireland throughout the Norman Period. Teachers within this school system were from Irish 'scholar families' (Corcoran 1928, v). The main subjects taught in this system were poetry, history, law and medicine. These subjects were taught through the

medium of Irish and Latin. The introduction of English state policy in the 1600s caused this system of education to collapse.

After the demise of the Gaelic education system various types of schools were set up in Ireland, including parish, diocesan, royal and charter schools. John Cooholan notes the upsurge of schools in Ireland, beginning around the 15th century and coinciding with the period of intense colonisation of Ireland through the plantations (Cooholan 1981, 8). Britain attempted to change Irish attitudes and society through the education system. The English used schools with some success as 'agents of conquest' to advance the Protestant faith and the English language in Ireland (Cooholan 1981, 8). These schools aimed to attract Catholic children by giving free tuition. The majority of Catholics were unreceptive towards these schools and choose not to send their children (Cooholan 1981, 8). The introduction of formal legislation regarding education in Ireland continued to restrict the development of alternative education for Catholics in Ireland.

The penal laws were introduced by the British government to Ireland in 1695 as part of an ongoing effort to suppress the working conditions of Irish Catholics. Among the first of the penal laws to be enacted were those against Catholic education. The laws forbade Catholics to send their children abroad to be educated, to set up school in Ireland or to

teach Catholic children (Cooholan 1981). The laws prohibited any form of Catholic education, thus effectively eliminating any legal means of education for a predominantly Catholic native population. During this time, many of the Catholic order schools closed and the clergy were forced to leave the country as the laws did not allow them to teach in Ireland. Regardless of these laws the Irish developed a wide range of unofficial schools, which became known as hedge schools.

Hedge schools were widely used by Catholics in Ireland from 1695 to 1829. The schools derived their name from the practise of conducting classes out of doors, in the shelter of a hedge that served to obscure the teacher and pupils. In his book *The Hedge Schools of Ireland,* P.J. Dowling writes about the rise of this unorthodox schooling system.

> Hedge schools were set up in remote and mountainous districts where danger of detection was least likely to be incurred, and where instruction might be carried on without serious or prolonged interruption (Dowling 1968, 11).

The hedge schools were a popular form of schooling even though they were illegal. Many of the teachers were poets or ex-students of the priesthood. The government were suspicious of these schools as they felt that the hedge schools 'harboured the potential for political subversion' (Heneghan 1995, 162). The government alleged that the hedge schools' educational content was immoral.

Hedge schools are often considered to have provided a 'Gaelic and classical training' to students (Dowling 1968, Heneghan 1995, Mc Manus 2002). While the main subjects taught were reading, writing and arithmetic, some schools offered other subjects such as Irish, Latin and Greek. A number of teachers from the bardic school system are thought to have become hedge schoolmasters as many of them had the ability to teach subjects such as Latin and Greek. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, many schools placed as much, if not more, emphasis upon the teaching of English, which had become the most popular language spoken in Ireland at the time (McManus 2002).

There is no official reference to the teaching of music in the hedge schools. It is believed that music was not taught for the reason that it would have attracted too much attention to the illegal schools. Julie Henigan's discussion of what she calls 'the hedge school master' supports the assertion that musical activity was an element of hedge school life. Henigan writes about the development of song writing that stemmed directly from the hedge masters in Ireland, many of whom were poets. Henigan cites some example of songs.

> P W Joyce in his Old Irish Folk Music and Songs attributes a song called 'The Cottage Maid' to Larry Dillon of Tipperary, a noted and successful classical teacher of the early part of the

> last [nineteenth] century. Similarly, Ulster song collector Sam Henry attributes Mudion River to a certain Master Mullan, 'The Big Master', an itinerant schoolteacher (1994, 3).

Henigan's analysis reveals that many of these songs exhibit 'literary' features. This clearly reflects the influence of the Classical and Gaelic traditions taught in the hedge schools.[5] The number of hedge schools increased significantly during the latter part of the eighteenth century, and they became so well-established that even after the abolition of the last of the Penal Laws in 1829 and the subsequent establishment of the national school system in 1831, many of the hedge schools continued to operate into the mid-nineteenth century.

Education and Religious Groups in Ireland

Shortly after the abolition of the penal laws in Ireland, various religious orders once again became involved in the provision of education in Ireland. Although the hedge schools remained in operation after the penal laws were removed, Catholic orders such as the Mercy, Presentation, and Ursuline sisters were also established in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Catholic order schools were set up to provide instruction for members of their communities, catering

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[5] For further accounts of these songs see Julie Henigan (1994), *For Want of Education: The Origins of the Hedge Schoolmaster Songs*.

exclusively for the Catholic population. A number of Protestant societies, such as the Association for Discountenancing Vice and the London Hibernian Society, were also set up at this time to encourage and promote the Protestant religion. A number of educational bodies offered non-secular education. One such body was The Kildare Place Society, which was set up in 1811 (McCarthy 1999, 42).

Education was recognised as an important factor in 'moulding the minds of the people' (Heneghan 1995, 169). Early accounts of music education in Ireland suggest that music was an important part of education at this time. There is particular reference to the use of music in the Catholic order schools to 'promote and reinforce religious doctrine and traditions' (McCarthy 1999, 42). The majority of music was in the form of hymns and instrumental church music. Emphasis was placed on the Western Art Music tradition, and music theory, part singing and piano instruction were of primary focus. There is no evidence to suggest the inclusion of any native traditional Irish music in the teaching in the Catholic order schools (McCarthy 1999).

The use of music education in the religious order schools was important in the overall promotion and development of the subject in Irish education (McCarthy 1999). Over the decades, Catholic teaching orders

have continued to play a major role in developing music education in schools and communities throughout Ireland.

Introduction of the National Education System in Ireland

During the 1800s Ireland was still governed by the British Parliament. All decisions regarding Ireland's administration were still highly influenced by a British government based at Westminster. In 1830, Thomas Wyse became one of the first Catholic Members of Parliament from Ireland to attend Westminster. Throughout the 1820s, Wyse was involved in the advocacy of Catholic rights in Ireland. Immediately after joining the parliament in Westminster, Wyse began to advocate for the development of a state education system in Ireland. In December 1830, Wyse submitted to the parliament a document entitled 'A Plan For National Education in Ireland'. This document outlined principals and structures for the development of a state national system of education in Ireland. The idea of developing a state education system was highly influenced by the Catholic church in Ireland as they were neither happy with the existing Hedge School system, which was set up for Catholics in response to the penal laws, nor, the Protestant schooling systems introduced by the British government (Cooholan 1981, 58).

In 1831, a Board of Commissioners for National Education was established in Ireland. The board comprised of three members of the

Church of Ireland, two Catholics and two Presbyterians. In 1831, the board set up a formal state education system in Ireland which was based on the recommendations from Wyse's document. The original plan was to have a non-denominational primary education system, where children of all denominations would be taught secular subjects together and separate arrangements would be made for doctrinal subjects. Efforts to draw a distinction between secular and religious instruction proved difficult, however, as the entire schooling process was essentially an 'extension of pastoral care with religion interpenetrating all facets of education' (Cooholan 1981, 16). Therefore, the vast majority of schools were immediately denominational in nature.

'Model Schools' were set up shortly after the introduction of the new state system of primary education. These were teacher-training schools for aspiring teachers. They were set up with the intention of setting the standards for teaching in National Schools and to assist in the early training of teachers (Dowling 1971, 124). In 1838, Marlborough Street Training College, the first model school, was set up in Dublin. In subsequent years several other model schools were set up around the county. Initially, the training system involved four and a half months of study at the college. Shortly afterwards a six year program was introduced which involved practical teaching and a state examination along with the college training at a model school (Dowling 1971).

As the national school system began to develop in the 1830s, there was considerable discussion about the value of including music in formal education. Two major sources guided the development of a philosophy for music in the Irish national school system: The Report from the Select Committees on Foundation Schools and Education in Ireland of 1835-37, and Sir Thomas Wyse's Education Reform of 1836 (McCarthy 1999, 52). The documents revealed that the primary functions of music education at primary level in Ireland were social and religious (McCarthy 1999, 52). The increasing need to educate all social classes in music education was also reflected in the reports (McCarthy 1999). A third perspective on music's role in education was advocated by Sir Thomas Wyse. Wyse felt that music was lacking in the education of Irish children and he argued for the inclusion of music in the curriculum in an effort to 'form a nation capable of knowing and loving the arts' (Wyse Thomas, 1835 quoted in McCarthy 1999, 53).

Music as a formal subject was introduced to the national school system in 1840. Music education at this time consisted of classes in vocal music and sight-singing that were based on the Hullah system.[6] The Hullah system of musical instruction originated from a musical system called the

6. See Rainbow, B. (1967), *The Land Without Music,* for further details on this system.

Frennach Wilhem method. This system was in use in France from the early 1820s. Around the 1830s the British Council of Education came across this method and the council hired John Hullah, a British music teacher and composer, to create an English textbook version of the Frennach Wilhem method. The textbook was called Hullah's Manual and it became widely used throughout the English education system shortly after its publication. In 1840, two Irish music teachers travelled to England to learn the Hullah method. On their return to Ireland, they began introducing this method into the teacher training schools in Ireland (McCarthy 1999, 55).

This method of music instruction placed an emphasis on music literacy and songs. Most of the songs used were based on English songs such as 'God Save the Queen' and 'The English Child' (McCarthy 1999, 57). In her discussion of the method, McCarthy points out that its main aims were to 'impart a theoretical knowledge of "the science of music" and to have pupils perform "appropriate" music (1999, 57).

The type of music instruction that was employed in the model schools formed the basis for all national school music provision throughout the 1840s and 1850s in Ireland. Many Irish educators felt that the method was not relevant to the Irish musical experience. Patrick Keenan, head

inspector of the national school system at the time, criticised the Hullah's Manual for the song repertoire used in it.

> They do not pretend to any national character,…are foreign to all sympathy,…belong to no country,… [and] are sung in no home (Keenan, Patrick 1855 quoted in McCarthy 1999, 55).

Several scholars suggest that the teaching methods and the content, which were predominately based on the English perspective, were an attempt to weaken and destroy any aspect of Irish native culture (Cooholan 1981; McCarthy 1998; Pine 1998).

From the 1850s onwards, evidence from the commissioners' reports reveals a slow rate of implementation of music in primary schools (White 1998, 102). A contemporary school inspector's observation suggests that the parents of school children did not value music as an educational subject.

> So long as their children can read, write and calculate the price of a load of hay or a bag of flour, they are perfectly satisfied, and they consider time misspent which is employed in the acquisition of grammar, geography and other subjects not understood by themselves (Keenan 1855).

This attitude towards education contrasts with the approach of the hedge schools, where languages such as Latin and Greek were often taught (Dowling, 1968; Heneghan, 1995). Such developments highlight shifting social and economic influences on the education system and the manner in which parents influenced developments within the education system.

Payment-by-Results System

Between 1872 and 1899, a payment-by-results system dominated the national school system in Ireland. The payment-by-results system was introduced to try to improve academic results. A board of inspectors regularly evaluated student progress, and a teacher's salary depended on the progress that was documented. This approach, already in use throughout the education system in England, had a significant effect on the entire schooling process in Ireland. As a system of accountability for teachers it laid down precise programmes and regular examinations. The main subjects taught were reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic. A narrow and mechanical approach to learning developed as subject content became standardised through a rote learning system. The payment-by-result system had a serious impact on both school teachers and pupils. The new system, which was primarily focused on an end of year examination, has been described as a 'mechanistic system' (Cooholan 1981, 30) that, in many cases, did not take into consideration the social and economic conditions of schools at that time.

Music continued to be taught in schools after the introduction of the payment-by-results system. There were significant changes in how it was taught as it became integrated into this new system of accountability. A standardised approach to music instruction, emphasising the technical and mechanical aspects of musical instruction was developed. Singing became less frequent as pedagogical emphasis was placed on formal knowledge and music literacy as opposed to practical music making.

The introduction of this system had a detrimental effect on music education in Ireland. The annual reports of the national commissioners (1871-1874) confirm the decline in the teaching of the subject. The report also reveals a decrease in the number of students who took music as a subject. The payment-by-results system brought music teaching and learning to a low ebb, resulting in what is described as the 'most destructive time for music in the entire history of that subject in Irish education' (McCarthy 1999, 79). Interest in music education at primary level decreased in the late nineteenth century as teachers concentrated on the other curricular subjects upon which their salaries depended (McCarthy 1999; Heneghan 1998; Pine 1998).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century a combination of factors in Ireland and across Europe led to discontentment in relation to the

content, nature and method of education provided by national schools. A number of European trends in educational thought began to challenge the traditional approach to education. A 'practical educationalist' movement believed that education was too narrow in scope and that it placed too much emphasise on reading and writing (Cooholan 1981). The group began to advocate for a more practical and manual approach to education. Practical educationalists encouraged the use of more practical subjects in schools believing that they were more relevant to everyday living. A 'child-centred' movement, inspired by the work of Rosseau, Pestalozzi and Frobel, also began to critique the schooling process for its emphasis on subjects rather than the children themselves (Cooholan 1981). This movement argued for a more child–centred curriculum rather that a subject-centred one, where the needs and interests of each child would be the focus of the schooling process (Cooholan 1981).

A revision of the primary curriculum in Ireland took place in 1900. The revision saw significant changes in many areas of the Irish education system. Some of the changes came about as a direct result of the influence of European education movements. The revision saw the introduction of a wide-ranging programme that featured many practical subjects, such as singing, drawing and physical education. Alongside reading, writing and arithmetic, these practical subjects became obligatory. The revision saw an increase in the provision of music

education at primary level and was aided by an intensive in-service programme that was set up to reach all teachers, in particular those in remote areas. However, many issues and challenges impeded the full implementation of this music programme. Singing was now a compulsory subject in this new revised programme. The emphasis continued to be on sight–singing, however, with the mechanical, formal aspects of ear training and sight-reading given much instructional attention (McCarthy 1999; Heneghan 1998; Pine 1998). Although there were many positive changes to the provision of music during this period, there were still many challenges to increasing the provision throughout the entire education system. In 1922 a new revision of the primary school programme occurred.

National School Programme 1922

The political and social landscape in Ireland changed dramatically in 1922 as a direct result of the establishment of the Irish Free State. Ireland now determined its own political and social affairs. A National School Programme was introduced to primary schools in 1922. There were significant differences between the new curriculum introduced and the previous programme. One of the main concerns of curricular policy following Irish Independence was the restoration of the Irish language, with great emphasis being placed on the school's role in bringing this about (Benson 1979, 14). The National school was viewed as an

institution which could be used to strengthen and promote national identity, particularly through the use of the Irish language. Subjects such as drawing and physical education were no longer obligatory. This programme was greatly different from the 1900 programme and it became clear that one of the most important functions of schooling in Ireland was the promotion and restoration of the Irish language. Not only was Irish to assume 'a new place of prominence' in schools but it was to be used also as a 'medium of teaching' (McCarthy 1999, 40). During this time, music was once again relegated to the periphery as an additional subject. The availability of music instruction was 'dependent upon the staffing of the school and local needs and resources' (McCarthy 1999, 90).

In the period following the development of the nation state, Catholicism, as a marker of Irish identity in the emergent nation state, was an important influence on the education system and the development of music in schools. McCarthy outlines how 'the ethos of national schools was permeated by the ideals of Catholicism' and how 'music served as a religious socialiser in the context of nationalist ideology' (McCarthy 1999, 121). During this period summer schools were set up to train and educate teachers in plain chant. As a result, large numbers began to participate in local liturgical festivals and this in turn influenced the development of 'massed singing of children' during church services

(McCarthy 1999, 122). The development and promotion of religious music played a dominant role in reinforcing Catholicism throughout the primary education system.

The curricular policy introduced in 1922 remained the main national school policy for the Irish primary education system for almost fifty years. After the introduction of the new curriculum, there was much dissatisfaction expressed by teachers (Heneghan 1998; Pine 1998; McCarthy 1999). Many teachers felt that there was too much emphasis on the Irish language and that the nature of many subjects changed to facilitate the promotion of the Irish language. In terms of music, there is evidence to suggest that there was an increase in the provision of music education at primary level during this period. The focus was on Irish language songs and the promotion of nationalist beliefs through the songs. In 1971, following a long period of dissatisfaction amongst teachers, a new curriculum was introduced (Cooholan 1981, 43).

An Curaculam Nua (The New Curriculum 1971)

During the 1960s in Ireland, there were many changes throughout Irish society. One of the most significant changes was in relation to the value of education in Ireland. Although education had always been an important part of Irish life, there was now a shift in emphasis from education as being a 'social expenditure to one of investment in the

individual and society as a whole' (Coolohan 1981). The role of education was now recognised as having an important role on the development of the economy (Cooholan 1981). The changing attitudes towards education began to impact on education systems in Ireland. In particular, it led to an increase in financial investment in education, which allowed for significant developments in terms of facilities and resource materials for schools (Cooholan 1981). Other outcomes included the setting up of many education groups such as the Investment in Education team, the Committee on Adult Education and the Committee on Reformatory and Industrial schools (Cooholan 1981).

The late 1960s saw the preparation of a new curricular document for primary level education in Ireland and a new child-centred syllabus was officially introduced in 1971 for all primary level subjects, replacing the previous subject-centred syllabus. This new curriculum acknowledged that education was previously 'curriculum-centred' rather than 'child-centred' and the teacher's function was that of 'a medium through which knowledge was merely transferred to his pupils' (Department of Education 1971, 15).

The new 1971 curriculum was based on child-centred principles, designed to facilitate the development of all children while acknowledging their individual needs. Subjects were to be taught in an

integrated manner as opposed to the previous tradition of compartmentalisation (Department of Education 1971).

The role of music in the new curriculum was expanded. The major areas were singing, vocal technique, ear training, music and movement, notation and creative activity. Music also was to feature as part of other subjects through cross-curricular integration. The curriculum emphasised the importance of including a wide variety of musics from a range of genres (Department of Education 1971). This was a major change from the previous music curriculum with its primary focus on Irish language songs. These developments reflected the changes that were taking place throughout the education system, as part of a move from a 'nationalistic' curriculum to a more diverse representation of subject materials.

Subsequent reports highlight the fact that while music was provided for in some form in the majority of schools, the full aspirations of the curriculum were not realised. In a questionnaire issued by the Conference of Convent Primary Schools in Ireland, an overwhelming 86 per cent of teachers considered that pupils' musical appreciation had improved since the introduction of the curriculum (1975). However, The INTO Curriculum Questionnaire Analysis revealed that while 79 per cent of respondents stated that they taught music, only 50 per cent felt that

they were teaching it satisfactorily (1976). The new curriculum was ambitious and did not fully achieve its objectives due to a lack of in-service training and resources in the education system.

In 1987, The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) was established by the Department of Education and Science. It replaces the previous Curriculum and Examinations Board. The main role of the NCCA is to advise the Minister for Education and Science on matters relating to Curriculum, Assessment and Examination systems in the Irish education system (Education Act 1998). The NCCA designed and developed a new revised curriculum for primary level education in Ireland that was launched in 1999. It was the first complete revision of the primary school curriculum since 1971.

Contemporary Overview of the Primary Education System in Ireland

The New Revised Primary Curriculum (1999) was developed and introduced in 1999. It was revised in response to the growing demands from teachers who were finding it increasingly difficult to implement areas of the 1971 curriculum (INTO Curriculum Questionnaire Analysis, 1976; Conference of Convent Primary Schools in Ireland, 1975).

The new music curriculum incorporates the child centred principles of *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (1971) but also includes new content and embraces

new approaches and methodologies. The new revised curriculum is designed to 'nurture the child in all dimensions of his or her life - spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social and physical' (Revised Primary School Curriculum 1999, 6). The New Revised Curriculum aspires to enable the child to live a full life, realise his or her potential as a unique individual, enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others, contribute to the good of society and prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning (Revised Primary School Curriculum 1999, 7).

The music curriculum outlines a number of issues relating to the role and use of music in the primary education system. It places a strong value on music as 'an art form deeply rooted in human nature' (Revised Primary School Curriculum 1999, 7). The New Revised Curriculum (1999) acknowledges the communicative value of music and the opportunities for creating a shared experience in the classroom, school and community (see also: Bohlman 1988; 2005; Small 1998). The curriculum aspires to developing lifelong opportunities for 'the development of imagination, sensitivity, inventiveness, risk-taking and enjoyment' (Revised Primary School Curriculum 1999, 7). According to the curriculum, music and music-making can play an important role in the development of a child's self esteem.

The Revised Primary Curriculum in Music (1999) is divided into three strands which are developed progressively through four levels. The four levels, usually defined by age, are: Infants Classes – Junior and Senior, First and Second classes, Third and Fourth classes, and, Fifth and Sixth classes. The three strands of music education at primary level are, listening and responding, performing, and composing. Within the strand of listening and responding, the curriculum attempts to facilitate the exploration of sounds through listening to and responding to music. The performance strand focuses on skills such as singing, early musical literacy and playing musical instruments. The composition strand explores possibilities for improvisation and creativity.

The New Revised Primary Curriculum was developed by the PCSU in partnership with a committee comprising of parents, teachers and principals. This partnership approach is also a feature of the implementation of the new curriculum in schools. The implementation strategy for the new curriculum involves both in-service training for teachers and planning at school level. The revised curriculum was the first curriculum to be introduced on a phased basis, with in-service (teacher-training) and planning days being provided for all teachers and schools.

In-service Training

In-service training for the new curriculum was introduced in 1999. It is part of the implementation of the new curriculum. Training days are organised by the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP), which was established before the launch of the New Revised Curriculum. The PCSP training days are set up to support and guide the teachers in the implementation of the new curriculum. Training is provided each year in two curricular subject areas. Two days are allocated to each subject in the New Revised Curriculum. During these training days, teachers are introduced to the principles and methodologies of the new curriculum. The training days take place in a local hotel or education centre and are facilitated by teacher trainers. This process of in-service training is an important new development in the primary education system. Well-planned training days catering for small numbers of teachers allow for greater professional development and the better implementation of the curriculum. It allows the opportunity for teachers to learn and develop their skills in an interactive way. Primary school teacher, Carroll, is enthusiastic about the new approach.

> There have been remarkable developments with the introduction of the new curriculum, in particular, in the area of in-service training for teachers. The days of 200 teachers gathering in the hall of St. Finbarrs hurling club listening is

> gone. Training days are now held in smaller group sessions and are a much more interactive encounter (Carroll 2005).

During my research I attended one of the in-service training days in music organised by the PCSP.[7] At the training day, the curriculum leaders outlined and discussed some of the changes in the new music curriculum. The leaders facilitated a number of interactive workshops based on the three main areas of the new music curriculum: Listening and Responding, Composing, and Performing. The workshop gave teachers the opportunity to participate in the curriculum strands using a practical 'hands on' approach. This interactive workshop was successful as it allowed teachers to experience music learning as their students. It might also provide them with the opportunity to engage in musical activities that they might use in a classroom setting.

The in-service days introduce teachers to the new areas of the curriculum in an interactive and engaging way. At all stages throughout the planning days there is an emphasis on the idea that 'music is for all teachers and all children'. The curriculum leaders encourage teachers to adapt the various aspects of the curriculum to their own classroom setting, always taking into consideration their own skills.

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[7] In-Service Training Day at The Marybourough Hotel, Cork, November 2005.

In-service days are beneficial to all who are involved in music in schools, as participation provides insight into the new curriculum, the nature and philosophy of music as part of that curriculum, and the various challenges that exist with regard to facilitating music in the primary level classroom. Attending in-service training provides awareness of the music curriculum and the methods of facilitation that are suitable throughout the various class levels within the primary school system.

Whole School Planning

Whole school planning is the second area of curricular implementation in the New Revised Curriculum. The school plan is usually a document or series of related documents that are drawn up by the principal and teaching staff. The school plan contains a statement of the educational philosophy of the school, its aims and how it proposes to achieve them. The whole school plan deals specifically with the curriculum of the school and how it is being adapted to the individual school and classroom contexts. It contains the school's policies on a range of areas such as curriculum, administration, organisation, management, professional support and development. It deals with the organisation of the school's resources including staff, space, facilities, time and finances.

While the curriculum is viewed as an important guide for the teaching of subjects at primary level, the whole school plan is the adaptation of the primary curriculum to the individual school setting. The whole school

plan provides a link between different class levels. It facilitates a spiral curriculum process, where curriculum material is developed and built on each year. Billy Lynch, principal at Scoil Choilmcille, outlines the importance of whole school planning.

> The school planning is very important; it establishes exactly what each class should be achieving in all areas of the curriculum. This is extremely important as, when they progress to the next teacher, the areas they have been working on previously can be built on. The class teacher can refer to the school plan to obtain the areas covered and then go back on those topics. They then can expand and expand on it. The idea is that they are building on the learning. What you do not want is them doing the same thing over and over again. So you must have some kind of a vision (Lynch 2005).

Whole school planning is an effective way to adapt the national curriculum to the local education environment. This empowers the teaching community from the ground up and locates the learning environment of a child firmly within an extended local community. Whole school plans that adapt the centrally devised curriculum are accepted as necessary to the successful administration of the curriculum. This adaptation is an interesting and important aspect of the primary education system. At school level, the particular character of the school is vital in shaping the curriculum's implementation in classrooms. Adaptation of the curriculum to suit the individual school is achieved

through the preparation and continuous updating of the whole school plan (NCCA 2006).

The system of whole school planning has a number of benefits for the development of music at primary level. The system allows the music curriculum to be adapted according to the resources and skills that are available in each school. It creates the opportunity for music activities to be integrated into the classrooms through the use of other subjects. It creates the situation where challenges in some areas can be overcome by sharing of resources, skills and ideas.

Summary

In this chapter I have highlighted some of the most significant developments in the history of music education in the Irish education system in the last few centuries. I have discussed some of the political and social changes that have occurred in Ireland and how these changes have impacted the education system and in particular the nature and content of music education within the system.

The above discussion reveals how music education has been influenced by various agencies within the education system. It highlights how music education was an important part of the curriculum in the religious order schools where the primary focus was on material that helped

promote the religious beliefs. This focus on music education in the Religious Order Schools is widely acknowledged as contributing to the promotion of music within the education system in Ireland. One of the most significant political and social changes in Ireland was the introduction of the Irish Free State in 1922. The promotion of nationalism throughout the education system became the primary focus. In the above discussion I highlight how music became widely used for the promotion of a nationalist ideology throughout the system.

I have also discussed how music education was influenced by the changing values in Irish society in the 1960s. During this period there was widespread interest in the education system and education was viewed as an important investment in the Irish economy. The role of music education within the system was expanded. A new music curriculum was introduced in 1971. The curriculum was based on child-centred principals influenced by European education movements.

The introduction of the new music curriculum in 1971 was a significant development in terms of music. It was clear from the onset, however, that it was an ambitious and challenging curriculum for teachers to implement. In response to teacher dissatisfaction, the Department of Education commissioned the Curriculum Development Unit to

commence a complete revision of the entire primary school curriculum. In 1999, a complete New Revised Primary Curriculum was launched.

The new system of curricular implementation found in in-service training and whole school planning is an important step in the development of music as a subject at primary level since 1999. In-service training in music provides teachers with the opportunity to learn about the changes in the new music curriculum and to participate in a number of workshops. With the growing number of professional musicians and music teachers who are involved in teaching music in primary schools, attendance at the two days of in-service training may increase the teachers understanding of the primary curriculum. Whole school planning is important as it allows the curriculum to be adapted to the skills, resources and needs of each individual classroom and school setting.

Recent studies in Irish education have noted the importance of a historical overview of the Irish education system and an examination of Irish society, politics and the economy in the development of that system (Cooholan 1982; Pine 1998; McCarthy 1998). The discourse surrounding the role of music in the education system has increasingly moved from a musicological perspective to one firmly located in concerns of access, provision and best practice in education (The Arts Council: 1976, 1979,

1984, 1985, 1986, 1989). The imposition of societal values on the education system, most clearly identified in the early years of the emergent nation state, is still pervasive today (McCarthy 1998). It is particularly evident in attempts within Irish society to adjust to increasing multiculturalism and an increasing poverty divide that challenges aspirations for an accessible education system. The New Revised Curriculum, introduced in 1999, has increased provisions for in-service training and professional development. The new curriculum has also facilitated the development of whole school planning by the school community in a process that empowers that community to a greater degree than has previously been the case. Members of the school community help shape the learning experiences of children, including their interaction with music.

In the following chapter I outline the fieldwork methodology employed in the ethnographic dimension of my research. I examine the various approaches used and the ethnomusicological methodologies that informed them.

Chapter 3

Locating the Classroom:

Fieldwork Methodology

Introduction

In recent years, I have been working in various capacities with music projects in primary level schools. Although I have spent time in schools, I had very little contextual knowledge about the classroom environment other than the work I was involved in. It was obvious to me that, if I really wanted to understand the role of music within primary level education, I needed to spend time in schools to learn about the classroom environment and the schooling process. I chose to carry out fieldwork in two primary level schools in the belief that the experience would enrich my understanding of the area and contribute to my research studies. The employment of an ethnographic mode of fieldwork creates opportunities for gathering information and learning about a specific environment. The methods used throughout the fieldwork were informed by concepts and methodologies that are central to the field of Ethnomusicology. In the following section I will discuss these concepts and methods and then continue by outlining the methodology used during the fieldwork.

Ethnographic Fieldwork

Ethnographic fieldwork has emerged as one of the central components of ethnomusicological study since the field was established in the late nineteenth century. Scholars have variously defined ethnographic field research as, 'the study of groups and people as they go about their everyday lives' (Emerson et al 1995), 'the observation and description of

culture' (Cooley 1997, 4) and as the 'observation of people in situ' (Myers 1992, 23). The term 'participant observation' is often used to characterise ethnographic fieldwork. Participant observation is a research process whereby a researcher aims to gain a close and intimate familiarity with individuals or groups of people within a particular setting through an intensive involvement with people in their environment.

Ethnographic field research can be divided into two distinct categories of activity (Emerson et al 1995). These two interconnected elements are the process of participant observation and the production of written accounts. The ethnographer conventionally begins the research by entering into a particular social setting and getting to know the people involved in it. The ethnographer participates in various aspects of daily life and develops ongoing relations with the people. Throughout the field research, the ethnographer creates written records of observations and experiences. These can be documented in a variety of forms such as fieldnotes, diary entries and interview transcriptions.

Ethnographic fieldwork allows the researcher to 'get close' to the subject of their research. This allows the ethnographer to experience firsthand the environment and to become deeply immersed in the social world of his or her chosen field. This opportunity to share experiences with people in their everyday environment is viewed by ethnomusicologists as

essential to the challenge of understanding human culture. This fieldwork approach 'reflects a bedrock assumption held historically by fieldworkers that "experience" underlies all understanding of social life' (Van Maanen 1988, 3).

Many of the studies undertaken by ethnomusicologists in the 1920s and 1930s focused on the documentation of unfamiliar musical cultures through data gathered from fieldwork (Myers 1992, 3). Scholars documented and wrote about the musical experiences within various cultures through information gathered from people within the field. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, ethnomusicological research was associated with the study of music from the non-western world. There were few studies which focused on aspects of western art music (Myers 1992, 7). Throughout the 1950s, some researchers began to study their own cultures.

Scholars from non-western nations also began to study their own native traditions of music. The growth in studies was first visible in the study of musics in urban areas of North America where a number of studies focused on blues, gospel, jazz, polka, country and rock musics. The fieldwork techniques originally associated with the study of non-western musical cultures were now being applied to the study of other cultures such as urban American cultures. During the 1970s and 1980s

researchers began to focus their research on urban and rural communities within their own culture. They began to write about the musical culture of cities, institutions and various education environments (Nettl 1978, 1995; Finnegan 1989; Kingsbury 1988; Campbell 1998).

While data collection and acquisition of knowledge are central to ethnographic fieldwork, there has been a growing effort to make the distinction between this process of fieldwork and the actual representation of this through ethnographic writing. Ethnography is viewed not only as a method of collecting data in the field but also as a means of representation. Referring to this, Van Maanen writes that, 'ethnography is the result of fieldwork, but it is the written report that must represent the culture, not the fieldwork itself' (1988, 7). The ethnographer aims to develop a deep understanding of a particular culture or group through direct experiences. After acquiring a certain amount of knowledge and understanding, the ethnographer then seeks to share this with others. Referring to this Van Maanen writes that, '[f]ieldwork asks the researcher, as far as possible, to share firsthand the environment, problems, background, language, rituals, and social relations of a more-or less bounded and specified group of people' (1988, 3).

Throughout the mid 1900s ethnomusicologists increasingly began to recognise the subjective nature of ethnographic fieldwork and they became more aware of finding ways to make this more visible to others. Cooley argues that 'by creating a reflexive image of ourselves as ethnographers and the nature of our "being-in-the-world," we believe we stand to achieve better intercultural understanding as we begin to recognize our own shadows among those we strive to understand' (1997, 4). Acknowledging this subjectivity and the idea of ethnographic work as a particular representation of a culture, Emerson talks about the central aim of ethnographic fieldwork, writing that, '[t]he task of the ethnographer is not to determine "the truth" but to reveal the multiple truths apparent in others' lives' (Emerson et al 1995, 3).

A number of studies of fieldwork have focused on the methods used to take notes in the field and the actual process of ethnographic writing (Emerson et al, 1995). Recent studies have highlighted the importance of ethnographic records that are written in the field. Spradley defines the ethnographic record as consisting of 'field notes, tape recordings, pictures, artefacts, and anything else which documents the cultural scene under study' (1979, x). Ethnography is essentially a 'description of a culture' (Spradley 1979, x) that is produced from ethnographic records collected within the field.

Fieldnotes are not only critical in determining what we know, but also illustrative of the process of how we come to know what we know. The inclusion of fieldnotes in ethnographies allows a dialogue to emerge between the experience and the writing (Emerson et al 1995). The idea that the narrative is created in the actual process of writing the ethnography is hinted at by Van Maanen when he writes that, 'the fieldworker must display culture in a narrative, a written report of the fieldwork experience in self-consciously selected words' (Van Maanen 1988, 4). Van Maanen, re-enforcing the idea that ethnographies are created outside the field.

> Ethnography as a written product, then, has a degree of independence (how culture is portrayed) from the fieldwork on which it is based (how culture is known). Writing an ethnography is office-work or deskwork not fieldwork (1988, 4).

Recent ethnographic studies in the field of ethnomusicology that have focused on the study of educational institutions have been particularly valuable to this thesis. Three studies in particular have informed both the concepts and methodological approaches used here: Henry Kingsbury's *Music, Talent, and Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System* (1988); Bruno Nettl's *Heartland Excursions* (1995) and Patricia Shehan Campbell's *Songs in their Heads – Music And Its Meaning in Children's Lives* (1998). These studies are examples of ethnomusicological works that explore

musical cultures within an educational context. All these books expand the knowledge of music in education as they all describe music in culture and musical communities. The value of the ethnographic method in the study of music education is acknowledged by Campbell.

> The occasional convergence of ethnomusicological and educational interests have enlightened and have begun to shape a more comprehensive understanding of children, music, and society at large (Campbell 1998).

In *Music, Talent, and Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System* (1988) Kingsbury provides an insight into music and music making in an American conservatory through the use of ethnographic writing based on his observations. Writing about the conservatory as a social system where students, educators and concepts all relate to each other, Kingsbury examines the ways in which music is produced, experienced and evaluated in an institution. Using a similar methodology, I observed teachers and students within their everyday practice and through this I gained an insight into the educational environment and how music is part of the school social system. Looking at the differences between teaching music and nurturing musicality, Kingsbury explores the concept of musical ability and in particular the western notion of 'talent'. Although this thesis does not focus particularly on the concept of talent, the concept emerged throughout the research as significant with

consequences for the development and provision of music education in schools.

In *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music* (Nettl 1995) Nettl, through his observations and reflections, provides an insightful ethnographic account of Midwestern university schools of music. Nettl observes the structures of these institutions and identifies some underlining codes, important values and guiding principals. Nettl focuses particularly on the transmission of western art music in these contexts. The management structures that form the social system of schools and classrooms are a significant factor in how music is provided for at primary level in Ireland. Like Nettl, my aim is to explore the structures that are in place in the Irish education system and to examine how these structures influence the way music is provided for as part of the primary level education system.

Campbell's *Songs in their Heads – Music And Its Meaning in Children's Lives* is one of the first detailed accounts of the role of music in children's lives. Although this work is primarily in the field of music education, Campbell has been heavily influenced by ethnomusicological methods. Her study explores aspects of the musical lives of children in an educational context. Campbell discusses the ways in which music is taught in schools and significant ways in which this could be enhanced. Using methods of

musical ethnography, Campbell engages as a participant observer in a number of elementary level schools. She presents written observations of children and how they use music as they play, and she comments and reflects upon these observations. Campbell reveals ideas about music she captured from informal conversations with children. Like Campbell, my ethnographic description of music in schools combines ethnographic accounts from my observations, reflections on what I observed, and quotations from teachers gathered from discussions and interviews.

The ethnographic methods used by Nettl, Kingsbury and Campbell have informed the methodological approach used in my fieldwork. In the following section I will discuss further the methodological approach used in this thesis and make some general comments on the fieldwork experience. I will also outline the aims of my fieldwork process.

Methodology

Although this research focuses on music at primary level in Ireland, it is important to consider that music is just one subject in a wide ranging curriculum. In order to understand how music is part of this curriculum it is important to learn about the entire schooling process, as this positions music within the total classroom experience. I decided the best way to do this was to enter the field and carry out ethnographic fieldwork. I carried out fieldwork in two primary level schools in the

Cork city area between November 2005 and February 2006. Through a combination of classroom observations and interviews with principals and teachers, I hoped to learn about primary level education and, in particular, the classroom environment. I wanted to understand how teaching is developed for the various subjects and, in particular, the relationship between the classroom teacher, the school and the wider community.

Throughout the four-month research period, I organised and carried out school meetings, classroom observations, formal interviews and informal discussions with principals and teachers. I documented the fieldwork by taking fieldnotes during classroom observation. I also recorded interviews with principals and teachers and transcribed them at a later stage. I spent two weeks visiting two boys' schools, observing classroom practice and talking to classroom teachers and principals about their work. I initially contacted schools by sending out letters containing information about my research and fieldwork plans and asked the principals if they were interested in facilitating my research.

I continued my ethnographic work by meeting the principals who replied to my request. A fieldwork schedule was planned during these meetings, which facilitated both the school schedule and my research. In most

cases, I asked the principal if it were possible to visit at least two classrooms for four full days over the two-week period.

I chose to carry out my fieldwork in Scoil Choilmcille and Togher Boys School because they were able to facilitate the length of visits I required. In addition, the principals of both schools suggested that there were a number of classroom teachers that would be very interested in contributing to my research study.

These initial meetings with the principals proved to be of immense value as they allowed me to discuss my fieldwork plans. More importantly, they created the opportunity for the principals to ask questions about my research. One of the principals advised me to send a letter with information about my fieldwork to all the teachers in his school. This proved to be valuable advice because it informed the staff about my presence in the school and it created the opportunity for teachers to discuss my research.

Because my ethnographic work brought me into direct contact with children, I was mindful of the relevant ethical considerations throughout the research. For this study I choose not to interview students directly. I choose, instead, to observe and write about children within their classroom environment. For this research study I decided that it was not

necessary to photograph or video record the classroom environment. I choose to conceal the identities of the children in the ethnography. I choose not to write about my visits to the resource classrooms as concealing the identity of the individual children would be difficult due to the fact that I planned to name the schools in the study.

The Fieldwork Experience

When I visited the classrooms I sat amongst the students, usually at the back of the classroom where I observed classroom practice and wrote notes in my notebook. This allowed me to be situated in a similar position to the students in the class and it was also the least obtrusive for the teacher and the students. I did not take part in classroom activities unless invited to do so. When I was invited to participate in some part of the class, in play activities or a fire drill, for example, I accepted. This was most common when I was visiting junior classes as there was more scope for interaction during activity time.

Class times varied slightly in each school but consisted of approximately two sessions of two and a half hours each, with breaks at around eleven am and twelve pm. During the breaks, I would visit the staff-room where I engaged in valuable informal conversations with teachers. By entering the teacher's space, in this way, I continued my focus on the teaching aspect of my ethnographic experience.

I also carried out formal interviews with the classroom teachers and the school principals. In most cases, the interviews were held at the end of my two-week visit. Due to the difficulty of conducting interviews during school time, the majority of the interviews were held directly after classes at the end of the school day. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were based on questions that had emerged for me during the classroom visits as well as ones that emerged during the interview itself. All interviews were recorded using a mini-disc recorder and were later transcribed.

During my fieldwork, I combined methods of classroom observation, informal conversations and formal interviews. By using the methods of participant observation in classrooms I was able to 'get close' to the classroom environment and to learn about how music worked in schools. It gave me the opportunity of experiencing what it is like inside classrooms and to share the experience of what it might be like as a student. While observing classroom practice I engaged in a process of writing fieldnotes. This gave me the opportunity to document aspects of what I was observing and allowed me to use the fieldnotes to develop some themes for discussion later in the interviews. The ethnographic method allows me to represent the information gathered through the writing. This was important as I wanted to share the experience of the

classroom and the discussions I had with teachers. Formal and informal discussions with people who work in schools created an opportunity to learn more about how music works within the classroom and school environment.

Throughout the field work my aim was to learn about the classroom environment and in particular how school days are structured. I was interested in trying to develop an understanding of both the formal curricular work and the informal extra curricular work that involves outside visiting teachers. I wanted to learn about the relationship between the curriculum and the teaching in classrooms and how music featured as part of this system. Although it is clear that all classrooms differ, the account in the next chapter reveals that there are many activities, events and challenges that are common to classrooms.

Although the fieldwork aspect of this study is based in two boys' schools, I believe that the findings are not undermined by this gender bias. I am confident that the insights into particular classroom environments presented here facilitate a broader discussion on the role of music within primary education. Furthermore, while I acknowledge that the insights gained from conversations with teachers are influenced by a number of factors, such as the background and experience of the teacher, the profile of the school, the location of the classroom environment and the level of

the class taught, I am confident that the viewpoints expressed by the teachers on the various themes in the study are representative.

The following chapter provides insight into some of the experiences I had in classrooms. I discuss a number of themes that emerged during the interviews with teachers. I begin the chapter by focusing on the management structures of primary Level schools in Ireland. Through my observations and discussions I learnt about the roles and responsibilities of the agents within a school community. I continue with a brief overview of the two schools I visited and the teachers with whom I visited.

Chapter 4

An Ethnography of Two Cork Primary Schools

Introduction

I begin this chapter by identifying the various agents involved in the management of primary level education in Ireland. I explore the roles and responsibilities of these agents who are part of the school community based on experiences I encountered through the fieldwork for this dissertation. I continue the chapter with an overview of the two schools that I visited as part of my fieldwork. I continue with an ethnographic account of two school days and a discussion of themes based on my classroom observations and conversations with teachers and principals.

Management of Schools

The majority of national schools in Ireland are State-aided parish schools. They were established under diocesan patronage and the State gave explicit recognition to their denominational character. All national schools comply with the rules and regulations set out by the Department of Education and Science. Up until 1975, each school was managed by a patron, often a member of the local clergy. As school manager, the patron was responsible for the appointment of board members, and the sanctioning of appointments within the school.

In 1975 the government introduced a board of management system for all primary schools in Ireland. Under this new system parents, teachers and local community members were given the opportunity to be part of the

management of schools through representation on the board. The introduction of this administrative structure is recognised as an important development in the management of schools. The Board of Management is involved in the administration of various aspects of school business. The board advises on areas such as school policies, the school ethos, and codes of behaviour and discipline. The board is responsible for recruiting school personnel, including principals and class teachers. The chairperson of the board acts as a liaison between the Board of Management, the school principal and the Department of Education and Science. The Board of Management system increases the connections between school and community and encourages a proactive role for the development of a learning environment and the implementation of the curriculum. In this next section I discuss the role and responsibilities of principals and teachers who are part of the school community.

All schools have a principal and some schools have a vice-principal. All principals begin their career as classroom teachers. They must teach for at least five years before they can apply for the position of principal. Many principals engage in further training in areas relating to education management and leadership before they take up their post. In some cases the principal will continue to teach even after taking up the senior post.

Jack Durkan, principal of Togher Boys' school, identifies three core duties of the primary school principal: leadership, management, and administration.

> Administration is what I spend 85-90 percent of my day doing, which is the routine, not mundane, but generally paperwork. Management is organising what's going on in the school, organising resources, keeping the place running, getting the money to keep the place running and that sort of thing and leadership is another important area (Durkan 2005).

Principals have overall responsibility for everybody in the school. They are responsible for managing the learning experiences of both teachers and pupils and for overseeing curricular implementation at classroom and whole school level. They are required to keep up to date with any new developments in curricular areas and to bring these to the attention of the teaching staff. They spend much of their time liaising with various groups that are affiliated to the school including the Board of Management, the Parents' Council, and local community groups. Billy Lynch, principal of Blarney Street CBS, highlights the important role that principals play in communicating with both the internal and external groups linked to the school.

> The most important thing about principalship is that you are working with so many people: children, parents, teachers,

> other staff and the wider community. Principals have an important role to play in communicating with all of the various groups (Lynch 2005).

The recognition of the principal as a bridge between the various agents within the extended school community underlines the importance of the role. Principals also facilitate teaching within the school, and play an important role in shaping the ethos and character of a school.

> The values of the leader ultimately become the values of the school. Therefore, what is important to me good, bad or ugly, spoken or unspoken permeates throughout (Durkan 2005).

Other agents in the school community also have a role in shaping the learning environment. From the perspective of a child, the classroom teacher is probably the most prominent individual in the school. Teachers are at the heart of the education system in Ireland. Broadly speaking, teachers are responsible for the learning opportunities they create for their students.

Teachers are also seen as leaders. Their focus is to manage the learning experiences in the classroom. Teachers develop class plans to help organise the learning experience and to structure the school day. Teachers are listeners, demonstrators, facilitators, and administrators. They play an important role in facilitating an active learning

environment. According to Brian Tubbert, Head of Education at Frobel College of Education, Dublin, teachers 'guide the children to learn how to learn, to question, to discuss among themselves, to discover, to explore, to observe, to test, to record, to display, to present, to make decisions, to take responsibility' (Tubbert 2005, 205).

Teachers also have duties outside of their own class. They may be responsible for areas such as sport, computers, music, school administration, the organisation of school events such as shows, concerts, and school tours. Teachers have a responsibility to keep up to date with curricular revisions and developments in subject areas.

In addition to classroom teachers, many schools employ 'resource' or 'special needs' teachers who work outside of the main classrooms with smaller groups of children. Resource teachers, or special needs teachers, usually occupy a small office space within a school. Resource teachers act as a support for classroom teachers. They work with children who require individual attention in a particular area. The resource teacher assesses a child needs and then sets specific learning goals for the child. As well as providing direct teaching to the pupil, the resource teacher provide advice to class teachers and parents on appropriate teaching and learning strategies for the children.

Since the introduction of the new revised curriculum in 1999, there appears to have been a shift in the role of the teacher. According to Tubbert, teachers were traditionally viewed as the 'font of all knowledge' (2005, 205). Their main role was to transmit a certain body of knowledge to the children in the classroom. This was mostly achieved through a didactic approach - the teacher would stand at the top of the class and transmit the information to the children who would generally be sitting down. Today, the teacher is seen as a 'guide and facilitator', as a 'director' of the childrens learning' (Tubbert 2005, 205). There is now more scope for teachers to select the methodologies and approaches to suit the learning needs of the children.

In addition to the principal and the classroom teachers the school community may also include regular visitors, secretaries, classroom assistants, home school liaison officers, the school Chaplin, sports coaches and school nurses. Some of these visitors facilitate learning in particular subject areas. They contribute to the overall learning community by sharing their special interest knowledge and skills with the classroom teacher and the students. In many cases, the classroom teacher works in collaboration with the visiting teacher. This is important as it allows greater continuity for the students in their learning experience.

Students are the heart of the school. The entire educational structure is designed around them. They, too, have many responsibilities: they are required to attend school regularly and punctually, to cooperate fully with everyone, to comply with the rules of the school and adhere to the dress code. They each have a responsibility to manage their own learning experiences through good attendance, active participation in class and homework. Although students do not make any obvious decisions on how the classroom day is structured, they do impact that structure as they engage in learning throughout the school day. Students also bring a large amount of knowledge, experience and interests into the classroom. These experiences and individual interests shape the learning within the classroom and contribute to the nature and content of the classroom learning environment.

The principals and classroom teacher determine the nature of music activity in the classroom and at whole school level. While the curriculum aims to provide an opportunity for every child to participate in music in the classroom, the nature of that participation can vary quite significantly. The availability of resources and professional training for teachers impacts on the way music is provided for within schools.

In the above section I have discussed the main agents involved in the school community and their various roles and responsibilities. Although

the classroom teacher is the main person responsible for teaching the class, many schools employ other teachers who work with small groups of children or with entire classes on specific subject areas or skills. The involvement of other agents in the learning environment creates the opportunity for students to learn from other people. It also requires principals and classroom teachers to have a flexible approach to school and classroom organisation.

The Schools

I carried out my fieldwork in Togher Boys School and Scoil Choilmcille, both of which are located in Cork city. They are both Catholic primary schools and they operate under the patronage of the Diocese of Cork. Scoil Cholmcille is under the Trusteeship of the Christian Brothers. The schools are managed by Boards of Management and funded by the Department of Education and Science. In the ethnographic account which follows I give an overview of the two schools and I discuss my first visit to each school. I provide insight into the structure of a school day by giving an overview of my first day in each school. I then continue with a discussion of a number of themes which emerged through the classroom observations and the discussions with the teachers and principals.

Togher Boys School

Togher Boys School is situated approximately four miles from Cork city centre. It has over three hundred students in attendance. While the majority of students are originally from the local area, there are approximately sixty non-national students representing over twenty five countries of origin attending the school. The school has a staff of twenty teachers, a principal, vice principal, three secretaries, and a caretaker. The local girls school (Togher Girls School) is adjacent to Togher Boys school.

The first national school in Togher opened in 1850. It was leased from a local businessperson, William Bateman, and was known as the 'cottage school'. It was managed by a local priest, Reverent Barry. In 1891, a new school was built to cater for the growing numbers of children in the area. In an effort to deal with the increased numbers of students, a separate girls school was opened in the 1960s and a new boys school was built in the 1970s (O'Keeffe 2003, 199-224). Togher Boys School and Togher Girls School have occupied these buildings since.

In Togher Boys School I liaised with the principal Jack Durkan. I interviewed Joe Carroll, Rachel Kelly, Sue Buckley and Richard Pardy. I spent the first day of my fieldwork with Joe Carroll, a class teacher at Togher Boys School. Joe has been teaching at Togher Boys for over

twenty years. He usually teaches fourth class but on this occasion, and for this year, he was the sixth class teacher. I planned to spend a week with him.

The Togher Boys School Yard

Monday, November 20th 2005

As I left my house on the first morning to drive to Togher Boys School, I wondered what my first visit was going to be like. It was approximately 8.15am. The morning was cold but dry. The school was approximately six miles away from where I was living and it took me about twenty minutes to get there. As I pulled into a parking space in front of the school, I noticed that the car park was a shared space for both the school and the local church. As I got out of my car, I could see children running, skipping and jumping inside the fenced schoolyard. Others were walking towards the yard and some were getting out of cars in the car park. The older children appeared to walk to school in small groups while the younger children were accompanied by a parent. As I passed through the school gate I saw the principal inside the schoolyard greeting both parents and children. Continuing to walk into the schoolyard, I heard lots of chatting. The children were lining up in rows in one area of the yard and I figured they were probably gathering into their class groups. They all appeared to be wearing the same clothes: dark grey pants, light grey jumpers, black jackets and black shoes. Some boys had hats on. There was a bustling, energetic feeling coming from the children in the school yard before the day commenced. Children were chatting to

each other, waving good-bye to parents, and parents were chatting briefly to each other as they rushed away.

As the school bell rang, a group of teachers came from the school building into the schoolyard. They collected their class groups from where they were standing and accompanied them inside the school to their classrooms. I later learned that it was school policy for the children not to enter the building without the classroom teacher, unless it was raining heavily. Arriving at Mr Carroll's classroom, I saw the children hanging up their jackets and sweaters in the cloakroom that was directly outside the room. Mr Carroll greeted me as I went into the classroom and brought me to a seat at the back of the room. The children entered the classroom bustling with energy. They all sorted out their belongings, placing their lunch boxes and drinks in one area of the room, their books under the desks and their pencil cases on top of the desk area. Some of the pupils approached the teacher with notes from parents explaining absence. When I sat down at the back of the class, some of the boys sitting close to me started asking me questions.

Boys: *Are you a substitute or something?*

Michelle: *No, I'm just here as part of my college work to learn about teaching and the things that happen in the classroom.*

Boys: *Are you a teacher?*

Michelle: *No, I'm learning to be one though.*

Boy: *Why would you want to be a teacher? Will you be a teacher like Mr Carroll?*

As this was my first visit to this classroom, the questioning of my role and presence was intense. I continued to explain that I was learning about teaching and that I wanted to be a music teacher.

Boy: Are you just going to be able to teach music? That would be boring. What about all the other things that happen?

I quickly learned from this boy that music played just one part of the many subjects and activities that were part of his school day. Although, on the first day, there were lots of boys turning around to look at me, by the second day, they didn't seem to notice me as much.

Mr Carroll began the school day by asking the boys some questions

Mr Carroll: Oh boys, does any one know what Google Earth is?

A few hands rose. One boy answered:

Boy: It has satellite images of earth.

Mr Carroll: Yes, that's correct. Why is it useful?

Mr Carroll looked at another boy who had his hand up.

Boy: You can zoom in anywhere in the world and see it from your computer.

Mr Carroll: Yes that's right, it's particularly useful for locating and discovering particular areas throughout the world.

Mr Carroll continued by telling the class that he had been hill walking the previous day.

Mr Carroll: *I spent yesterday hill-walking, boys. I climbed the Galtee Mountains. It was a beautiful day. Do you all know where the Galtee Mountains are situated?*

Lot's of hands went up, with a few faintly whispering "Sir, Sir". One of the boys that was sitting close to me answered.

Boy: *They are in County Tipperary, Sir.*

Mr Carroll: *That's right. They are about 900 metres high, the second tallest mountains in Ireland. Does any boy know what is the highest?*

A few boys shouted 'Carrauntoohil'.

Mr Carroll: *Yes, that's correct. Carrauntoohil is about 1,039 metres high. The range is called the Macgillicuddy Reeks.*

9.30am

Mr Carroll asked the boys to take out their Irish language copies and the morning continued with an Irish language lesson. During the lesson, a knock came to the door. A boy who was sitting at the top of the room opened the door [I later learned that this was his class job]. A lady walked in and started talking to Mr Carroll. After a few minutes, Mr Carroll asked the class if the rest of the boys had brought in their cards for the school nurse. A few boys in the back two rows got their cards from their bags and brought them to the school nurse. The nurse then called five boys names from a sheet she had on a clipboard. The boys stood up, placed their chairs under their desks, and followed the nurse outside of the room. Shortly afterwards Mr Carroll continued teaching the boys Irish. A variety of teaching methods and resources were used throughout the lesson. Posters that were situated on one of the class walls were used for part of the

lesson as they contained some language rules. Worksheets were also handed out for the students to read. Every five minutes, the school nurse would return with one group of boys and call out another group. While the boys were doing some writing in their copies, Mr Carroll called out the school roll. All of the boys names were called out in Irish; they each responded when their name was called saying 'anseo'. Two boys appeared to be absent, when their names were called, a chorus of voices shouted 'as láthair'.

At ten thirty, a man arrived into the classroom with a trolley carrying sandwiches and drinks. Without any conversation the man placed the sandwiches and drinks on trays that were on a table at the top of the classroom. The boys continued in silence with their Irish worksheet. Mr Carroll said thanks to the man as he left. I later learned that this man was the school caretaker and that the school was involved in a new 'healthy eating' campaign. One boy raised his hand and when Mr Carroll called his name, he said,

Boy: *Sir, I'm finished my Irish*

Mr Carroll: *Ok, well done, you can take out your Maths copy now. Any other boy who is finished their Irish worksheet can take out their Maths homework and continue on from where you finished last night.*

10.45am

At about ten forty five, Mr Carroll asked the boys to finish their work and told them to collect their sandwiches and drinks, one row at a time. The boys

collected their drinks and sandwiches and returned to their seats. They all chattered to each other as they were eating and drinking. The school bell rang at 11am. The boys quickly finished eating and placed their rubbish in the bin and went outside to the schoolyard. Each class had a designated area to play in. The juniors were at one side of the building and the senior classes gathered at the other side close to the playing pitches. During the break, some teachers on 'yard duty' went outside to the yard to supervise the children. Most of the other teachers went to staff room to have some tea or coffee. After spending a few minutes walking outside I went back inside the building to the staff room.

The staff room was a very busy place. It had a lively atmosphere with a lot of conversations going on between teachers. The seats were placed around the outside of the room. They were all facing towards each other. This created ample opportunity for interaction and chatting amongst staff. As well as having some facilities for eating and drink, the room functioned as a central resource centre for the teaching staff. It contained many notice boards on each wall with details of courses, schemes, projects, and so on. It also had a specific white board that contained important information about schools events that were happening that week. Underneath the white board, there was a large-scale school calendar, which marked events such as school holidays and annual outings. After what seemed like just a few minutes, the school bell rang once again. All the teachers quickly left the room and went out to the schoolyard to collect their class. I returned to Mr Carroll's room. It was located very close to the staff room. The

boys returned to the classroom with Mr Carroll and very soon they were working on their Maths work again.

At twelve o clock, Mr Carroll and the boys all stood up and began to say the Angelus prayer together. When they were finished they automatically sat down and took out their religious education books. Mr Carroll told them to continue with their map quiz on page twenty five. I glanced over at some of the boys books. I could see that the page they were working on had a crossword quiz with questions on countries and religions. The boys filled out their crossword while chatting to each other. After a few minutes, Mr Carroll came to the back of the room with a group of papers in his hand. He showed me some of the papers, explaining that the boys had being working on mock entrance papers over the past few weeks. The exams are part of the entrance test for secondary schools in Cork and are important as they determine if the student can attend the chosen schools. As I looked through the exam paper, I noticed that it was mainly English comprehension questions and mathematic problems.

Mr Carroll asked the boys to complete the exercise they were working on and tidy away their books. He told the boys that it was time to practice some of their recorder tunes for the concert. They were also required to learn a new piece, Amhrán na bhFiann, which was to be performed at the concert. The boys quickly finished their work and cleared their desks. Mr Carroll lifted the music box, containing recorders and music folders, from one corner of the room. Two boys helped distribute the recorders and folders to the class. There were white stickers

labelled with each boys name on the folders and recorders. Mr Carroll plugged in his keyboard at the top of the room and he told the boys that they would play together some of the tunes that they had been practicing last week starting with the warm up tunes. The boys opened their folders on the first page. Mr Carroll counted them in and they began to play. I recognised that the tune was 'Hot Cross Buns'.

As I glanced around the room I could see that most of the boys were playing the tune without the notes. As they got to the end phrase, Mr Carroll told them to play it again. When they finished the second time, he asked them all to blow the note f. All the boys started to blow the notes quickly and repeatedly. Mr Carroll left his keyboard and moved closer to the rows of tables. He told them to stop blowing and then he explained that he wanted all the boys to blow the note f, for four beats. This appeared to settle the class.

For the next part of the music lesson the class began to learn Amhrán na bhFiann, the national anthem. Mr Carroll took out his recorder and he played the first phrase. The boys then repeated the phrase as a group. Mr Carroll then asked the boys to play the phrase individually, commenting on each student in turn. Speaking to the whole group, Mr Carroll gave the boys tips on how to get a clearer sound from their instrument. Mr Carroll proceeded to teach each of the following phrases in turn until the completion of the tune.

After working on the phrases of Amhrán na bhFiann for a few minutes the group played the complete tune with keyboard accompaniment by Mr Carroll. Mr Carroll then asked the boys what tunes they would like to play to end the class. A couple of the boys requested the 'Jazz pieces'. Mr Carroll agreed and he went to his drawer at his desk and he took out a CD. There was an introduction on piano, drums and guitar and after a sixteen bar introduction the boys joined in. The pieces were entitled 'Ten Toe Tapper' and 'Howdy Doody'. As the boys were playing the jazz pieces alongside the backing track, Mr Carroll walked around the room and he was able to help some of the boys keep in time.

The school bell rang and it was lunch time. Lunch was from twelve thirty to one o'clock; once again, the children went to their designated areas in the schoolyard to play. Some of the boys from the senior classes went to the pitch to play soccer, while others remained in the schoolyard, playing and chatting in small groups.

At one o clock, the school bell rang and I returned to Mr Carroll's classroom. Mr Carroll and the boys arrived shortly afterwards. The boys spent a few minutes sorting out their belongings before they all sat down again. During this time, Mr Carroll wrote homework information on the black board. When he was finished writing, he asked the boys to write it in their notebook. He continued by telling them to read a particular section in their history book after they had completed their writing. The room became much quieter as the boys began their assigned work.

Shortly after lunchtime, Mr Pardy, a resource teacher whom I had met earlier in the staffroom, visited the classroom. Mr Pardy teaches mathematics to a number of boys in the class and he called in to the classroom to write the Maths homework for the boys on the blackboard. After Mr Pardy left, Mr Carroll continued by asking the class some questions relating to what they were reading. At approximately one thirty, Ms Buckley, who usually teaches senior infants, arrived into the classroom. Mr Carroll had to leave to go to a meeting and Ms Buckley came to teach the class. As Mr Carroll left the room, he told the boys to be on their best behaviour and that Ms Buckley would be supervising them while they were doing their art and music work.

Ms Buckley put on a CD for the boys and asked them to take out their artwork copies and to continue drawing their Beethoven story. The CD contained a spoken narrative of Beethoven's life story accompanied by his music. As the boys listened to it, they drew pictures in their copies. I could see from the boys who were sitting close to me that they had started some drawings in previous lessons. They were drawing pictures of a concert hall, a piano, musicians, and Mr Beethoven himself as a conductor. The pictures related the visual and sonic aspects of their experience as an example of cross-curricular learning.

As the CD was playing in the background, Ms Buckley asked questions of the students concerning the sounds they were hearing. She specifically asked them questions relating to the instruments that were featured. The boys displayed a

knowledge of the instruments and an ability to verbally communicate that knowledge with the teacher.

Mr Carroll returned just a few minutes before the class was over. He told the boys to get organised as it was nearly time to go home. The boys started packing their bags, putting on their coats and hoodies, and cleaning the area around their desk. Two boys closed the windows. Mr Carroll and the boys said an evening prayer together and shortly afterwards the school bell rang and the boys started to leave the classroom. I gathered my bag and coat and I walked to the yard with Mr Carroll. As I walked towards my car I could see that many of the boys were being collected by their parents outside, while some of them walked home in small groups.

My experience of music in Mr Carroll's classroom reveals the use of music in two contexts. Firstly, in cross-curricular linkage, it is used as an aid in the teaching of other subjects. Secondly, in an instrumental class, it is used to develop instrumental and performance skills. The music lessons were facilitated by the resources available in the classroom including music folders, instruments, CD and related equipment. Different genres of music were explored, including Jazz, Irish and Classical music. Later in this chapter I will discuss further the use of music in the classrooms. I will now give an ethnographic account of my first visit in Scoil Choilmcille.

Scoil Choilmcille

Scoil Cholmcille is an all boys' school, situated on the northside of Cork city, overlooking the river Lee. It has over one hundred and twenty students, a staff of ten teachers, a principal, a vice-principal, one secretary, and a caretaker. The school was built over one hundred and fifty years ago. Shortly after the great famine, the Christian Brothers founded the school for the education of young boys. Rev. Daniel Foley (a local priest) and Mr James Hegarty (a local businessman) invited the order to run the school. Soon after it opened, the school had over 300 pupils attending. The school was a branch establishment of the North Monastery until 1927. In that year, the Christian Brothers purchased the school property from James Hegarty and it became a separate school. The school was originally built on what is now the upper yard. Over the years there have been many renovations carried out on the old school. By the late fifties, it was felt that a new school was needed, and in June 1963 the Department of Education gave sanction for a new ten-room school (Lynch, 2005). In Scoil Cholmcille I liased with the principal Billy Lynch. The teachers I interviewed there were Michael Casey, Noreen Guiney and John Burke. My first classroom visit was to Ms Guiney's classroom. Ms Guiney teaches senior infants.

Scoil Choilmcille

Wednesday, December 10th 2005, 8.45am

As I arrived at Scoil Choilmcille to begin my first week of fieldwork, I was immediately greeted in the school yard by the school principal, Mr Lynch. Mr Lynch welcomed me and immediately brought me inside the school and walked with me downstairs to Ms Guiney's classroom. He explained that Ms Guiney was teaching senior infants and that I could spend the first couple of days with her. Ms Guiney greeted me and welcomed me inside her classroom. She immediately introduced me to her class and she explained to the students that I was going to be visiting them. Ms Guiney then told me that I could sit at the back of the room beside the table with the three boys. As I was walking to the back of the room Ms Guiney outlined the morning activities to the class. Ms Guiney then visited each table, where she assigned a specific group activity to each group of students.

As I sat down to my table I quickly learned from one boy that I was now part of the red table.

Boy: *You are with us and you're red*

Michelle: *Okay, I will remember that so*

Boy: *Yes, because someone is missing today, that's his seat and we are the reds*

Michelle: *Okay, we are the reds so*

Boy: *They are the greens over there*

He pointed to another square table with four boys at the back of the room

Boy: *And the blues and yellow are at the top of the room.*

Ms Guiney: *Okay boys, the red table, you are going to start with jig-saws first and you can ask Ms Finnerty to help you if some bits are really hard*

Boys: *Yes, Ms Guiney*

And so, I began my fieldwork at Scoil Choilmcille as part of the reds, with some jig-saw work. I noticed that the room was really colourful. There were many paintings and posters on the wall. One of the posters hanging on the wall closest to me was of tiny handprints. I assumed the prints were these of the boys in the class. After observing all the paintings around the room, I glanced at the other tables to see what the boys were doing. I noticed that there was some classical music being played very low in the background. I hadn't noticed Ms Guiney switch this on but I could tell that it was coming from the CD player located on her desk at the top of the room. The boys at the yellow table at the opposite corner of the room were painting. They were all wearing large old grandfather shirts over their uniforms. The boys at the top table, on the right hand side of the room, the closest to Ms Guiney's desk, appeared to be looking through magazines and cutting out pictures. At the table closest to us, the boys were making various shapes out of dough known as 'mala'. After what just seemed like a few minutes, Ms Guiney announced that it was time to change activity. All tables swapped so each colour table had the opportunity to engage in each activity. During this time, Ms Guiney visited each table, helping the boys and chatting to them and answering their questions. After each table had hosted all of the activities, Ms Guiney told the boys to start to tidy away all the materials they were using.

Later in the morning, Ms Guiney asked the boys to bring their chairs up to the top of the room for 'circle time'. Ms Guiney requested the boys to come up in pairs to form the circle. It took a while to fix the circle and to get everyone organised.

Ms Guiney: *And so boys, is everybody ready?*

Boys: *Yes, Ms Guiney*

Ms Guiney: *I want you to look and listen carefully to my questions*

Ms Guiney held up a chart titled Days of the Week.

Ms Guiney: *Can any boy tell me what day it is today?*

Almost all the hands in the circle went up. Ms Guiney looked at one boy that was sitting directly opposite her in the circle

Ms Guiney: *Cian can you tell us?*

Cian: *Monday*

Ms Guiney: *Well done Cian. Can everyone say together what day today is?*

Boys: *Today is Monday*

Ms Guiney: *Excellent, what boys know what day it was yesterday?*

Only a few hands went up this time and some of them were only half up. It shows that these boys were only half sure what the correct answer was. Ms Guiney looked at one of the boys beside her who had his hand up high.

Ms Guiney: *Dylan can you tell us what day yesterday was?*

Dylan: *Yes, Ms, Yesterday was Sunday and I know cause I went to the park and I always go there on Sundays with my dad*

A number of boys put up their hand and started calling the teacher, "Ms, Ms, Ms".

Ms Guiney: *Yes boys?*

Ms Guiney looked at one of them

Boy: *I go to matches on Sunday with my dad, cause my brother plays*

Ms Guiney: *O, that's great, so we all do diffent things on Sundays because it's our day off. And now I have one more question boys, does any body know what day it is tomorrow?*

Just one hand went up this time. Ms Guiney nodded at the boy and the boy responded

Boy: *mmm is it Wednesday Miss?*

Ms Guiney: *It's not Wednesday but you are close. Can you remember the song boys that helps us*

Boys: *Yes Ms, It's Barney*

Ms Guiney: *Let's sing it so boys, so we can try and find out what day it is tomorrow. Let's start after three. One, Two, Three.*

The boys began to sing the song, They're seven days, they're seven days, and they're seven days in the week Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. The melody was the popular song 'My darling Clementine.'

Ms Guiney: *Ok, well done Boys, Ms Finnerty aren't they great at singing?*

Michelle: *Yes, Boys, well done. That was great.*

Ms Guiney: *So, can anyone tell me now what day is tomorrow, if today is Monday? Tomorrow is…?*

Lots of boys put their hands up and Ms Guiney asked one of them to answer

Boy: *Tomorrow is Tuesday*

Ms Guiney: *Yes, that's correct*

Ms Guiney: *So does any boy have any news after the weekend? What kinds of things did you do?*

Boy: *I watched a Man United match*

Ms Guiney: *O, that's good. Did they win? Where did they play the match?*

Boy: *No Ms, they lost. I don't know where it was on, maybe England?*

Boy: *Ms I went to Ballincollig with my Mam. We went shopping*

Boy: *I went with my Dad on Sunday to bowling. It wasn't like the real bowling. It was on the road, and there were no cars allowed.*

Boy: *Yes! My Dad does that bowling as well*

Boy: *My mam went to New York shopping and she won't be back for seven sleeps.*

Ms Guiney: *Ok, that's a lot of news this morning boys. Let's go to the computer now and see what news we can remember to type up and put in our 'news folder'.*

All the boys got up from the circle and followed Ms Guiney down to the computer. Ms Guiney sat at the main chair and opened up the Word Application. As she was waiting she asked the boys.

Ms Guiney: *What will I write first boys?*

A few boys responded quickly,

Boys: *Today is Monday*

Ms Guiney started typing, as she got to the end of the line, another boy said

Boy: *The weather is dry and sunny*

Ms Guiney: *Good Cian, [as she continued to type]*

Boy: *Cian's Mam is gone to New York*

Ms Guiney: *Ok, I'll write that and then we can print it out. Which one of the boys wants to change the size and print it out today?*

A few boys, said 'me, me, Miss can I?' Ms Guiney said that Cian could do it because he hadn't got a turn yet. Cian sat down and he made the writing bigger and then he clicked print. As the page was printing, Ms Guiney told all the boys to slowly walk back to their seats and take their lunches as it was nearly break time. I noticed that all the movements and tasks in the room were always done in an orderly fashion, table by table. As the boys got ready to leave the room for their lunch break, they all collected their jackets from outside in their groups. They returned to the classroom with their jackets and they all lined up automatically in order or in their table colours. It was obvious that they were used to doing this. Ms Guiney checked that all their jackets were zipped up and then she walked them out the corridor. Then she brought them outside to their section of the yard. When Ms Guiney returned to the classroom we both went upstairs to the staff room. As in Togher Boys School, the staff room here was a very busy place. It had a big table that was centred in the room and the chairs were all gathered around the table. There was a mini kitchen area located on one side of the room and there were lots of books and resources on the other. The room appeared to be a central resource area for the teachers. There was a year planner on the wall and a white board with information. The white board had details of soccer training, a hurling match and it also had a line which stated,

'Ms Finnerty from UCC will be visiting us this week'. During the break, I chatted to Ms Guiney and to the other teachers. The school is located close to the Department of Music at University College Cork so many of the teachers were asking me about the types of activities that happen in the department.

When the school bell rang, I returned directly to Ms Guiney's room. Ms Guiney and the boys returned a few minutes after. Ms Guiney had collected them from the school yard to accompany them to the classroom. I later learnt from her that this was school policy. The boys entered the classroom randomly as some were slower than others to zip down their jackets. When they all arrived back into the classroom, Ms Guiney closed the door. She asked the boys who were responsible for giving out the copies to do so and for the class to get ready for their writing.

> *Ms Guiney:* *Boys, can you all open your writing copies now please on the correct page? Today we are going to finish writing 'oscar orange' so open that page. We will then start to write 'munching mags'.*

The boys all started to write in their writing copy. I noticed that they were all using pencils to practice their writing. I could see that they were practicing the letter O and M. They didn't actually use the letter names at all. Instead, they referred to them as characters. The boys continued to work on each letter. Ms Guiney reminded them to be careful about writing on the line each time. As the boys were busy practicing their writing skills, Ms Guiney took out the attendance books and started to fill out the attendance. She called the names out

in Irish, the boys responded with 'anseo'. A faint knock came to the door as Ms Guiney was filling out the attendance. Ms Guiney looked at one of the boys who was close to the door and he said 'yes Ms, I'll get the door' (I later learnt from Ms Guiney that this was his class job). There were two boys at the door, and as they entered they walked over to Ms Guiney's desk. One of them had a medal. He showed it to Ms Guiney. Ms Guiney congratulated him and asked him what he had won it for. He explained that he had won it at a karate competition. Ms Guiney held up the medal to the boys so they could all see it. She continued to ask him some more details about the event. Ms Guiney then told the class to give him a 'round of applause'. The two boys left quickly after the applause. Ms Guiney encouraged the boys to continue with their work. After she finished filling out the attendance, she told two boys that the roll books were ready to be brought up to Mr Casey. Two boys that were sitting at my table immediately recognised that this was their responsibility and they collected the books from Ms Guiney and they left the room. The boys returned after a few minutes. Ms Guiney started reading from a book. I wasn't sure of what the book was but I soon got to know the characters in it. After reading for a few minutes, Ms Guiney then asked the boys some questions about the story. During the question time, a man walked in without knocking. He appeared to have trays with sandwiches and drinks. I immediately recognised that this was similar to Togher Boys school. I later learnt that Scoil Choilmcille were also involved in the 'Healthy Eating Campaign'. After the man left the trays down on a small table that was located to the side of the room, Ms Guiney told the boys to put their books away because it was nearly lunch time. The boys started to clear their

desks and to put their copies and books into their bags. I noticed that they were doing this very efficiently. After a few minutes I realised that there was a competition to see which table would be the quickest at getting organised for lunch. Before the boys collected their food and drinks, they all said a prayer together with Ms Guiney. The boys once again collected their food and drinks after Ms Guiney had called out their table colour.

During lunch Ms Guiney told me that it was her day to do P.E, so we were going straight to the hall after lunch. She explained that the hall was better to use during the winter months as she didn't want the boys to get sick. During lunchtime I got the opportunity to ask Ms Guiney about some of the things that had happened that day. She clarified some of the jobs and responsibilities that some students had and she also explained about the importance of having everything organised in groups in the room primarily for safely reasons but also to facilitate classroom planning.

Ms Guiney collected the boys from the yard and she went directly to the hall. There was a side entrance to the hall next to the school building. This was the side I entered. The hall was large; it had a stage on one side of it with lots of chairs and benches on the stage area. The floor space was all clear. As I walked inside the hall I saw all the boys gathered around Ms Guiney in a circle. Ms Guiney immediately started a 'watch, listen and respond' game. The boys had to repeat everything Ms Guiney was doing. Ms Guiney combined a number of moves such as rubbing her hands together, clapping her hands and jogging on

the spot. The boys all followed her. Ms Guiney took out a referee whistle from her jacket pocket and she told the boys to start walking around the outer area of the hall, when she blew the whistle once they had to walk and twice they had to jog. The boys seemed to be familiar with these signals as Ms Guiney didn't need to explain to them. The boys walked around the hall in the same direction and they listened carefully to the whistle signals as Ms Guiney combined some walking and jogging. After a short while, the boys started to indicate that they were tired, so Ms Guiney blew the whistle three times and the boys all ran to form a circle in the centre of the room again. Ms Guiney then divided the group in two and she got an indoor soccer ball that was in a box on the stage at the top of the room. The two groups of boys decided who would be their goalie and then Ms Guiney threw the ball in the middle of the hall to start the soccer game. Ms Guiney and I talked during the soccer game. She explained how the boys loved P.E and in particular playing soccer. Ms Guiney mentioned how all the boys wanted to learn hurling soon. They were still a little young, but they were looking forward to starting it when they became 'big boys'. Our conversation was interrupted by a number of boys who were calling Ms Guiney telling them that it was a foul. Ms Guiney said that she didn't see it so she would have to throw it in. The boys seemed happy with that decision and they continued to play after the ball was thrown in. A few minutes later Ms Guiney blew the whistle three times and the boys all gathered and formed a straight line. They all seemed to know that they were leaving the hall. After everyone was in line Ms Guiney opened the hall door and held it while all the boys passed through. The boys then walked to the door outside of the main school. They waited until Ms

Guiney opened the main school door and the classroom door which was just inside it. Then, with her permission, they all walked back into the classroom. Ms Guiney told them to leave their jackets on because it was nearly home time. She asked the boys to make sure they had everything in their bags and that their desks were tidy. The boys seemed to just have a few things to put away. They then all started to place their chair on top of the table. Ms Guiney watched and after they were all ready she reminded them that they had to bring their letters in the following day signed by their parents to allow them to go swimming. Ms Guiney then said an evening prayer with them and once again the boys were escorted in their line to the school yard where Ms Guiney waited with them until each boy was collected. I chatted with Ms Guiney until all the boys had gone home and I then walked to the car park and returned home.

My experience of music in Ms Guiney's classroom reveals the use of music as a cross-curricular subject. During this first day music on a CD accompanied the activities that took place at the beginning of the school day. Later, a song was used to assist in the learning of the days of the week. Elements of the music curriculum such as the concepts of beat and rhythm were used in the 'listen and respond' game as part of the physical education class in the hall. The use of music as a cross-curricular subject particularly at infant levels is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Discussion of themes

In the beginning section of this chapter, I have given an ethnographic account of a school day in both Togher Boys School and Scoil Choilmcille. The accounts reveal the structure of a school day and they provide insight into the types of activities that happen inside a school classroom. During my classroom visits I noticed that a number of themes emerged relating to classroom practice and the role of the curriculum. In the following section I begin my discussion of the school day and I continue with an examination of the curriculum in the classroom and the relationship between the curriculum and the teaching practice. Within the discussion I use information gathered from my classroom observations and also from my discussions with the classroom teachers to discuss how music is taught in primary level schools.

The ethnographic overview of the two school days reveals that a typical school day usually commences with informal conversations and general discussions between the class teacher and students. This type of interaction was frequent in almost all classes I visited. Many of the classroom teachers referred to it as 'News Time' or 'An Nuacht'.[8] Teachers all spoke about how important it is to facilitate a discussion time early in the school day as it allowed the children an opportunity to talk to

[8] 'An nuacht' is the Irish for 'The news'

the teacher and to share some information with the class. I noticed that teachers often shared information about their personal lives, hobbies and interests during 'News Time'. During 'News Time', the children seemed to be extremely interested in learning about the teacher and in talking about their own family and the things that they did together. The discussions also provided the opportunity to discuss events that were happening within the school and in the local community. National and international current affairs were also discussed.

At infant class levels, activities, such as jig-saw making, painting and drawing, are used to facilitate discussions at the beginning of the school day. Activity based work plays an important part of the day at Junior and Senior infant levels. It usually occurs early in the school day. Activity time facilitates conversation between the class teacher and each child. The types of activities vary from day to day and include painting, drawing, sculpturing and jig-saw making. During activity time, the classroom teachers get an opportunity to talk to each student individually. Many of the teachers also use this time to correct homework. In my discussion with teachers, I learnt that activity based work is an important element of the curriculum for a number of reasons. It gives each child the freedom to express themselves (Guiney 2005). It also provides the teachers with the opportunity to check each childs work and talk to them individually early in the school day (Kelly 2005).

During the class visits, I sat at the back of class observing and taking notes. Throughout the class visits, I planned to take note of the subjects that were being taught and the nature of the teaching and learning in each lesson. I had expected the change from each curricular subject to be very obvious, however, this was not the case. On a number of occasions, I found it difficult to distinguish what curricular subject was being taught. In some cases, I did not notice that we were engaging in another subject area until some time had elapsed afterwards. The structure of the school day had a subtle flow. The transitions between subjects were smooth. I noticed that certain subjects were combined in lessons. I learnt that this method was called 'cross- curricular linkage'. During the interviews, teachers discussed the importance of cross-curricular linkage and how they use the method to structure the school day and to integrate curricular subjects. They highlighted in their conversations that music is prominently used as a subject in cross-curricular teaching. In the following discussion, I will discuss cross-curricular linkage in some detail due to the important role it plays in relation to the teaching of music in the classroom. I will highlight some of the important ways that teachers use the method of cross-curricular linkage as part of their class planning and to teach subjects as part of the new curriculum.

When I asked the teachers about their use of cross-curricular linkage they first explained that class planning is an important element of teaching. During the interviews many of the teachers spoke about how they organised their school days. All of them mentioned how they had a class plan, which is a time schedule for all the curricular and extra-curricular activities that happen for each class. Class plans are usually located on the classroom teacher's desk as they are primarily for the teachers reference. The teachers spoke about how they used the class plan to structure the school day. The teachers mentioned that there were certain subjects such as Maths, English and Irish that needed to be covered each day. They pointed out that it is important it is to start each day with these subjects as they required the most concentration. Many of them spoke about how, as teachers, they had to prioritise subject areas such as Reading and Writing as these were the basics for learning in other subjects. In relation to this, teacher Michael Casey explains.

> We try to initially start with the 3 R's - Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. It's important to get Maths, Reading, and Irish completed. Everything else can follow then and with these fundamentals the children can engage in other learning areas and activities (Casey 2005).

Many of the teachers I interviewed spoke about how they used cross-curricular linkage as an important method in the preparation of classes.

Teacher, Rachel Kelly spoke about the importance of integrating subject areas within a lesson plan.

> It's highly recommended. It's called co ha thú, which means cross curricular links. The words are drilled into you at teacher training college, linking all the subjects. In fact they recommend a day that you take a topic, for example the beach or winter or the snow, and you would try and bring that and link it with every subject. You could do a poem, Maths problem on it, a story or Irish could be based on it (Kelly 2005).

Cross-curricular linkage is important at all levels but in particular at junior level where subjects need to change more often. Unlike senior classes that may spend up to an hour on one particular subject area, junior classes may cover up to four subjects in the same period. This is partly due to the shorter attention span of younger students and also because much of the time is focused on English and language development skills. Teacher Sue Buckley discusses the importance of cross-curricular linkage at junior infant level.

> Junior infants is dominated by the teaching of English. They have to have that foundation to explore other subjects as they progress. We have all the other subjects. We go through them so fast there is a change of subjects every twenty minutes (Buckley 2005).

One of the important things about the cross-curricular linkage is that it helps create a sense of continuity between the subjects. Most of the time infants do not realise they are changing subject. Usually they do not recognise it until they are asked to take out a different book from their bag.

Cross-curricular linkage is important as it helps with the transitions between subjects. Teacher, Sue Buckley points out that it also creates an opportunity to cover material from a range of curriculum areas that may not be taught otherwise.

> There are so many subjects and areas to cover. If you were to do each subject stand-alone you wouldn't have time in the week. If you are doing a topic there might be a slightly different slant, you can bring in what you have previously done that week, so you can cut the time, otherwise you would never fit it in (Buckley 2005).

Music plays a prominent role at infant level. It is used for enjoyment and educational purposes, in particular, for cross-curricular linkage with areas such as Irish, English, Maths, Religion and Art. The integration of music and art features throughout the various class levels. In many instances, it is used as part of the 'Listening and Responding' strand of the curriculum. While I was visiting the senior infants class in both Scoil Choilmcille and Togher Boys school I noticed that music, especially

singing, features as part of a whole range of activities throughout the day. The class sings songs as part of a range of others subject such as Irish, English, Maths and Religion. The senior infants teacher Ms Kelly spoke to me about the important role of singing at infant level. She told me that the children love to be active throughout the day and they associate singing with a heightened scene of activity.

> Juniors seem to learn better through song. They like to be active. They like to be involved, rather than just reciting something off. They like to sing the Irish. I sing it first and they pick it up. It's so much faster (Kelly 2005).

Ms Buckey also spoke about how junior infants love singing and how she uses song singing to accompany their Maths, Religion, and English language programme. She explains how the infants use the songs to help with their sentence structure.

> We do numbers with the songs. There is a song for each letter. There are seventy two songs on one CD. They are able to rattle them off. It reminds them of their sentence structure. They sing it in their head for their grammar. We sing the Maths, the Religion (Buckley 2005).

Music is also used for enjoyment purposes during the school day. The infant teachers all mention how they often 'take a break' in-between subjects and sing songs with the class.

One of the things I observed from my classroom observations and my discussions with teachers is that music is predominately used as a cross-curricular subject in classrooms. I also observed that music is often taught as a separate subject in the classroom to develop skills in group singing or on an instrument. In many cases, the focus is on developing performance skills. Throughout my two week visits in Togher Boys School and Scoil Choilmcille I observed the teaching of instruments to groups of students and the school band. Both schools employed specialist music teachers from the local area to assist the classroom teachers in the development of instrumental skills.

In the above ethnographic accounts of two school days I reveal a number of interesting aspects relating to the structure of a school day and in particular the use of music within the classroom. The accounts highlight how school days usually begin with informal conversations between teachers and students which allow them to share personal information. In the discussion I have revealed how certain subjects such as English, Irish and Maths are prioritised by teachers and are taught at the beginning of each school day. I have also highlighted how the method of cross-curricular linkage is used by teachers to facilitate the teaching of all the curricular subjects and to create a flow between the subjects during the day. During the conversations with the teachers I learnt that music is often used in cross-curricular linkage. It is sometimes used

independently as an activity for enjoyment purposes. This was particularly evident in the junior level classes. The other primary focus in senior level classes in both schools was the teaching of instruments in the classroom. In both schools there is a focus on developing instrumental music skills in order to have school bands. Classroom teachers often with the help of visiting specialist teachers assist the students in the development of instrumental skills and a repertoire of music which can be performed at school events such as visits from the Lord Mayor of Cork and the Cork hurling team.

The Relationship between the Curriculum and Practice

Throughout the classroom visits, I was interested in learning about the relationship between the curriculum and classroom practice. I had originally expected the use of the curriculum to be quite prescriptive and highly visible in classroom practice. In my experience, this did not appear to be the case. I didn't observe any direct references to the curricular documents or indeed subject areas. Although the curricular document books were located near the teachers' desk in all classrooms, I didn't observe any direct use of them throughout their teaching. Throughout my observations I noticed that teachers often referred to a folder which was usually located on their desk. During the discussions, I asked the teachers to share their own thoughts and views on the role of

the curriculum in their day-to-day teaching practice. The following is a summary of some of the views of the teachers in relation to this topic.

All of the teachers I spoke with were familiar with the curriculum documents. They view the documents as guidelines. In their teaching practice, teachers work closely with the guidelines but essentially adapt them to suit both their own personal interests and the classroom situation. This appears to be an important aspect of the teaching profession. While the curriculum is a key component, central to teaching at primary level, it is up to each individual teacher to plan his or her own programme, which is classroom-specific. Joe Carroll addressed the adaptation of the curriculum guidelines in my interview with him.

> There's not a prescription in the sense that some people might imagine…something I've also guarded from the beginning of my teaching would be my freedom to select and choose what I think is appropriate for the circumstances where I teach and for my own interests and so on…to keep myself motivated and therefore, them, [pupils] (Carroll 2005).

Michael Casey also refers to the necessity for selection of certain subject when implementing the new curriculum.

> You have to pick and choose. And you do pick and choose. It's the reality of it. It's something you definitely look at and

> something you have to be aware of and that on a broad level you are paying attention to (Casey 2005).

While discussing this area with other interviewees, I learnt that there are several types of curriculum that occur in schools. The two types relevant to this area are the 'laid down' prescribed curriculum, which is what is in the curriculum documents, and the adaptation of the curriculum guidelines which is referred to as the 'taught' curriculum. While discussing the relationship between the curriculum guidelines and the teaching practice, I learnt that sometimes the curriculum guidelines and the classroom teaching can be quite similar and in other instances the two can be quite different.

According to school principal, Jack Durkan, differences between the curriculum document and classroom practice are accounted for by the individual strengths of each class teacher.

> The relationship between the curriculum and practice varies from classroom and from school. If a teacher has a particular strength, like art for example, they take what is in the curriculum, and they adapt it, tweak it and they apply it to their own situation (Durkan 2005).

The differences between the curricular guidelines and teaching practice appear to be an important element of teaching, allowing each teacher to

plan their classroom teaching, using the curriculum as a guide and adapting the ideas to suit their own class situation. The teacher essentially makes the decisions about what learning opportunities are put in front of the children at school level and then at classroom level. It is obvious that there can be a gap between the taught and the prescribed curriculum due to the nature of this process.

One of the strengths of the Irish curriculum is that it is not strictly centralised. The fact that there can be a gap between what is prescribed in the curriculum and what is actually taught is hugely important to the teaching profession. Jack Durkan commented on the "à-la-carte" nature of the curriculum.

> It is an à-la-carte, but it was intended to be that. It was never intended to cover everything. We couldn't do that. It's twenty-two books. Somebody weighed it and it was three and a half stone weight. But we were never meant to do that. It is our job to take it, adapt it, and then make decisions about what we put in front of the children at school level and then at classroom level. So that's a given that there can be a gap in the taught and the prescribed curriculum (Durkan 2005).

The flexibility that is allowed in the implementation of the curriculum allows each school and individual teacher to examine their own specific

situation, to look at the children in the school and adapt the curriculum to suit each child.

> Your starting point is the children. You look at what they can do, what they can't do. You look at their background, where they're at. So you start there. The curriculum is a resource for you to dip into and to work with the children. The child is the first and foremost. And, I suppose, primary schools are different to secondary in that they are not exam orientated. In secondary schools you have to have xyz covered for the exam, where, with us, it's just about where the children are at (Lynch 2005).

This flexibility provides teachers with the opportunity to allow the curriculum to be adapted to serve the children, and not the other way around. This independence in their work is very important for teachers and creates a sense of autonomy, which they appreciate. Jack Durkan talks about the importance of creating a balance between the curriculum guidelines and what is taught within the classroom.

> The danger, of course, when we leave it too loose is that vacuums can be created. People can leave bits out. At some level there's a balance between what we must do and what we can do (Durkan 2005).

While discussing the role of the curriculum in the classroom, many of the teachers explained how they use the curriculum in their everyday

teaching practice. Many highlighted ways in which they achieved a balance between the curriculum guidelines, whole school plan, and the child-centered ideology. Some of their views are presented in the following discussion.

Teacher, Noreen Guiney, talks about how she uses the curriculum as a guide for what she needs to do with her class. She places huge importance on the whole school plan as this is what has been drawn up specifically for the school and for the class. Noreen outlines the importance of following the whole school plan as it provides continuity for the children and teachers as they progress from year to year.

> I would use the curriculum as a guide for what needs to be done for senior infants. The curriculum is for the whole country and obviously each school is not the same. So the school plan puts what we want to do in our own setting… So you work with both the curriculum and the school plan. The school plan is kind of more important as the 1st class teacher knows that senior infants have done addition up to 10 and then they can work from that. This is important for continuity (Guiney 2005).

John Burke is also a teacher at Scoil Cholmcille. He talks about the child-centred philosophy on which the curriculum is based and the importance of using the curriculum as a guideline for each classroom.

> The curriculum is child-centred. It is all about each individual child, what you want them to learn, what they get out of the lesson. It's not about what I'm teaching. It's not about 'I will stand up in front of the class and tell them how to do this sum'. It's all about what they will learn, and for each child that might be different. How they learn it might be different. The guidelines are supposed to be broad, so it can be approached in whatever way suits your class (Burke 2005).

The opportunities that each teacher put in front of their class is important and is highly influenced by the children that they are teaching. This is the way that the child-centred ideology is used in practice. The teacher can cater for the diversity of learning styles and ability by using the curriculum as a guideline for teaching.

Michael Casey explains that the role of the curriculum can depend on a number of things. He talks about how the local mix of people who participate in the curriculum shapes the local classroom experience. He mentions how the children and parents and social environment in the area can determine how the curriculum is played out in classrooms.

> I would say that the role of the curriculum in the classroom depends on a range of things, for instance, the children coming into the school, the socio economic background, their home lives and what education means to their parents (Casey 2005).

Michael Casey also discusses how the curriculum is used in classrooms, referring specifically to the wide range of ability that can be found in each classroom. He explains how teachers work with the classroom situation, and how the curriculum is used as an important guide to learning,

> Dealing with a wide spectrum of children, there is a huge gap in ability, which is not unique to this school. It is in every school. The curriculum is a guideline, and if you were to stick directly with the curriculum and implement directly what it says, you'd be doing a lot more hours. You'd want to be teaching eight hours instead of five. It's not realistic, but it's a good guideline (Casey 2005).

He also discusses how the teaching changes depending on what class you are teaching. He talks about his own personal experience of teaching second class, and now third and fourth class.

> When I taught second you have bit more luxury in what you can teach. When you're into third and fourth you are looking ahead to what they have to know for fifth and sixth and secondary school. You might not think it, and I wouldn't have thought it before I got into third and fourth. You really want them to have a good grasp of Irish, Maths and Reading so when they get into fifth and sixth and when they have the entrance exams for secondary school, it's that they will be up to doing it. Try to get them to work to their maximum ability (Casey 2005).

Casey's statement reflects the challenges within the system, as he highlights how the each classroom within the primary level education system is influenced by the way the next level of education systems works. The structures of the secondary system in Ireland and in particular the entry routes to accessing certain schools through entrance exam affect the way primary teachers work and often this challenges the principles and ideologies of the primary level system in Ireland.

The above commentary from teachers reveals that the national curriculum set out is a key component of primary education in Ireland. The curriculum is used as a guideline and teachers adapt these guidelines to suite their own classroom environment. This process is a flexible approach to teaching and learning. It allows the central curriculum to be tailored to each individual setting. This is important as it facilitates a 'needs led' or a 'child centred approach' to teaching and learning, an element which is central to the education system in Ireland. This approach also facilitates certain activities to happen throughout the school day that are not necessarily part of the formal curriculum

Extra-Curricular Activity

Throughout my observations I noticed that there were a number of activities that happen throughout the school day alongside the teaching of curricular subjects. The types of activities in the classroom vary from

class to class and indeed from day to day. I observed a number of extra-curricular activities relating to music in the classrooms. In some cases, students are responsible for organising and distributing musical instruments to the students in the classroom. In other instances I observed visiting teachers who work with the classroom teachers in developing instrumental and performance skills that contribute to extra-curricular events outside the classroom. I also noted a number of performance ensembles who visited the schools. Extra-curricular music activities take place inside the classroom, within the school and often in local venues. Although these activities are considered extra-curricular, there are elements that compliment areas set out in the curriculum.

The above overview of the two school days reveals a number of instances of other extra-curricular activities and events. Some of the types of extra activities I observed were in the form of extra duties or responsibilities carried out by students, groups of students and in some cases, by teachers themselves. These extra activities happened throughout the entire school day. An example is where one student was responsible for collecting money from the other students and bringing it to the schoolteacher. The teacher referred to him as the class banker. Two other boys were responsible for collecting the milk at a certain time. A number of boys were responsible for distributing the music instruments and folders to the rest of the class during the music class. Another group of boys were

involved in a litter patrol project where senior classes were involved in looking after the schoolyard. The classroom teacher referred to them as 'environmental engineers'. They were late coming back from lunch break, as they had to water the flowers and pick up rubbish from outside. I noticed a great sense of importance attached to having one of these positions, particularity because the boys often had to report to the principal.

I also observed other activities, which were linked to the curriculum, but involved outside specialist teachers and coaches who visited the classrooms. These additional teaching personnel work with the class teacher and the students on a particular area. Togher Boys School, for example, are involved in a cycling project. A cycling coach arrives each week and facilitates cycling workshops in the schoolyard. Both Togher Boys School and Scoil Choilmcille are involved in the Bridging the Gap Project, which involves a visiting music teacher who teaches instruments to some classes. Both schools have visitors who teach foreign language classes each week. A number of the classes in both schools were involved in activities where they had to leave the school; some went to the local swimming pool for lessons, others travelled to a local GAA club for hurling training and matches.

The extra-curricular activities discussed above take place both within the classroom and school environment and also, sometimes, in other locations outside the school. They involve the classroom teachers, students and, in some cases, a visiting specialist teacher. The presence of many extra activities in classrooms requires a degree of flexibility on the part of the classroom teachers. The role of the teacher as a facilitator of classroom activity and learning is very evident in the inclusion of extra-curricular activities. Many teachers explained that one of their biggest challenges is the facilitation of all the activities that occur at both classroom and whole school level. The changing dynamic of education has presented many challenges for teachers, as teaching and learning is no longer solely based inside the classroom environment. Joe Carroll comments on these changes.

> It's not like schooling was, where the door was closed and there was no encounter at all beyond the teacher and the class. Now you have the teachers coming to collect children, children leaving to go to classes and going at different times of the day for different subjects. You have unpredictable interventions that have assumed a new order of importance nowadays: the unpredictable, and the unforeseen. You have everything from fire drills to celebrations like today [referring to a team presentation]. Visits to the church, funerals, it's all recognised. There is an engagement with everything that happens now, outside (Carroll 2005).

Due to an increased level of engagement with whole school activities and outside community events, teachers are faced with facilitating the transitions between internal and external learning. The need to facilitate the various activities has presented new and different challenges for teachers that require flexibility in their work. Joe Carroll points out the importance of a flexible approach to teaching.

> Most people here are very flexible. We have a long history of that adaptability. It is very important. We don't get too uptight about it, but you could. There are personalities that would find that difficult and frustrating, for sure (2005).

The extra-curricular activity in schools alters the dynamic of the classroom environment. It also presents challenges for the children in terms of trying to keep focused on other curricular areas.

> That's the character of things today. There's a price to be paid for it in terms of concentrating. Children's concentrating and the amount of material you might cover can be effected by that kind of thing but then again one must be realistic about what is achievable (Carroll 2005).

There are limits to a child's ability to absorb information and carry out tasks and, hence, there is a need for prioritisation of subjects, including music and other school activities. The process of selection further

highlights the need for a complimentary continuation of learning beyond school space and time and also the benefits of cross-curricular learning.

Summary

In this chapter I have provided a contemporary overview of the primary level education system in Ireland. I have outlined the main agents involved in the management of primary education and their roles and responsibilities. Although classroom teachers have primary responsibility for managing the learning environment in classrooms, many schools also employ other teachers who teach specific subject areas or skills to students. The involvement of other outside agents in the school learning environment creates the opportunity for students to learn from other people. It also requires principals and classroom teachers to have a flexible approach to school and classroom organisation as the school community involves extends beyond the school environment itself.

In this chapter I have provided an ethnographic account of the two schools I visited as part of the fieldwork for this dissertation. The ethnographic account provides insight into the structure of a school day and the type of activities that occur. I have also examined a number of central themes to this dissertation combining information gathered from my observations with some commentary I gathered from teachers during the interviews. The above examination reveals how classroom days are

structured and how certain subject areas such as English, Irish Language and Mathematics are prioritised. It also revels how cross-curricular linkage is an important method used by teachers throughout the school day as a means of covering all the curricular subjects. In the above section, I have also provided some thoughts from teachers in relation to the national curriculum and essentially how they use the curriculum as a guideline in their classroom. I have pointed out the extra-curricular activities that take place throughout the school day.

Throughout the conversations with teachers and principals I learnt how music is used as part of cross-curricular linkage to enhance learning in other subjects areas. During the interviews, there was much reference to various musical activities, rehearsals and concerts in both of the schools. I observed the teaching of instruments within the classroom and the rehearsing of certain tunes to be performed at school events. While interviewing, I asked the teachers and principals to talk about the types of music activities that were happening in their schools and their general thoughts on music at primary level. The following chapter outlines aspects of these discussions and reveals some of the ways that musical activities take place in these primary schools. It focuses on how music is co-ordinated in both of the schools.

Chapter 5

The Provision and Co-ordination of Music Education at Togher Boys School & Scoil Choilmcille

Introduction

I begin this chapter with a discussion of the important role of the classroom teacher in the provision and development of music at primary level in Ireland. I continue with an overview of the co-ordination of music in Togher Boys School and Scoil Choilmcille. I discuss the various musical activities that take place within the schools and I examine the main areas where music activities occur, in particular the classroom setting and at school events. I then focus on the people who are involved in the facilitation and co-ordination of these activities. I continue the chapter with a discussion of some of the important issues that emerged throughout my conversations with classroom teachers and the school principals relating to music education at primary level.

The Role of the Classroom Teacher in the Provision of Music

The importance of the classroom teacher in the provision of music at primary level was very evident during my fieldwork. The role of the teacher is shaped by their training and life experience. They are also guided in their work by the curriculum and whole school plan. The choices made regarding the implementation and use of the curriculum, particularly when developing the use of music in the classroom, is central to this study. Extra-curricular activities, particularly noticeable when they take place outside of school spaces, usually involve classroom

teachers, though they may also incorporate other individuals, such as other teaching staff, music specialists and principals.

Teachers form a central resource of the education system in Ireland. Classroom teachers have many different roles and responsibilities for different classes, students, and extra-curricular duties. Teachers have sole responsibility for their classroom and class of students but they also occupy a number of other spaces within a school. If the classroom is the central space, the teacher acts as the link between the classroom community and other parts of the whole school community, including the parents. The teacher controls the formal flow of information in and out of the classroom space. The teacher also shapes the informal learning process. Processes of learning and opportunities for learning are 'controlled' by the teacher but that control is limited by other factors including curriculum, resources and conventional hierarchies within the education system. In this classroom model, teaching is just one of many roles and responsibilities assigned to a teacher.

Teachers are also seen as leaders and decision makers. Brian Tubbert, Head of Education at Frobel College of Education, Dublin says that the teachers role is to 'guide the children to learn how to learn, to question, to discuss among themselves, to discover, to explore, to observe, to test, to record, to display, to present, to make decisions, to take responsibility'

(Tubbert 2005, 205). Teachers are listeners, demonstrators, facilitators, and administrators. The decisions made by teachers directly influence the learning experience of the students that they teach. The decision making process within the classroom focuses on what is taught, what activities the students engage in, when these activities occur, how the curriculum is implemented and opportunities for the use of spaces outside the classroom.

The position of a teacher is conventionally imagined as a manager of the learning experiences in the classroom. However, a teacher's responsibilities encompass much more than this and their decisions are influenced by their own personal values, training and life experiences (Norton 1931; Florio-Ruane 2001; Kelly 2004). The preferences of the teacher may differ from those of the student and other communities, thus presenting a challenge to teaching and learning (Kelly 2004). Through their different roles and participation in, or links to, various communities, a teacher shapes the learning and social environments that they share with students on a daily basis.

The curriculum is an influential factor in a teachers decision making process and can shape the activities in the classroom. There is a vital interrelationship between the use of curriculum and the individual attributes of a teacher. Hargreaves suggests that teachers don't just

deliver the curriculum. He points out that they '*develop it, define it and reinterpret it too'.*

> *It is what teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers do at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the learning that young people get. The ways they teach are also grounded in their backgrounds, their biographies, in the kinds of teachers they have become (2003, vii).*

Essentially, teachers play an important role in facilitating an active learning environment while acknowledging the guidelines presented by the curriculum. They, as occupants of a number of spaces outside of the classroom, carry personal experiences that can enhance the learning experience outlined by the curriculum.

A recurring theme throughout this thesis is the role of the teacher as a resource and empowered agent of the primary school system. Through the discussion, I have highlighted how teachers control and shape learning experiences based on their own socio-cultural experiences and values, as well as their skills and training. In terms of music, I have revealed how teachers provide the link between the classroom, the curriculum and the outside communities.

Teachers choose the material that is taught within the guidelines of the curriculum and play a role in the development of opportunities for

performance by students. In terms of music, I have highlighted how many teachers choose material that they feel is accessible to the children and also relevant to their contemporary musical worlds.

I have highlighted how the structure of the new music curriculum plays an important role in shaping the learning experiences of both students and teachers and presents teachers with a range of choices regarding what and how to teach. The curriculum places various values on music and emphasises for all children to experience music as part of their learning experience in the school. The selection processes developed by teachers with regard to the curriculum as a whole reflect the specificities of each classroom and the people who occupy that space. Teachers may also be involved in extra-curricular music activities or activities that move music from the confines of the classroom into other spaces. The development and use of more spaces for the learning and performance of music creates additional contexts for music and greater links with the wider community. These links facilitate greater access to music education and enhance the learning experiences of music by children in Irish society.

Opportunities for the performance of music by students and participation in musical events are important on a number of levels. Activities in the name of the school, musical or otherwise, impact on the perception and

reputation of the school in the wider community. That reputation fosters an attitude within the school community that can benefit the learning environment. When attitudes develop among the extended community, involving parents and other community members, those attitudes extend and filter into society and may be perpetuated.

Those activities which are not related to the curriculum go beyond those conventionally thought of as extra-curricular. Traditionally, activities such as sport, art and music have often been regarded outside the curriculum but the New Revised Primary Curriculum (1999) attempts to challenge traditional attitudes and reintegrate these activities as subjects within the school experience.

In the context of music education, spaces of music performance such as arts centres and theatres provide opportunities for the alternative location of education that simultaneously communicate meaning about music and music-making (Small 1998). Through their interaction with music in these spaces, children become familiar with entering these spaces – something that is not common in Irish society and which becomes a crucial factor in audience development for the arts (Arts Council 2007). Different spaces create different contexts for learning and experiencing music and also impart and communicate the values and attitudes of the society in which the school is located.

I will continue my discussion of the provision and co-ordination of music at primary level by highlighting how music activity take places inside the classroom, as part of school events and outside in the local community. I will discuss the roles and responsibilities of the three main agents that facilitate the development of music in Togher Boys School and Scoil Choilmcille namely the classroom teacher, curriculum co-ordinator, and visiting music specialist.

Music at Togher Boys School

Togher Boys' National school has a long tradition of music, song and drama, which stems from an earlier principal's keen interest in music (Durkan 2005). While visiting the school I learnt about the types of musical activities and events that take place in the school. Musical learning is facilitated primarily by the classroom teacher but also by visiting instrumental teachers and by local performers and organisations. At all stages the classroom teacher is responsible for the planning and organisation of musical learning. The principal and curriculum co-ordinator also contribute to the organisation of musical activities in collaboration with the class teachers. In the following section, I discuss how music in organised in Togher Boys School.

Music activities are organised in a number of ways in Togher Boys. All teachers are responsible for organising the music within their classroom. Some teachers also organise music events which involve one or two classes of similar age levels. The principal organises specific music events in the school. The classroom teachers and the principal work together with the newly appointed music co-ordinator, Joe Carroll, in the overall development of music within the school.

Since the beginning of his teaching career at Togher Boys, Carroll has been organising music events in the school in collaboration with the classroom teachers. Carroll took up the position of music co-ordinator when the new arrangements for the posts of responsibilities were introduced in schools. Carroll discusses his new appointment as music co-ordinator and what that entails.

> Over the last number of years what has happened is that the arrangement of extra posts have taken into account the roles that teachers have already been playing in schools. I took up the music co-ordinator post as I was already a link in a hub in a sense, at the centre. So I have been doing those activities under the new post, with other things like sport, administration, bits and pieces of all kinds (Carroll 2005).

In this post, Joe facilitates whole school planning, co-ordination, and curriculum development. Most importantly, he acts as a support for all

teachers in their music teaching. Several of the other teachers I interviewed mentioned the important role of the music co-ordinator in facilitating the implementation of the music curriculum. They felt it was important to have someone there to support them, advise them and provide them with resources. Many felt it was important to have someone close-by that they could approach if they were experiencing difficulties. The value placed on support coming from within the school community reinforces the sense of community within a school and helps develop and foster a positive learning environment.

The decisions on how music is organised in the school occurs during the school planning day for music. This planning day is a new initiative as part of the implementation of the New Revised Curriculum. The whole school planning day for music took place earlier in the year and was facilitated by Carroll, the music co-ordinator. The whole school planning meeting provided an opportunity for teaching staff to discuss the provision of music in the school. It also created an opportunity for objectives to be set at both individual classroom and whole school level. The preparation of certain musical materials for specific events emerged as an important focus at the planning day. This year in Togher Boys, particular emphasis was placed on learning local repertoire. Teachers felt it was important to focus on the learning of some local material and to try and work towards preparing this material for school events such as the

Lord Mayor's visit. They decided to focus initially on learning the anthems of the locality, including The National Anthem, Amhrán na bhFiann, Mo Ghile Mear, the Muskerry anthem, and the 'third' anthem, The banks of My Own Lovely Lee. The teachers felt that these were important pieces for the children to know.

At classroom level teachers all work with the ideas developed as part of the New Revised Music Curriculum, and, in particular, the whole school plan that they have developed with the other teachers in the school. Classroom teachers frequently use music as part of cross-curricular linkage with subjects such as religion, art and the Irish language. Musical activity in classrooms often involves listening to a CD of music and responding through drawing. The learning and singing of songs are also frequent activities. In some cases the learning is focused on practicing a set repertoire which is to be performed as part of a school event, such as a school concert. The repertoire for school events is chosen by the curriculum coordinator, the visiting instrumental teacher and the classroom teacher.

Togher Boys School has been involved in an outreach project entitled 'Bridging the Gap'. The project is run from the Department of Education, University College Cork. The project facilitates the development of music in the school through funding which is used for the purchase of

instruments and the hiring of an outside music teacher. As part of the project an instrumental teacher visits the school for a half day each week to teach recorder to a number of classes. One of the objectives of this scheme is to try to incorporate this instrumental program throughout the entire school so every child has the opportunity to learn to play an instrument and to participate in school performances.

Musical performances are organised regularly throughout the school year. They are often organised in conjunction with school events such as the Lord Mayor's visit and with national events such as National Irish Week, Seachtain na Gaeilge. Musical performances at school events are important as they provide the children and teachers with an opportunity to perform their musical pieces or songs in an informal setting. It also creates the opportunity for classroom teachers to link their class-based teaching material to whole school level events. These events provide opportunity for children to perform and to share their experiences with others.

Music at Scoil Cholmcille

Scoil Cholmcille has had a long tradition of music in the school. Billy Lynch talks about how the tradition stems from the days of the Blarney Street Pipe Band (Lynch 2005). A number of factors have facilitated the

growth of music in the school over the past number of years. The introduction of the new music curriculum by the Department of Education and Science has facilitated in-service training and planning days for music. Visiting musicians and bands have been organised by the principal to visit and perform for the entire school. The school has also become involved in an education outreach project, which has facilitated instrumental teaching by music specialists in the school.

The introduction of the new music curriculum by the Department of Education and Science gave all teachers the opportunity to attend two in-service training days during which they were introduced to the structure, principles and methodologies of the new curriculum. A planning day was also organised in Scoil Cholmcille where all teachers discussed the provision of music at classroom and whole school level. Billy Lynch described the planning day as an opportunity for teachers to share ideas, reflect on current practice and attempt to integrate aspects of the new curriculum (2005). During the planning day, aims were set to focus on particular areas at classroom level and then the integration of these at whole school events.

> Areas that we chose to particularity focus on at class level were song singing and use of percussion with songs. We aimed to try to integrate this with a school performance where all children would participate (Lynch 2005).

The elements chosen in Scoil Colmcille, singing and percussion, reflect an attempt to utilise those musical activities that are most accessible to the greatest number of students. The students may then develop these elements in musical performances.

Over the past number of years, the school has held various performances in the school. Each year the school invites musicians and bands to visit the school to perform for all the children and classroom teachers. Among the visitors to the school this year were the Butter Exchange Band, a jazz band, a string quartet, American singer-songwriter, Josh Ritter, and the Army Band. These events are arranged by the school principal. Many of these performances coincided with particular events that were happening in Cork city. The Jazz Band, for instance, visited as part of the Cork International Jazz Festival.

One of the most recent visitors to the school was the American songwriter, Josh Ritter. Josh spent a day visiting each classroom talking to the children about music and he sang some of his songs to them. Michael Casey describes to the visit as a valuable experience for the children.

> Josh Ritter visited the school…we played his CD's before he came and they were very impressed with the fact that he had

> CDs. When he visited, Josh talked to the children about where he was from and about his career as a singer. They enjoyed that because they got to learn about the music profession and of course a different part of the world (Casey 2005).

Like Togher Boys School, Scoil Choilmcille has been involved in the Bridging the Gap Project which is run from the Department of Education at University College Cork. The Bridging the Gap program has facilitated the growth of music in the school, allowing for the purchase of instruments for the children and the hiring of 'specialist' instrumental music teachers to teach the children each week.

> The aim of this project was to try to give every child in the school the opportunity to learn to play an instrument. We originally started with fourth, fifth and sixth. Then we included the junior classes (Lynch 2005).

The project continues to build on the previous years work, trying to incorporate new material and activities. The Bridging the Gap Project provides schools with the resources to continue musical activities beyond the remit of the project itself and also to develop music within the school.

Discussion of Themes

In the above discussion I provide an overview of how music is organised in Togher Boys and Scoil Choilmcille. During my conversations with

teachers I was interested in learning about their views in relation to music at primary level and, in particular, the successes and challenges surrounding music since the introduction of the New Revised Curriculum in 1999. The following section discusses the views of the teachers in relation to the new curriculum, the challenges in facilitating music at classroom and school level, and the need to continuously find ways of making material relevant to the lives of children.

Since the introduction of the New Revised Curriculum (1999), classroom teachers have become increasingly aware of the need to increase the provision of music in their classrooms. The nature of music in schools has often involved just one or two teachers who organise music to accompany school events and performances. The New Revised Curriculum emphasises the importance of every classroom teacher in the development of the provision through the facilitation of music in their classrooms. The new in-service training and whole school planning has facilitated this change. Many teachers highlighted the challenges surrounding the implementation of music in their classrooms during the implementation phase of the curriculum. Throughout my research many teachers and principals emphasised the importance of having a music co-ordinator, visiting music teachers and musicians to enhance the musical activities within their classrooms.

Since the introduction of the new curriculum many of the teachers I interviewed said they have become more aware of implementing the music curriculum now. Part of the success of the new music curriculum is its accessibility to teachers and the inclusion of clear guidelines and in-service training. Fundamental to its successful implementation is the communication of its values and contents to those who are required to implement it.

Many of the teachers expressed some difficulties in implementing the curriculum. Billy Lynch points out that teachers need 'certain skills' to teach music and that many teachers are 'very nervous' about teaching music (Lynch 2005). Lynch goes on to discuss his own personal experience as a student teacher and the difficulties he had with teaching music.

> I remember as a young teacher, in training college an inspector coming into me. I had no more notion of ta te ta and I was living in dread of that part of the lesson and I couldn't concentrate on what I was teaching as I was thinking of that part of the lesson. See, if you're not used to it, it's like a foreign language (Lynch 2005).

Although theoretically the music curriculum is considered as part of the general primary curriculum, it is evident that in practice music is often regarded as a specialist subject. Though the majority of teachers feel

comfortable teaching aspects of the music curriculum, there are certain areas that they find challenging. Instrumental teaching and composition are two areas that emerged as challenging to teachers. Many teachers do not consider themselves musicians or composers and they feel that it is difficult to be comfortable teaching these skills to their students. In some cases teachers feel ill equipped to facilitate areas of the music curriculum because they don't consider themselves musicians. The challenges that classroom teachers face with regard to implementing areas of the music curriculum emphasises a specialist nature of music. Many feel that one needs to be a musician and to be musical in order to successfully facilitate the teaching of instruments to children. This idea stems from the view that musicality and musical skills are something that one either has or has not.

Many principals and teachers spoke to me about others areas of the curriculum which they consider difficult to implement. Physical education and music are two subjects that present particular challenges for teachers. These two areas area often viewed as being specialist skills. In Irish society many people consider ability in music and sport to be unique skills and not a skill or activity that is readily accessible to all people. Jack Durkan pointed out that many schools get specialist teachers to assist in the teaching of subjects such as PE and Music.

> PE is one for people; PE is a subject that not everybody is comfortable with. They [music and PE] would be the two subjects that many schools might try and get somebody in to help with (Durkan 2005).

Although there is no formal provision for the employment of outside specialist teachers in Ireland, it is clear that many principals and teachers feel that there is a need to engage specialist teachers to facilitate the teaching of certain subject areas within schools. Many schools throughout Ireland choose to hire specialist teachers, particularly in areas relating to music and physical education. Billy Lynch draws upon international references in relation to the hiring of specialist music teachers. Scoil Cholmcille is part of a Comenius Project involving the development of partnerships between a number of European schools. The Comenius Project allows teachers to observe other systems of education in countries such as Greece, France and Germany. Lynch highlighted to me how he observed in certain schooling systems in countries such as Greece that there are 'specialist music teachers' who teach certain subjects. Jack Durkan believes that schools will always need a combination of internal and external resources to implement music in schools' (Durkan 2005). He notes the importance of enhancing the skills of classroom teachers through collaboration with external experts.

It is widely acknowledged by principals and teachers that music should not just be confined to the classroom. All teachers and principals emphasise the importance of having music performed as part of whole school events, assemblies and as part of school visits. The above overview of music in the two primary schools has shown that visiting music teachers help facilitate instrumental programs. The schools have also involved musicians from the local community who visit and perform regularly for the children.

The Nature of Music in Schools: Relevance and Participation

In Togher Boys School and Scoil Choilmcille, there is much emphasis on the importance of giving each child the opportunity to learn an instrument and to be part of a music group. All teachers and principals spoke about the importance of children performing music together. Durkan talks about the significance of creating opportunities for the children to perform as part of a school band or ensemble.

> Well obviously to make music on one's own is one thing, but performance is a huge part of it. It's a balancing act though. It's between trying to give students the opportunity to develop some skills on an instrument but also showing them how they can develop these skills and share them in a performance setting (Durkan 2005).

Many of the teachers spoke about how they felt it was important for the children to perform both within the school setting and to perform in venues outside of the school. They highlighted the importance of having school concerts at particular times of the year, such as Christmas or Easter time. School concerts create the opportunity to invite parents and local community members to visit the school. The performances also allow the children the opportunity to showcase their work in front of their parents, teachers and peers.

Participating in performances outside of the school environment is seen as an important development for the students as it provides a goal to work towards. Durkan talks about the significance of aiming towards performing in a venue outside of the school setting.

> It's huge, there's huge growth in that. It's the same as the football. It's an analogy. It's one thing to kick a ball around the back yard, it's another thing playing a game in Páirc Uí Rinn like we did last week – of course it's part of it, a very important part. It is also important to have to prepare for it and that pushes excellence. It gives you a goal, a fixed goal. We've a Christmas concert in three weeks lads, we got to get it done. Nothing like it, a target to get the job done (Durkan 2005).

Teachers acknowledge the value of performance in the development of goals that may enhance or support the achievement of curricular goals.

Music performances are also viewed as a medium to develop a shared community experience. Teachers recognise that music can provide the school with an opportunity to go above and beyond the curriculum where various non-curricular awards may be achieved.

The sense of achievement that students acquire through participation in events in the local community is discussed by Billy Lynch in reference to Scoil Cholmcille.

> Last year we decided to bring two classes together who had been learning recorder for a year. We formed a senior band and they started to develop material so they could perform as an ensemble. Towards the end of last year, the senior band began to perform at school events. They also performed at the Annual Cor Fhéile na Scol, which takes place in City Hall (Lynch 2005).

Billy explained that participating in the Cor Fhéile na Scol was an important event for the children, teachers and parents.

> It was a fantastic achievement for everyone as it has been nearly fifty years since Scoil Cholmcille took part in this concert. There's a photograph out there of the Cor Fhéile na Scol from 1956. There is a coloured one now from 2004, we've put it beside it, it's the exact same writing (Lynch 2005).

Participation in Cór Fhéile na Scol emphasises the importance of the visibility of the school to other communities in the city and the presentation of a 'good' school image. It presents children with opportunities to achieve through the performance of music and creates aspirations for recognition by their peers. The context of the Cor Fhéile creates a special context for music as an activity that can enhance music as a school or curricular subject.

As well as emphasising the importance of learning a musical instrument and participating in performances inside and outside of the school environment, many of the teachers spoke about the importance of finding musical material that is relevant to the children's lives.

Michael Casey discusses ways he uses music in the classroom and most importantly what he feels is relevant to use in the class. He speaks at length about the importance of using musical material that is, in some way, relevant to the students, that they can identify with and respond to.

> As regards music, I am the first to admit that I'm not in any way musical. I don't play an instrument. I do songs with them that they are familiar with, that's relevant to them, that have some connection to their own environment (Casey 2005).

Michael Casey's attitude to his own musical abilities is symptomatic of a prevailing attitude among large numbers of teachers in the Irish education system. Many were brought up in a educational environment that viewed music as a subject just for certain students who had musical ability. The same individuals now work in a system that aims to nurture the talents of all children in an educational environment which should allow opportunities for participation in music for all students. During the interview, Casey gave some examples of creating or utilising material relevant to the life experiences of the students.

> I use songs that are relevant to the children. An example of something I used recently is a song from the band 'Jam'. I taught that it was about a cityscape, living in a city, the noises, and the different happenings. This type of material gets their imagination going, something that they can identify with. If you can do that, it heightens their interest (Casey 2005).

Casey talks about the importance of finding materials that are enjoyable for both the children and the teacher when teaching subjects like music, one must find a 'middle ground'. Casey talks about the types of music that the majority of his class experience outside of their school environment.

> The boys are interested in hip hop P Diddy, Fifty Cent and Eminem. Music like this is what they are interested in learning about as it's part of their contemporary music scene. They can

> also relate to other musics such as those played by the army band in a recent performance. This material is what their parents would listen to so they can also relate to it and they can identify with it. They might be familiar with the lyrics or the melody. They are also into music from the 60s and 70s, groups such as Abba. They can sing many of these songs. As a teacher this is all relevant material that you can bring and use as part of the music class (Casey 2005).

The New Revised Curriculum gives teachers the opportunity to incorporate various musical genres and musical materials that students and teachers can relate to during music class. The three strands within the New Revised Curriculum of listening and responding, performing and composing, facilitate the learning of particular musical strands without focusing on any particular musical genre. When musical values, performances and experiences are shared it can enhance the learning atmosphere of the classroom and community.

Summary

In the above chapter I have highlighted the important role of the classroom teacher in the provision and development of music at primary level. I have also provided an overview of how music is organised in Togher Boys and Scoil Choilmcille. Throughout this account I have highlighted how musical activities are organised within the classroom, as part of school events and often in local community settings. I have

provided a commentary from the teachers on their views in relation to music at primary level, in particular, since the introduction of the new music curriculum. The teachers reveal that they have become more aware of facilitating music in their classrooms since the introduction of the new curriculum and the in-service training. The in-service training has provided them with an opportunity to engage with the new curriculum in an interactive and informative way. Teachers mention that their primary everyday use of music in the classroom is through cross-curricular linkage with other subject areas. Many of the teachers mention that they find some areas of teaching music challenging. They all place a high value on the visiting music specialist teachers that work with them to teach certain areas that they find challenging, in particular, the teaching of instruments to the students. Teachers emphasise the importance of learning to play a musical instrument and to perform in a school band. In both schools, the principals emphasise the importance of involving outside teachers in the development of certain subjects in schools. During these discussions I learnt that musical activities are co-ordinated by a number of different agents in both schools, primarily the classroom teachers, music co-ordinators and visiting music specialists. These agents have various roles and responsibilities with regard to the provision and development of music in schools. They work independently and in collaboration with each other in the facilitation of music at primary level education.

Chapter 6

Findings:

Making the Connection Between School and Community

Introduction

In this final chapter of the dissertation I will examine the roles of the three main agents. I will discuss the role of classroom teachers who are primarily responsibility for facilitating music education within the classroom. I will then consider the role of music co-ordinators in the development and provision of resources and support for classroom teachers. I will also focus on examining the successes and challenges of involving outside teachers and musicians in the provision of music at classroom level. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of how the various agents and systems of music education could collectively combine and draw on resources to increase and enhance the provision of music education at primary level in Ireland.

The primary research goals of this thesis are to understand the musical culture of classrooms in primary level education in Ireland and to examine the various agents involved in the provision of music education at primary level. Attitudes and practices regarding music in the classroom have undergone a complex evolution throughout the history of the formal education system in Ireland. Focusing on the primary level system, I have outlined how both policy and practices have evolved or developed, in particular since the introduction of the New Revised Primary Curriculum (1999). Using the experiences of fieldwork conducted in two primary level schools in Cork, namely Scoil Choilmcille

and Togher Boys School, I have examined how music is provided for within classroom settings. I have explored the relationship between the curriculum and the teaching of music in the classroom and the role of the classroom teacher and music co-ordinator in implementing the music curriculum. I have also observed the role of the wider community in the application and success of this initiative.

Over the past fifty years, literature and reports on music education in Ireland have highlighted the neglect of the arts and music within the education system in Ireland. Although there is evidence to suggest a lack of provision of music education, my fieldwork experience has highlighted musical activity within primary level schools, both inside and outside the classroom. Many of the studies and reports on music education in Ireland fail to recognise the wealth of music within many classrooms, schools and communities. The opportunities for the learning and performance of music encountered during the course of this study were outlined through classroom experiences, the performances for visiting dignitaries and through visits to outside venues such as Cór Fhéile na Scol. The public performance of music by school children is viewed as an extension of their classroom activity. Thus, while the provision of music varies between schools, an understanding of the arts in Irish education must consider music activities that occur inside the classroom, within the school community and within the local community.

A recurring theme throughout the study has been the connections between the various people involved in the provision and application of music education at primary level. Sarah Hennessey (1998) outlines three positions in relation to music in the English Education System: 'a teacher able to offer music'; individuals who are brought in and termed as 'music specialists'; and co-ordinators whose role is to take responsibility for musical learning and activity within a school. Agents of musical activity in the Irish primary level school system may include teachers, students, principals, coordinators, and musicians. Exploration and examination of the material previously presented in earlier chapters structures some tentative conclusions on the importance of accessibility and provision of music education at primary level in Ireland. Due consideration and understanding of the uniqueness of each classroom setting and school community is included in the development of these conclusions.

This final chapter is divided into four sections. The first considers the role of classroom teachers; the second examines the role of music co-ordinators; and the third considers the employment of outside teachers and musicians. The chapter will then conclude with a discussion of how the various agents and systems of music education could collectively combine and draw on resources to increase and enhance the provision of music education at primary level in Ireland.

The following is a visual representation which forms the basis for the following discussion. The diagram illustrates the interconnectedness of the main agents that are involved in the provision and co-ordination of music in schools. It highlights how the various agents connect in the context of classroom, school community and the wider community.

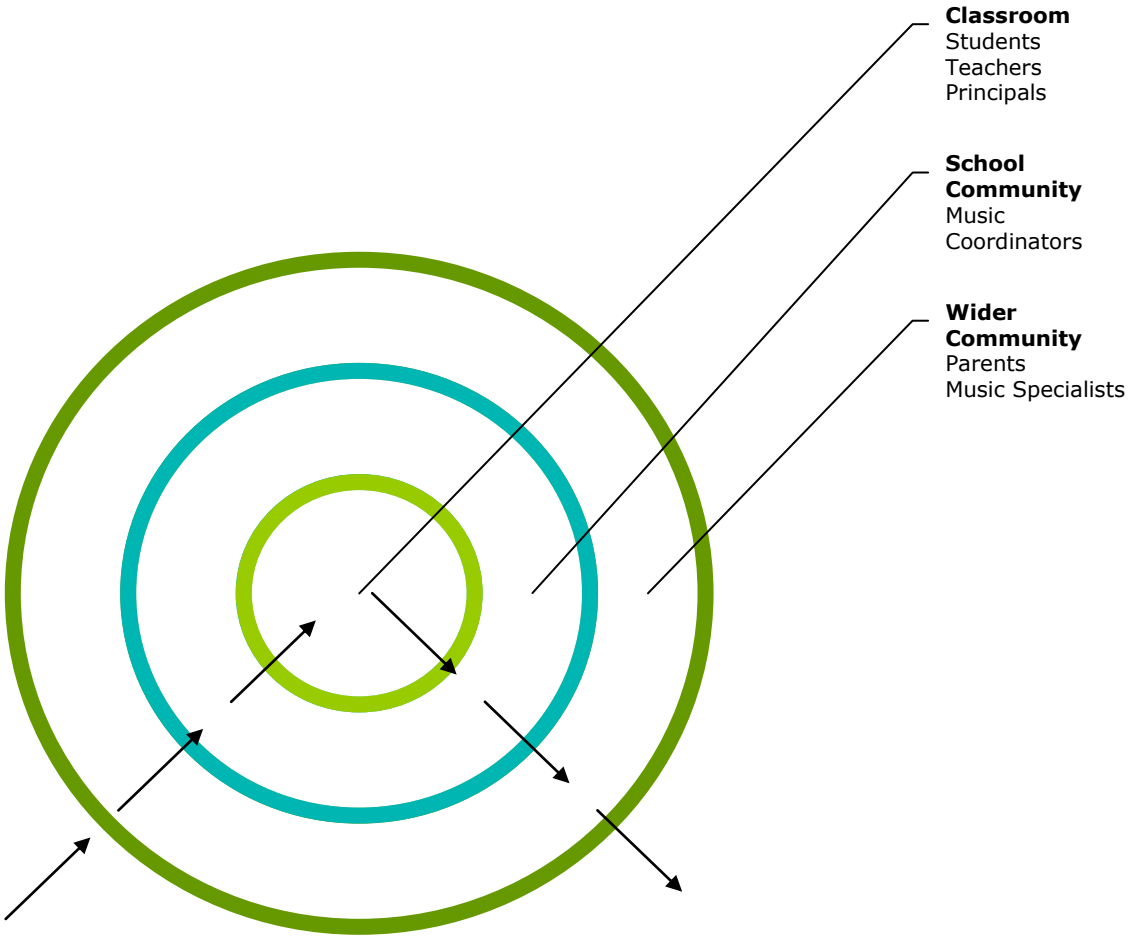


Diagram: Outlining the agents involved in the provision of music at primary level education in Ireland.

Music in the Classroom: The Role of the Classroom Teacher

My examination of music within the classroom setting, controlled largely by the regular classroom teacher, is based on the themes of integration and confinement. In the following section, I will outline the successes and challenges of such a system and explore some possibilities for further developments. The teaching and use of music within the classroom is controlled and facilitated by the individual classroom teacher. Within the classroom, music can become a private learning experience shared between teacher and students. Music may become normalised as part of a general learning experience or presented as a special(ist) subject area. Within the classroom, the integration of music into the school day is based on important cross-curricular links between subjects.

Emerging from my ethnographic experience, and specifically written into the methodological planning of this study, is the observation of an interlinked school day. Within the format of the primary education system, teachers are encouraged to facilitate cross-curricular learning, combining subject areas to develop understanding (Revised Primary Music Curriculum 1999). In terms of music as a subject, there are two aspects to cross-curricular learning, the use of music as a tool in the study of other subjects and the continuation of themes or subject matter in the learning of music as a subject. It is a reciprocal process that affects the value of subjects, creating different contexts for students consideration of

music. The classroom teacher plays an important role in facilitating cross-curricular linkage throughout the classroom day and the value systems developed within a particular classroom community.

The knowledge developed within the classroom through the school year creates a relationship between teacher and students. The acknowledgement of each student's individuality can often enhance the learning processes and the integration of students into the classroom community. The classroom teacher is the sole director of learning within the classroom space and is empowered by the system. Within the classroom space the teacher has control over what is taught, how it is taught and when it is taught. The classroom teacher has the opportunity to facilitate the teaching of music at a time they feel is most appropriate. They may consider the atmosphere of the classroom and the importance of covering particular material, influenced by traditional value systems. In a system facilitated by the individual teacher in a confined space, an impression may emerge that subjects have a hierarchical order. Music may be considered optional, merely complimentary to other subjects or used as a reward for good behaviour. Within the format of the primary education system, music is a curricular subject and that curriculum seeks to value music equally within the wider system. Within the confined space of the classroom, the curriculum, as a guideline for education practices, may become separated from practice. The curriculum fails to

acknowledge the various manifestations of music within a school and the complexity of connections within and between classroom, school and the wider community.

A distinctive learning community that develops particular relationships between its members, principally between students and the classroom teacher, occupies the classroom space. Recent literature on the professional development of classroom teachers suggests possibilities for enhancing current education systems through developments within the classroom space. Joan Dean presents an analysis of teaching that concentrates on classroom organisation. She points out that teachers 'need to consider what we want to organise before we consider how to do it' (2001, 111). A consideration of the role of music in the curriculum, classroom, school and community is critical in defining how a teacher relates to, uses and teaches music in a classroom. The fieldwork carried out during the course of the study has explored the various agents and how they inform the organisation of music within the Irish primary education system.

The fieldwork has also highlighted the possibilities for ground up development in the Irish education system, beginning with the classroom teacher. Joe Kincheloe (2003) suggests that ground up development takes place through professional development whereby teachers become

researchers aiming to improve their own skills, resources, subject matter and methods. While the curriculum presents a teacher with guidelines that are further enhanced by in-service training, there are other opportunities for professional development in all areas, not just music. An important aspect of professional development is the provision of opportunities for communicating and sharing classroom experiences (Pollard 2002). The opportunities for professional development, such as training courses, are sometimes considered inaccessible to some members of the teaching community, frequently due to geographic location, though sometimes an attitude prevails that there is not sufficient reward or incentive for participating in existing courses.

Another challenge that emerges for classroom teachers is the requirement to competently teach and repeatedly develop their own skills and knowledge in eleven subjects. There is a possibility for enhancing the classroom experience through the sharing of time and space with other individuals with complementary skills. There is evidence in some schools of teachers alternating between classrooms to teach particular subjects. However, this system is not easily facilitated by the current system. There is a requirement, within this system, to recognise the diversity of skills within a school staff and, when challenges arise in relation to particular skills or subject areas, other individuals may be employed.

Curriculum Leadership: Co-ordinating Music Education

The introduction of a curriculum co-ordinator with responsibility for music education and performances changes the focus for music education in a primary level school. This system suggests the opening up of classroom spaces, a re-evaluation of music and the development of material resources within the school. The position of co-ordinator ideally provides a central resource for teachers that may enhance the experience and learning of music within the primary level system. The curriculum co-ordinator can facilitate opportunities for professional development for both themselves and other classroom teachers within a school.

The curriculum co-ordinator is a post of responsibility. Sarah Hennessey (1998) outlines the role of the curriculum co-ordinator in the English school system, a model closely related in structure to the Irish education system. In the system outlined by Hennessey, the music co-ordinators are also music specialists as opposed to classroom teachers, a model that has been adapted informally by some schools in the Irish education system. However, music co-ordinators in the majority of Irish primary schools are classroom teachers. The existence of many small schools makes it challenging to have a specific teacher assigned to each subject area.

In an Irish primary level school, the music co-ordinator can contribute to the development of music in schools by acting as a central resource and as a support for all teachers. From a curricular perspective, a music co-ordinator can help in the implementation of the curriculum guidelines within a school. Within this context, the music co-ordinator can facilitate the development of a spiral curriculum allowing continuity in a student's music education.

The fieldwork experience highlighted the importance of curriculum leadership combined with an understanding of the extra-curricular role of music in a classroom and school. The complexity of the role of the curriculum co-ordinator is difficult to outline fully. Often, the extra-curricular duties are not clearly delineated. The most prominent extra-curricular role is the development of performance opportunities in public spaces. These musical performances, mirrored in sports and other artistic pursuits that engage the community imagination, are an integral part of the image and reputation of the school. The reputation of a school, as previously discussed, can influence the learning environment, which can be enhanced by extra-curricular success.

Another important role fulfilled by the music co-ordinator is the development and co-ordination of certain material resources within a school. Within a school environment, this can be useful in the provision

of skills, instruments and opportunities for shared performance. The inclusion of music, performed by students and, perhaps, teachers, in school events, provides a reason and incentive that enhances the learning process. This context for music in a school creates a re-evaluation of music within the school community, often adding value to music as an activity. The performance of music, even within the confines of a school setting, can help to forge links with the wider community, usually through audience observation. In turn, this process enhances and changes our perspective of music only as a curricular subject confined to people within the school environment.

The curriculum co-ordinator should be afforded the opportunity to undertake professional development that may then help other teachers within the system. The role of the curriculum co-ordinator, much like that of a classroom teacher, requires a range of skills that go beyond those required to teach. These skills are enhanced by communication between teachers and co-ordinators and an understanding of the various models that already exist. These models may be then adapted to suit a particular school setting, guided by the curriculum co-ordinator. A curriculum co-ordinator must, therefore, be provided with the opportunity to become a researcher, engage with professional development in relation to their area, and develop a knowledge of music education systems and structures that may be applied to their own school setting.

Conclusions: Linking Communities

In the primary education system in Ireland, a number of opportunities have arisen for the employment of music teachers who are not necessarily, or formally, part of the permanent teaching staff of a school. The term 'music specialist' can often create an attitude that music is a special subject that is not accessible to everybody. Thus, a paradoxical situation is created that challenges models of education that employ specialist music teachers to present opportunities for access to music education, while simultaneously re-emphasising the specialisation required for the professional pursuit of a career in music (Hennessey 1998). However, Anthony Everitt suggests that 'participatory music', based on the role of music in contemporary British schools and society, is not under threat and music continues to involve large numbers of people, in a natural way, without undue financial constraints (Everitt 1997). Therefore, there is a need to relate the naturally occurring musical activity of communities and societies in which a school is located with the musical activity of the school itself.

Musicians within the surrounding community often occupy music specialist positions. A link is therefore created between the musical activity of the school and its surroundings. The role of the music specialist is often undefined and can vary greatly between schools. The

school principal or curriculum co-ordinator generally selects the individuals involved. The selection of a music specialist is often based on musical reputation, ability and availability. These individuals become empowered to make the choices that create the structures for musical learning in the school. There is a fundamental need to acknowledge the process of selecting and training music specialists, particularly in relation to the skills of teaching. The lack of formal recognition of music specialists in the Irish education system is reflected by the dearth of literature, particularly regarding the selection process, the role of music specialists and the training provided, or required, for the post.

Musicians employed in the role of a music specialist in a school setting most often provide instrumental training, often in tin-whistle, recorder and percussion. This provides a partial music education that may be perceived to be somewhat exclusive. The introduction of a music specialist challenges the hierarchical ordering of subjects and, in many ways, removes music from this order. The music specialist focuses primarily on the teaching of music as an individual subject, perhaps, separate from the primary school curriculum. However, if the music specialist can work within the remit of the whole school setting in collaboration with the classroom teacher, the music specialist can make a significant contribution to the overall musical activities in the classroom. In such a system, a child centred learning approach and the

acknowledgement of individuals within the learning community can be achieved.

In the following discussion I will consider the possibility of developing further connections between the various agents of those systems. Based on the roles presented by the agents involved in the provision of music education, three questions have emerged in relation to the provision and development of music education at primary level. First, what is the aim of providing music education? Secondly, is it part of the classroom (confined and private) or an opportunity to link communities? The third question relates to the role of music within a curriculum and explores the complexities of music simultaneously as a school subject and as a part of the fabric of society.

The curriculum guidelines aspire to music as a combination of performance, appreciation and understanding. Teaching practices that focus on the development of performance capabilities are often technical and may include activities such as composing, group singing or playing, or individual virtuosity. The appreciation and understanding of music, developed through experiences of listening, primarily within the classroom setting, can be developed through writing, drawing or movement, and are based on personal or individual responses. These responses present challenges in relation to the evaluation and assessment

of music in the classroom as they require alternative methods. When focusing on the role of music in the primary level education system, the opportunities provided for children to present their learning to a wider community, often made up of family members and neighbours, is important. Participation becomes achievement.

Developing music as a subject within the classroom is one way of creating opportunities for students to participate in musical experiences and learning. The hidden curriculum attaches a sense of value that must be considered in the development and provision of music education at primary level in Ireland. Facilitated by an individual classroom teacher, the development of music as a subject within the curriculum presents many opportunities and challenges. It may or may not include public performance, though such performances may be aspired to as a sense of achievement.

In-school music co-ordinators, as both a resource and as an agent in the development of resources, create links between curriculum and practice. Music co-ordinators can remove the boundaries that confine music to the classroom and present it as an activity and performance. The aspiration and perceived importance of performance, as a tool for developing links outside of the school space and the generation of a positive school image, places pressures on the activities of teachers and co-ordinators.

Music specialists are often assigned special responsibilities for teaching music with a focus on developing a school band. This type of musical activity can often focus on skills and technical ability over listening and understanding. Although this may alter the focus of music, it does present an opportunity for assessment that has become an inherent part not only of the Irish education system but also of a society obsessed with the quality of education.

Fundamental to the quality of education presented by each of the three roles, classroom teacher, music co-ordinator and music specialist, is the role of professional development. A model that aims to develop access to and provision for music in the primary education system requires an element of further professional development for all of those employed professionally. An essential element of professional development is the facilitation of communication between teachers, co-ordinators and specialists. A space must be created within the Irish education system to allow for communication between agents, which allows for the enhancement of teaching and learning experiences. These paths of communication should also extend to the wider community in which the school is located. Teachers must continue to acknowledge the contexts in which they teach and adapt the material taught to accommodate their students within the guidelines of the curriculum. It is imperative that

those teaching and co-ordinating musical activity in a school understand the contexts in which these children are approaching and learning music. It is important to acknowledge the musical interests and skills of the children and teachers within each classroom setting. This can enhance the learning experiences for both teachers and students. In such a system, participation for all in musical experiences can be further realised.

This study has presented a number of important themes in relation to the interconnectedness of classroom and community in Ireland. The study reveals how the classroom as a primary space for learning is at the locus of a wider cultural and community environment. It has also shown how reciprocal connections exist between the agents within these environments. The wider community is significant as it can potentially play a role in the development and enhancement of the learning environment in schools. The school community can also engage with and contribute to the wider community setting.

The study has shown how connections have already formed between various agents located within the school environment and in the wider community. Classroom teachers and outside community agents are pursuing various collaborations which extend the educational

environment for students and locate the learning within the wider community and cultural setting.

Within the context of the classroom, school community and the wider community, music has emerged as an important medium for the expression of connectedness. Music is unique in the way it can facilitate students to connect their learning within their school environment in relation to their wider community. In order to enhance and extend the opportunities available to all students, classroom teachers and local community members, these connections must be acknowledged and considered in the future development of the primary level education system in Ireland.

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Fieldwork Interviews

Name	Date	Location	
Jack Durkan School	November 21st 2005	Togher	Boys
Joe Carroll School	November 24th 2005	Togher	Boys
Rachel Kelly School	November 29th 2005	Togher	Boys
Sue Buckley School	November 29th 2005	Togher	Boys
Billy Lynch	December 17th 2005	Scoil Choilmcille	
Noreen Guiney	December 18th 2005	Scoil Choilmcille	
Michael Casey	December 19th 2005	Scoil Choilmcille	
John Burke	December 19th 2005	Scoil Choilmcille	