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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRIMARY-SECONDARY CONTINUUM IN IRISH MUSIC EDUCATION[1]

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The relationship between music education in Irish primary and secondary schools is examined. Factors that have contributed to the 'fractured continuum' that exists between music education at the two levels are identified and the establishment of a continuum from the perspective of curriculum development, music teacher education, and a teacher support system is explored. Within the broad area of curriculum development, it is necessary to establish continuity in terms of philosophy, aims, and objectives, and the structure and organization of learning experiences. Since a major premise of the paper is that the teacher plays a pivotal role in establishing a continuum, emphasis is placed on the reform of music teacher education and the development of a teacher support system.

At no other time in the history of Irish music education has there been such intense dialogue on the status of music in education and on the issues and challenges that confront music teachers in their professional work in the schools. The forum of the Music Education National Debate (MEND), 1995-96, has been a catalyst for change, for improving the quality of music instruction for the youth of Ireland. In a larger context, if a national forum is established as a result of these deliberations, it will ultimately contribute to improving the quality of musical life and culture in Ireland, and that is tied to the spiritual wealth of the nation. President John F. Kennedy, addressing the American nation in the 1960s, addressed the centrality of the arts in the welfare of the nation. He said:

[1] This is a shortened version of a paper presented at Phase III of the Music Education National Debate, Dublin Institute of Technology, November 10-12, 1996. A second paper that the author contributed to this Debate, Phase II in November, 1995, was published in *Oideas*, 1997, *45*, 5-22. The Music Education National Debate was sponsored by the Dublin Institute of Technology and organized by its Director of Cultural Affairs, Frank Heneghan. The Debate, which began with Phase I in April 1995 and ended with Phase III in November 1996, focused on discussion of an eight-point agenda which included philosophy of music education, appraisal of the music education network in Ireland, the role of performance in music education, the Leaving Certificate crisis, music at third-level and the training of professional musicians, the role of national culture in the music curriculum, and the establishment of a National Forum for Music Education.

> This country cannot afford to be materially rich and spiritually poor. To further the appreciation of culture among all people, to increase respect for the creative individual, to widen the participation by all in the processes and fulfilments of art – this is one of the fascinating challenges of these days.[2]

As Ireland's economy moves more and more into the foreground of the nation's concerns, arts educators at all levels need to be vigilant and to advocate at all times the need to balance education in the arts with education in science and commerce. Placed in that context, the mission of MEND is noble and can be of tremendous consequence for the quality of life in twenty-first century Ireland.

The focus in this paper is on the establishment of a primary-secondary continuum in Irish music education. Since the Debate began in public in 1995, the phrase 'fractured continuum' surfaced many times in relation to secondary- and tertiary-level music education. The Leaving Certificate was viewed as the critical interface in the continuum, and as Frank Heneghan (1995) put it, 'an encapsulation of most of the problems by which Irish music education is currently beset'. This educational juncture is one that needs the closest of attention and critical evaluation, but it is also clear that

> no change in the Leaving Certificate programme, no addition or subtraction of syllabi will provide a long-term and satisfactory solution, because the cure or solution lies at other critical interfaces in the system, the interface between preschool and primary school, and between primary and secondary school. Focusing the majority of music specialization resources – human and financial – in secondary schools is like attempting to build a superstructure on a weak or non-existent foundation. In this case, not only is the foundation not consistently solid but there is no scaffolding, no infrastructure for all students to develop their musical potential, to form a musical consciousness or a musical image of self. (McCarthy, 1997, p. 10.)

In this paper, I explore another critical interface in the system – between primary and secondary education. In the Music Education National Debate (1996) Frank Heneghan stated that 'a continuum in music education between primary and secondary education is virtually impossible under current circumstances' (p. 16). My goal is to identify what these circumstances are and to explore ways in which change can be introduced so that a continuum is possible. The present structure of the educational system limits the extent to

[2]These words are inscribed in marble in the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC.

which a continuum can be implemented; however, there are creative ways of thinking beyond the confines of administrative structures.

A basic comparison of music in primary and secondary schools illustrates how the institutional history and culture of music in both contexts are radically different (see Figure 1). There are certain structural and administrative changes that are beyond the control of subject specialists or maybe even subject inspectors; these impact on our ability to advance the idea of a continuum beyond rhetoric and include the autonomous nature of both primary and secondary schooling and the unlikely chance that music specialists will be introduced into primary schools.

FIGURE 1

MUSIC IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A COMPARATIVE VIEW

Primary	Secondary
Child-centered	Subject-centered
Subject-integrated	Subjects isolated
General teacher	Specialist teacher
Curriculum is 'local', with national guidelines	Curriculum determined by national syllabi
Performance-based	Separate performance/academic music
No formal assessment	Highly structured formal assessment
Primary inspectorate	Secondary inspectorate

Certain recommendations of the White Paper on Education, *Charting Our Education Future* (1995), indicate an awareness of the need for a continuum between primary and secondary levels of education. The word 'continuum' appears frequently in reference to the transition between the two levels: 'ideally, close links between curriculum, learning process and teaching methods at both levels should enable students to make connections between the different aspects of their educational experience.' The idea is revisited in the context of arts education: 'Continuity will be fostered ... between the arts curriculum at primary level and the arts curriculum at second level.' The inclusion of the arts in the discussion reflects considerable progress when compared to the Green Paper, *Education for a Changing World* (1992), which was widely criticized because of its neglect of this area (Coolahan, 1994; Dunne, 1995). As evident in the White Paper, arts education is beginning to have a real presence within the spectrum of educational concerns.

There are four basic assumptions that underlie my development of the continuum idea[3]: it is educationally sound; the teacher plays a pivotal role in the realization of a continuum; a primary-secondary continuum is part of a life-long continuum of music education; and, to be successful, a continuum must be interfaced with music education in the community and in the culture at large. In my historical study of Irish music education in a cultural context, I found that the strength of music education in Ireland has traditionally been located outside the formal education system (McCarthy, 1990). Any conception of a music education continuum in public education needs to take this into account. I view the primary-secondary continuum as the backbone of music education for the population in general, aimed at developing a set of common musical understandings, practices and values. At the same time, that set of common learnings is grounded in and draws its energy from what is musically continuous in children's lives as they grow up and what they return to after formal school music education is over. To keep that life-long learning continuum in perspective contextualizes and gives meaning and direction to primary and secondary music education.

Several problem areas contribute directly to the lack of a primary-secondary continuum: lack of philosophy and aims that would allow for continuity between music at the two levels; lack of a conceptual base for music in education; minimum continuity in methodologies, instructional materials, and assessment; the absence of a dialogue among teachers at both levels; different sources of teacher supervision, advising, and in-career education; different teacher qualification and education practices; and an educational structure that does not facilitate communication between the two levels.

In approaching these areas of concern, I highlight the pivotal role of the teacher in establishing a primary-secondary continuum. I take this approach based on the assumption that continuity is not established through documents or statements that are imposed on a school system, although such documents are an essential prerequisite to change; rather a continuum is established in the process of educating preservice and inservice music teachers, in the actions of teachers in their classrooms and professional communities, and in the support system that

[3] Examining the root meanings of a word can provide insight into how we can use it to advance ideas. Continuum can mean: a linked or continuous series of elements producing a whole, a compact set which cannot be separated into two sets, something in which a fundamental common character is discernible amid a series of indefinite variations, or an ideal substance or medium containing no vacant spaces and devoid of discrete structure.

is available to them in the form of materials, forums for dialogue, and supervision. I will first consider the continuum in terms of curriculum development, then music teacher education, and finally teacher support system.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Philosophy

The development of a philosophical orientation to music, and to music teaching and learning, is a fundamental prerequisite for establishing a continuum, and for conceptually uniting all levels of music education. Where there is no vision for music in education commonly held by all teachers of music – primary and secondary – the stability of music in compulsory education in endangered and music will continue to be a vulnerable subject and maintain its frill status in many sectors of the educational community.

An examination of the primary curriculum and the secondary music syllabi shows that this area is beginning to be addressed, particularly in the primary school curriculum and in the most recent Leaving Certificate syllabus. Secondary school music syllabi have typically lacked such statements in the past, but this situation is changing. The 1996 Leaving Certificate syllabus includes a rationale which focuses on the functions of music and its role and value in our lives (Department of Education, 1996).

The tradition for philosophy in music education is young, not only in Ireland, but also elsewhere. Bennett Reimer's *A Philosophy of Music Education*, first published in 1970, was the first in-depth thesis specifically addressing music in general education; and it is only in very recent years that an alternative philosophy, proposed by David Elliott (1995), has entered the discourse and challenged the former one. These books provide an invaluable foundation for examining the meaning of music in human life, and the implications of such knowledge for music teaching and learning.

The establishment of a continuum depends on a comprehensive philosophical statement that articulates the role of music in society and in education, and the interrelationship between the two. Such a statement will give direction to goals and objectives for music, to music teacher education at primary and secondary levels, to the types of curricular offerings made available to students at various levels, and to access to the subject in the curriculum, both as a compulsory and an elective subject. It will also situate music education in primary and secondary education in the context of life-long learning and participation in music, and in the context of other forms of music education that are available in the culture at

large, from formal schools of music to the influence of the popular music industry.

At another level, each music teacher needs to develop a personal philosophical perspective and be able to articulate it – a perspective gained from teaching experience and reflection, reading and reflection, and discussion. In other words, it is a perspective with a stable foundation that is clarified and refined during one's professional career. In the process of clarification and refinement, teachers' values about music and music education are internalized and, based on their personal convictions and beliefs about music, teachers position themselves as strong advocates for music in the schools.

It is no longer adequate for music teachers to limit their responsibility to educating their students; they must also educate the school community and all those who support music in the schools. This is evident from the recent publications of the US Music Educators National Conference. Advocacy materials for educating the community and building public relations are now available (see, for example, Music Educators National Conference, 1990, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1994). In promoting music in this way, music's role in primary and secondary education becomes visible, and parents of primary-school students (and students themselves) who develop an appreciation of its value are more likely to continue supporting and participating in music in secondary education. Phase I report of MEND highlighted the centrality of parental support and stated that 'very many parents have come through the same system and will need to be convinced that music education has any serious place in the system.' (Donnelly, 1995). Advocacy materials are now available for the Leaving Certificate course, prepared by the Curriculum Support Team for music, and it would be beneficial if similar curriculum teams would create advocacy materials for other educational levels.

The foundation for a continuum is laid in a philosophical or mission statement that bridges the primary and secondary levels, and one that is shared by all teachers of music. It is articulated in all music curricular documents and syllabi so that the Infants – Leaving Certificate context for music education is given continuity and coherence. This will begin to transcend in the minds of teachers the artificial fracture that is imposed by the administrative organization of Irish education.

Aims and Objectives

In relation to aims or goals and objectives, the same artificial division has militated against the achievement of continuity and unity of purpose between music in primary and secondary education. A continuum is evident in the

planning of Junior and Senior Certificate syllabi so that teachers can look across the spectrum of secondary music and identify skills, understandings, and attitudes/values that are developed over the course of a student's schooling. The Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus seeks 'to promote continuity and progression in the skills acquired through the Junior Certificate syllabus in music' (Department of Education, 1996, p. 1). The Junior Certificate Music Syllabus aims 'to advance the musical skills and concepts acquired at the primary level.' (Department of Education, n.d., p. 5) Those skills and concepts are changing, given that a revised primary school curriculum is now ready for implementation. In an ideal world, the primary music curriculum would have been available before the secondary music syllabi were revised so that the 'musical skills and concepts acquired at the primary level' had some concrete meaning for those planning the syllabi and for the secondary music teacher who is implementing them. Such inter-level communication is crucial to achieving continuity in a child's musical education, since aims and objectives ought to be developed in an Infants – Leaving Certificate context.

The National Music Curriculum in Britain and the National Standards for Arts Education in the United States provide fine models for establishing a continuum that bridges the goals of primary and secondary music education. The four Key Stages of the British music curriculum cover the years of compulsory music education, from 5 to 14 years of age (Great Britain. Department for Education, 1995). The U S *National Standards for Arts Education* divides the schooling years as follows: K-4, 5-8, 9-12, to reflect the different types of schools that students typically attend at those grade levels – elementary, middle, and high school (Mahlmann et al, 1994). The unifying factor at all levels is the nine content standards which appear for all levels. (Although pre-kindergarten is not officially part of the plan, it is discussed in great detail, and a separate publication has been issued for that level.)

To establish a continuum, an overall set of goals and objectives is needed for classes from Infants to Leaving Certificate. This runs contrary to the tradition of maintaining a separate identity for disciplines in primary and secondary schools, but inter-level planning of music education is vital for curricular coherence, instructional sequencing, and the success of music in the schools.

Curriculum Organization

The organization of the curriculum is closely related to a continuum of aims and objectives. Already, there is a certain degree of unity in how the curriculum is conceptually based. The areas of primary-school music – song singing, ear training that includes listening skills and reading, and creative work –

correspond with the Junior Cycle focus on performing, composing, and creative skills. The Leaving Certificate syllabus articulates a broader range of music learnings that includes not only skills but also understandings and attitudes/values. It is curious that these areas are not considered in the context of primary or Junior Cycle music programmes which seem to be conceived exclusively in terms of skill development.

Music can be approached in a variety of ways in a primary-secondary setting. In the United States, the development of musical concepts has dominated general music in the last three decades. This was based on what Elliott (1995) calls the 'structures-of-discipline' approach advocated by Jerome Bruner and others in the 1960s. Its focus is on the elements of music, and concepts of each element are revisited at different grade levels, when the familiar is reinforced and a more complex understanding of the element introduced. This approach placed music on an equal footing with other subjects, proving that it too had an inherent structure around which verbal concepts could be articulated and learned. Further, it provides a natural organization for the curriculum, it is logical and tangible, and facilitates the identification of learning outcomes and assessment strategies. However, numerous drawbacks of the approach have been identified in the last decade. Reducing the meaning of music to verbal concepts carries with it the danger of basing one's teaching on the concepts rather than on musical considerations (Elliott, 1995). For example, a teacher might decide on a concept and look for a song to illustrate it, rather than choosing the song based on musical criteria. Elliott who is highly critical of this approach, calls it 'a mechanistic concept of teaching' (p. 245) and cites the philosopher Clive Bell who argued against the notion of one structure for each subject: 'A subject has many structures at once. Different experts are aware of different fundamental principles' (Elliott, 1995, p. 247)

Certainly ethnomusicologists who study music in culture advocate other ways to explain the meaning of music in human life. Merriam (1964), writing at the time that the conceptual approach was gaining ground in American music education in the 1960s, examined the many functions of music in culture. He identified a variety of functions: emotional expression, aesthetic enjoyment, entertainment, communication, symbolic representation, physical response, enforcement of conformity to social norms, validation of social institutions and religious rituals, contribution to the continuity and stability of culture, and contribution to the integration of society. It is only recently that Merriam's work or a 'functions-of-music' approach has been integrated into mainstream music education in the United States. Elementary school music methods books (e.g., Shehan Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995) and high school music textbooks

(e.g., Fowler, 1994) are based on this approach. The approach is suited to all age levels, since children experience the function of music in their lives from the beginning – music to help them sleep and to comfort them, music for enjoyment in the playground, music for encouragement and esprit de corps in the sports field, music for celebrations in home, church, and community. The 'functions-of-music' approach is a tangible, real, and meaningful way to present music to primary- and secondary-school students.

Elliott's (1995) 'music-as-practice' approach provides a related way of conceptualizing and organizing music in the curriculum across all levels. He writes: 'Music is a human practice, and all musical practices depend on a form of knowledge called musicianship that is procedural in nature' (p. 247). The emphasis here is away from the formal and verbal knowledge which dominated the 'structures-of-discipline' approach, incorporating the 'functions-of-music' approach and reconceptualizing the skills approach, based on the idea of music as a human practice. It recognizes that musical understanding is always situated and contextualized, and is not merely an outgrowth of skills developed in isolation of context or musical practice. Elliott's approach demands a radical rethinking not just of how we conceive of musical practices but also of teaching-learning practices. Each stage of curriculum development is based on procedural knowledge.

In the Irish context, curriculum development in primary and secondary music seems to place a strong emphasis on skill development as an avenue to musical understanding. This may need to be rethought in light of the 'music-as- practice' approach and the related 'functions-of-music' approach. It is clear that the way the music curriculum is conceived and organized will play a major role in establishing a continuum between primary and secondary music education.

MUSIC TEACHER EDUCATION

A continuum between primary and secondary music education is first conceived at the national level of curriculum development and is reflected in the documents that provide guidance for the teacher. Such documents represent a necessary step towards the achievement of curricular continuity and coherence. However, they are useful only when they influence the dispositions and actions of teachers in their individual school contexts, since teachers and teacher educators play a critical role in the realization of a continuum in practice.

One of the most widely discussed and persistent problems in Irish music education seems to be the qualification and education of teachers of music. Within this general area, a number of issues arise: the education of the generalist teacher of music for primary schools, the education of the specialist teacher for

secondary schools, the lack of communication between primary and secondary teachers leading to misperceptions that ultimately inhibit student achievement in music, and the lack of communication between music teacher educators for primary and secondary education.

The issue of whether primary school music ought to be taught by a generalist/classroom teacher or a specialist sets up a continuum in and of itself, ranging from the generalist teacher, whose attitude to, self-confidence in, and competence to teach music leads him or her to pay minimal attention to music in the curriculum, to the specialist teacher who approaches the subject as a discrete discipline, isolated from other learning. Neither of these scenarios is desirable. At intermediate points on the continuum, one finds the generalist who uses music primarily to support the teaching of other subjects such as Irish, history, or religion, and the specialist who works closely with the classroom teacher in an advisory capacity. Considering that the introduction of music specialists into Irish primary schools is unlikely to occur in the near (or maybe even the distant) future, one has to explore ways of maximizing the use of music specialism that already exists in the primary teaching profession and among prospective teachers in colleges of education. Tapping the musical impulses of these teachers or student teachers, nurturing their self-confidence, building their self-identity as musicians, and developing in them a personal conviction of the value of music in their own lives and in their students' education ought to be the main goals of preservice and inservice education for primary teachers.

The education of classroom teachers of music, has been investigated in a considerable number of research studies, especially in Britain and Australia (less so in the United States where music is typically taught by music specialists, although this situation is changing, particularly in the cities). In Britain, the move in recent years has been towards re-establishing the classroom teacher as the primary music educator, with music co-ordinators or specialists supporting but not replacing her or him (Ward, 1993). Given the contemporary Irish context, this combination of generalist and specialist seems to be the logical and practical avenue towards establishing continuity within primary music education. I offer three recommendations for teacher preparation at this level.

First, new models of music methods courses need to be explored for prospective primary teachers, courses that are focused on attitudinal change, reflection on teachers' own musical background and experience, confidence building in music, consistent engagement with music-making at a fundamental level, the development of musical skills that are directly applicable to primary-school pupils, and reflection on the music-making process. The challenge in primary teacher education lies less in the amount of time devoted to music. After

all, primary teachers, with one hour a week of music methods over two years (and the option of music in their third year in one college of education), spend more time in their professional sequence of courses on music pedagogy than prospective secondary music teachers who typically receive one hour a week of music methods for one year. Exceptions are the Bachelor of Music Education degree (University of Dublin and the Dublin Institute of Technology) and the Royal Irish Academy of Music which integrates educational experiences into the entire degree programme.

A second recommendation is to identify students who have specialist training in music in their precollege experience, and to find ways to further develop their musicianship in the context of primary school music pedagogy. One study carried out over a decade ago found that 17% of students entering Carysfort College of Education in 1983 had taken music for the Leaving Certificate Examination (compared to 2.4% nationally), and 47% had taken music for the Intermediate Certificate Examination (compared to 16.2% nationally) (Spelman & Killeavy, 1990). If the percentage has not changed markedly in the last decade, these figures indicate a considerable concentration of potential music specialists in colleges of education. For students who elect music as their academic subject in the degree programme, music education/pedagogy courses could be included as well as the required performance and academic courses. Such pedagogy courses would be above and beyond those required of all students in their BEd programme.

Prospective teachers who specialize in music in their BEd degree in this way would go into the schools with specialist training to teach music, the knowledge and skills to advise or collaborate with colleagues in the overall school music curriculum, and ultimately be advocates for music in the school community and beyond. They could also liaise with secondary music teachers, thus filling the 'vacant space' in the fractured continuum and bridging the two educational levels.

Change would be required in music teacher education at both levels if this recommendation is to be successfully translated into practice. At present, teachers of music are certified or qualified to teach at either primary or secondary level and teacher education programmes reflect this structure. Thus, specialist teachers of music typically focus on secondary music, with little or no background in the fundamentals of music education in early childhood or primary school. In the United States, music educators are typically certified to teach music K-12, and specialize in either instrumental music or general and vocal music; teacher education programmes prepare students accordingly. The Irish context is different, no doubt, but it seems that a more comprehensive

education for secondary music teachers to bridge the chasm created by the organization of schooling would benefit all involved.

A third recommendation originated in the lack of communication between primary and secondary teachers of music. This problem is not unique to Ireland. Mills (1996) has reported on two government-sponsored studies of music education carried out in Britain in the early 1990s. The studies examined the implementation of the new national curriculum. Many of the findings and recommendations are worthy of reflection when considering a primary-secondary continuum in Ireland. In Britain, primary-school teachers frequently under-rated the quality of their music teaching, while secondary-school teachers frequently had a very low expectation of their new pupils from primary school, setting them tasks that lacked challenge and did not provide the opportunity for students to show their capability as performers, composers, or appraisers of music. These findings reflect misperceptions about teacher and student competence, as well as a lack of knowledge on the part of secondary teachers regarding the musical experiences of pupils in primary school. As Mills points out, in the best of situations, there is going to be a drop in achievement when students change schools. Further, the misperceptions indicated in the study findings may cause high levels of frustration in students who are confronted with less than challenging tasks.

Several of Mill's (1994, 1996) recommendations appear appropriate in the Irish context. First is the need to promote a dialogue between primary and secondary teachers which takes into account the achievement and the difficulties of teachers at both levels and increases continuity in children's musical experiences. Secondly, primary teachers with low self-esteem in music need assistance to recognize their strengths and to feel more confident that their contribution is valuable and is valued by secondary teachers. Thirdly, secondary-school teachers should be encouraged to visit all their feeder schools to observe primary pupils making music. This should help them have more realistic expectations of their new pupils. Fourthly, teachers at both levels need to develop a shared vocabulary for talking about students' musical achievements. Finally, the creation of joint appointments would be helpful, as would the organization of joint inservice education.

What is implied in these recommendations is a structured support system that encourages dialogue between teachers of music at both levels. For such a system to be effective, dialogue would also need to be introduced and reinforced in music teacher education programmes at both levels. Music teacher educators also need to realize the continuum by acknowledging the common dimensions of their professional work, by collaborative planning, and by sharing their

approaches to and concerns about the manner in which teachers of music are educated. Music teacher educators have a significant role to play in mending the fracture that exists between primary and secondary music education.

TEACHER SUPPORT SYSTEM

A major premise of my paper is that the teacher plays a pivotal role in establishing a continuum that ensures a sequential and unified music curriculum for all students in primary and secondary schools. However, the individual teacher's ability to negotiate this role successfully depends heavily on the presence of a highly organized and integrated system of support. In a nationally controlled system of education, guidance and support begin with the Department of Education and Science but, given the limited number of persons involved directly in the co-ordination and supervision of music in the schools, the amount of immediate support that can be expected from this source is minimal. As in the case of music teacher educators, music inspectors or music co-ordinators also need to work with a continuum in mind. Such an approach would be likely to facilitate the formulation of a unified, sequential curriculum, to ensure participation of teachers from both levels in all curriculum development efforts, to work towards joint teacher inservice programmes, to nurture partnerships between primary and secondary school music, and to supervise the even distribution of resources at both educational levels.

The Department of Education and Science could also encourage and endorse the publication of a graded, sequential general music textbook series to bridge the primary-secondary curriculum. Such a series should be introduced to student teachers during preservice education and thus create continuity with inservice practices. The dearth of music education materials, especially at the primary level, is in stark contrast to the proliferation of materials in Britain and the United States. The financial burden of purchasing such texts could be problematic for individual schools when one considers the cost of accompanying CDs, videotapes, teacher resource kits, and student textbooks. Yet classroom teachers need high-quality, user-friendly materials that appeal to their level of musicianship, provide a context for integrating music with other subjects, and reflect music in Irish culture. Thus, the production of a graded music series for Irish schools based on the most recent curricula must be regarded as a priority in the development of music in primary and secondary education.

The founding of a national forum for music education would also be a major source of support for teachers since the establishment of a continuum would require ongoing dialogue among music educators of all levels. A forum has the potential to facilitate such dialogue. It could take many forms – from national

and regional conferences, journals and newsletters, to the organization of research and the dissemination of its findings. More importantly, it could provide a meeting place and a site for building a professional identity for all teachers of music. An association for post-primary music teachers, with a membership of approximately 200, already exists. A national forum would reach beyond that professional group to include teachers of music at other levels, particularly at the primary level. Such a forum would provide opportunities for dialogue not only among school music educators but also with other centres or organizations that have a music education agenda. A forum could also act as a clearing house for establishing contacts and creating networks for music in the schools – the Arts Council, Music Network, schools of music, music in universities and community/regional colleges, centres of traditional music-making, and community musicians. Supplying music educators with resource lists of local musicians and other relevant sources could be the beginning of collaborative projects between school and community music.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the Irish education system is not structured to accommodate and support a primary-secondary continuum in music education. However, the parameters of the present system could be extended to realize such a continuum. In the process, innovation would have to outweigh tradition in certain practices and perspectives, and music educators at all levels would need to create new pathways that connect students and teachers within the primary-secondary continuum in imaginative ways, to linking music in schools with music in communities and nurturing continuity in the child's own experience of music in the world. How might a continuum be experienced by children progressing through primary and secondary school?

Children would participate in regular music instruction that would enable them to engage meaningfully in music-making: they learn from confident, musical teachers who know and believe in the value of music. They would experience consistent interfacing of school music with other sources of musical experience in their lives. They would perform a common repertoire that facilitates shared music-making. They would draw on an ever-expanding and sophisticated vocabulary for appraising and reflecting on music. And finally, they would develop a profound sense of the role and value of music in their lives. The challenges of moving forward with this agenda are immense, but not insurmountable. To quote the Chinese proverb: A journey of a thousand miles must begin with the first step. Every interested member of the music education community can be empowered to take that first step and to help improve the

quality of music education for every child as they progress through primary and secondary schooling.

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