UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

MUSIC TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF MUSIC IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF KUALA LUMPUR

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master in Education (Music)

Faculty of Education

August 2005

ABSTRACT

This study was structured around two main objectives: 1) to identify the professional development needs of primary school music teachers; and 2) to propose relevant and suitable in-service courses to fulfil these needs. For this purpose, three methods of data collection were used - namely, documentary reviews, interviews, and a questionnaire were used. There were two sets of respondents in this study: primary school music teachers and ministry officers in charge of music programmes in the schools. A quantitative approach was employed in seeking responses from a sample of 197 music teachers in Kuala Lumpur to provide data to ascertain the knowledge and skills of music teachers in Malaysian primary schools and the current status of professional development programmes provided. Qualitative data were obtained through interviews with Ministry of Education officers in Teacher Education Division, Curriculum Development Centre, and State Education Department of Kuala Lumpur to lend insights to the quantitative data.

Descriptive statistics and inferential analysis were used to analyse the data in relation to the research questions. The concentration of this study was on the following seven major areas of knowledge and skills in music - namely, music theory, singing and aural, playing of musical instruments, music education areas, music history and appreciation, educational technology in music education, and specialised activities in music.

It was found that music in primary schools is taught by music teachers who are not adequately qualified to teach music. These music teachers indicated incompetency in all seven areas, music educational technology being the most notable, followed by lack of competence in the playing of Malaysian traditional musical instruments. These music teachers had also not received much in-service support or training. However a t-test showed that music optionists were significantly better than the non-music optionists when comparisons were made on the seven areas of knowledge and skills in music. Training thus far provided has not been based on teachers' incompetencies or choices. However this study has also shown that music teachers' choices of professional development courses were often not made based on their own areas of incompetencies or needs for professional development. Irrespective of training as music optionists or non-music optionists, they were assigned to teach music at Levels I and II. Results of the survey indicate an urgent need for professional development courses for music teachers, non-music optionists in particular, to promote good teaching of music in the classroom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The world of education is undergoing massive changes in tandem with rapid and multi-faceted advances in the world of communication and technology. These changes have also contributed to the use of innovative musical tools such as synthesizers as well as computer software in music education. In the past, one simply needed a pen and a sheet of paper to write a song. Today one can compose a song using computer technology. Under these circumstances, it is only logical that the ways teachers teach music has undergone or will need to undergo some sort of change.

Apart from technological and communication advances, there are also government-initiated and related changes such as policies, politics, economics and global issues which have an effect on the ways teachers teach music in the classrooms. These, together with the rapid development of knowledge, especially in the areas of information technology, consistently render our present knowledge and expertise in education obsolete.

According to Fullan (2001), as the world changes, so will educational content, thoughts, theories, and practices. Often these changes, especially those spurred by the advent of technology, leave teachers with a feeling of powerlessness. The teachers' increasing responsibilities are compounded by fast moving developments within the areas of science and technology (Davis, 1998). Over a short period of time, teachers are expected to be up-to-date with the latest technological developments, be responsive to their students' individual differences and needs, as well as to move away from regular teaching and learning to practise more progressive inquiry methods.