

Evaluation of the EMI Music Sound Foundation Project rollout: Training Key Stage 1 Primary School Teachers (2010-2011)

Institute of Education

University of London

Professor Susan Hallam
Dr Andrea Creech
Dr Maria Varvarigou

Evaluation of roll out or training for delivery of Key Stage 1 music (2010-2011)

Executive Summary

Introduction

Music offers powerful potential to enrich primary pupils' learning experiences. In addition to its role in developing musical skills there is considerable evidence that there are benefits of music education in relation to a range of transferable skills.

Many primary school teachers feel ill equipped and insecure at the prospect of having to teach music and very few teachers in primary schools have any qualifications in music, even at a comparatively modest level. Teachers of Foundation Years and Key Stage 1 require particular support if they are to deliver a well-defined and organized music curriculum that will equip children with basic musical literacy that underpins progression through Key Stage 2.

The aim of the EMI Music Sound Foundation project was to provide primary schools with resources and training to support KS1 teaching. Schools chose resources and were provided with one day of training for teachers organised by and at the focal secondary school whose teachers also provided additional support following the training. The schools had the option of buying a further day of training from the monies provided for them to buy resources. Only two schools did this.

The evaluation concerned itself with several broad but interrelated aspects of the project including the impact on:

- the delivery of the Key Stage 1 music curriculum;
- teacher confidence and enthusiasm relating to the music curriculum;
- the musical skills of pupils;
- music provision in the school as a whole; and
- music education in the school in the long term.

It also aimed to identify future possible training needs.

Methodology

The evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach. Questionnaires were distributed to participating teachers before and following the training. Twenty-eight secondary schools participated in the project and 132 primary schools. Two hundred and nineteen teachers completed the pre-training questionnaire and 161 the post training questionnaire.

The participating teachers were asked to carry out an evaluation of the musical skills and attitudes of six children in their class before the start of the programme and after it had been completed. Measures were completed for 1013 children prior to the training and 971 children following it. Data were collected for 315 children perceived to have high level musical skills, 330 with moderate skills and 326 with low level skills.

Thirty four primary head teachers and 18 secondary school music teachers completed questionnaires relating to the impact of the programme. Telephone interviews were undertaken with three primary school music teachers. The two facilitators of the training were interviewed.

Visits were made to six primary schools towards the end of the academic year. Video recordings were made of some of the Key Stage 1 music teaching. Teachers and head teachers were interviewed and pupils were asked to make a drawing of their perceptions of music in their school.

The analysis of the data focused on change brought about as a result of the intervention.

Findings

The context

The primary school teachers had a wide range of musical skills and prior experience. For those with no prior musical experience the amount of time spent on music in their initial teacher education was inadequate. Subsequent training programmes were very short and tended not to focus on KS1.

The level of musical expertise in the primary schools was varied. Some schools had no music specialists while others had several.

There was wide variability in the amount of time spent in musical activity in classes each week ranging from 20 minutes to 70 minutes.

Primary school teachers reported variability in access to instruments (pitched and un-pitched) and in the extent to which the instruments were used. Most teachers had access to a CD player in their class. About half had access to recording equipment.

The main aims of the primary school teachers participating in the training were to get new ideas, increase their confidence, enhance their knowledge and understanding and develop planning skills in relation to the music curriculum.

Impact on the primary school teachers

Overwhelmingly, primary school participants, primary school head teachers and secondary school music teachers valued the training and the resources which were supplied to schools.

There were highly statistically significant changes in primary school teachers' responses to measures of their skills and attitudes prior to and following the training. Prior to the training 46% reported being confident about teaching music to their class, following the training this increased to 96%. Prior to training 78% reported enjoying teaching music. This rose to 95% following the training.

Ninety six percent of the KS1 teachers reported that the training was successful in helping them improve their music teaching. 75% believed that the training had brought about changes to music education in their school.

Analysis of the video material showed that the primary school teachers were implementing practices introduced during the training and that the new resources had encouraged the use of instruments. There was wide variability in the quality of the teaching and the standards attained by the pupils and the extent to which the outputs were 'musical' rather than mere exercises. The best lessons were delivered by the music co-ordinators who were either very experienced musicians or very confident.

Impact on the children

There were highly statistically significant differences in the primary school teachers' ratings of pupils' attitudes towards music prior to and following their teachers' attending the training. Prior to training 95% were assessed as enjoying music lessons. This rose to 100%. Prior to the training, 69% of the children were assessed as being confident in music lessons. This rose to 98%. The greatest change was in relation to those children who were perceived as having the lowest levels of musical expertise.

There were highly statistically significant differences in primary school teachers' ratings of their pupils' musical skills prior to and following training including their sense of pulse, rhythm and pitch. The percentage of children assessed as having well-developed musical skills rose from 28% to 78%. The percentage having strategies for composing rose from 9% to 58%, the percentage assessed as performing well rose from 81% to 94%, and as having well-developed listening skills rose from 65% to 91%. The increase in skills was not differentiated in terms of children's prior musical expertise. A small number of complex skills were assessed by teachers as having deteriorated. This was almost certainly as the teachers were better able to make a realistic assessment of these skills following the training rather than a real deterioration.

Children's drawings of making music in their classes following the increase in resources suggested that they were appreciated as many drawings included instruments. There were also many pictures which depicted children smiling suggesting that they enjoyed their music lessons.

Impact on schools

The training was perceived to have integrated well with previous music practices in the school.

There was perceived to be an increase in the extent to which primary school teachers could integrate musical activities into the overall curriculum.

The training was seen to have had a moderate impact on the provision of extra-curricular musical activities.

There was variability in the primary schools in the extent to which music was valued. The training was seen to have raised the profile of music in the schools as the teachers were more confident about teaching music. The greatest obstacle to an increase in the profile of music was perceived to be the concentration on literacy and numeracy for national testing.

The secondary school music teachers indicated that the training had given them useful insights into the KS1 curriculum. They believed that the training would have an impact of the KS1 teaching.

Further training needs

A range of further training needs were identified including those for:

- KS2 teachers;
- particular areas of the curriculum (see Table 17, page 45);
- learning how to plan, monitor and understand issues of progression;
- teachers to develop their own musical skills; and
- general training and support to develop new skills, techniques and ideas, and keep up to date.

There was variability in the extent to which primary head teachers were committed to funding future training needs in music education.

Conclusions

The evaluation demonstrated that the training, the resources and the support offered by the secondary school teachers were successful in improving the confidence and skills of the participating KS1 teachers with a subsequent impact on the attitudes of the children and the development of their musical skills. The benefits in terms of attitudes to music were greatest for the children who initially had low levels of musical expertise. The benefits in terms of musical skills were consistent across all of the children. The training was seen to benefit the whole school and the integration of music across the curriculum. By increasing the confidence of teachers the training was seen to raise the profile of music in the school.

The evaluation confirmed previous research in highlighting variability in the priority given to music in primary schools. This was reflected in;

- variability in the number of staff with high levels of musical expertise;
- differences in the time spent engaging with music education;
- the available resources (instruments, other equipment and materials);
- the extent to which there were opportunities to learn to play an instrument;
- the extent to which there were opportunities to engage in extra-curricular musical activities; and
- the preparedness of the head teacher to commit funding to further training.

A wide range of further training opportunities were suggested as being needed. Training for KS2 teachers was seen as a priority in addition to ongoing training and support within schools to enable teachers to continue to develop their skills and increase their repertoire of activities. Some teachers were enthusiastic about developing their own musical skills through, for instance, learning to play an instrument or learning to read music. There were also requests for the further development of teaching skills in specific areas of the curriculum and the use of ICT. Overall, there is a clear need for the provision of a wide range of training opportunities.