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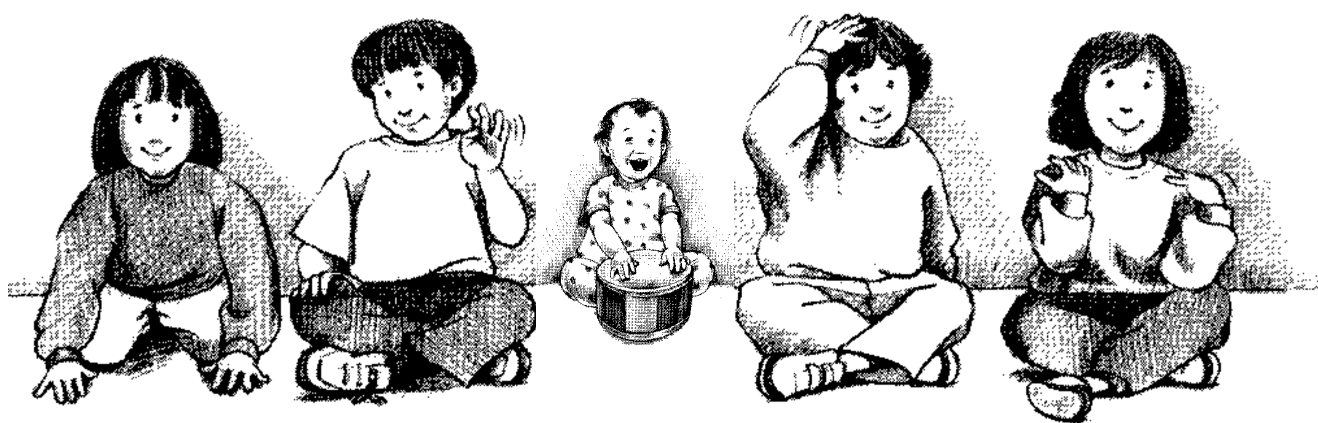

Music for fun, music for learning: Finding the music curriculum in early childhood

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INTRODUCTION

In my position as a lecturer in early childhood music education to early childhood teacher trainees, I have found myself over the years becoming increasingly distant from the reality of making music with young children. My experience as a playcentre supervisor was almost twenty years ago, and my current knowledge about the music programme in early childhood settings comes from being a visiting lecturer to students in their teaching experience. I have been present at many mat-time sessions and have had opportunities to get to know some centres well; however, I no longer feel in touch with the full realities of working with children in music. The study I report on in this paper was chosen in part as an attempt to dispel this feeling of distance, while at the same time fulfilling the requirements of my study towards an M.Ed.

My study (Willberg, 2000) began with the question: “What is the role of music in early childhood education settings?” My supervisors quickly persuaded me that it was too much to attempt to study the three main kinds of New Zealand early childhood settings: full-day early childhood education for 0 – 5 year olds (childcare), sessional age-based early childhood education for 3 – 5 year olds (kindergarten), and parent-co-operative early childhood education programmes (Playcentre). This led to a decision to focus on full-day childcare through one case study.

My rationale for choosing this setting was that:

- full-day childcare was the setting with which I was least familiar;
- children are attending childcare in increasing numbers;
- the teachers who graduate from the teacher education institution in which I teach are increasingly likely to be teaching in this type of early childhood education setting;
- a case study would offer sufficient data to allow for the emergence of some theoretical statements about the place of music in childcare.

MUSIC IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM

My literature search revealed much information about what children can do musically, but not a great deal about music in early childhood education settings. Much of my reading dealt with children's musical development and provided useful indications of an ideal music programme in an early childhood education setting, and the benefits of doing music, particularly in early childhood. There were also some useful New Zealand studies into the confidence of teachers working with music and about what constitutes quality in early childhood education. The Ministry of Education (1996) curriculum document, *Te Whäriki*, early childhood curriculum provided indications of ways in which music contributes to the early childhood curriculum.

Why do music?

Snyder (1997) has argued that: "Beginning four and one-half months before birth (Nash, 1995) and continuing throughout life, music is an essential human way of thinking and communicating about the world. It has existed since before language, and exists in every culture" (p. 165). Many writers and philosophers attest that music education in an important aspect of human development essential in any educational setting (e.g., Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995; Elliott, 1995; Sloboda, 1985; Snyder, 1997).

It has been argued that during the early childhood years it is important to develop music skills, such as listening and responding to music, singing, and playing musical instruments, which enable children to create music to express feelings and ideas (e.g. Bruner, 1966; Feierabend, 1990; Sloboda, 1985; Snyder,1997; Woodward, 1999).

Woodward notes that "the presence and quality of the musical environment before the age of two is of the utmost significance in the development of auditory processing skills vital to the acquisition of musical language" (p. 10).

WHAT IS A QUALITY MUSIC ENVIRONMENT?

The question of what constitutes a quality music environment is partly answered by studies of children in their music play (Campbell, 1997; Temmerman, 2000). Musical play can be broadly categorised into the activities of listening and responding to music (particularly with movement), singing, and playing musical instruments. These categories, and the role of the teacher in each, are explored in the following sections.

Listening and responding

Children begin to make music connections before birth with the development of hearing in the womb (Woodward, 1999). In the early years, children take an interest in all kinds of music (Sims, 1996 August), beginning with the music of their own culture. Movement is a very early response to the stimulus of sound, and rhythmic sound is matched with rhythmic movement as the infant becomes increasingly able to co-ordinate limbs.

Moorhead and Pond (1978), in an extensive study of children's responses to music, found that rhythmic music elicited rhythmic movement, although this was not always synchronised. The implications of this are that the infant can enjoy and respond to music well before being able to keep the accurate beat of the particular music. Among those children able to express their preferences, Temmerman, (2000) found that movement to music was equal with instrument play in popularity.

Singing

Singing sounds are implicit in the first vocalisations of infants. Parents and teachers instinctively use the very high pitches of child-directed speech, produced by adults of all nationalities in the presence of infants (Papousek 1996). Moorhead and Pond (1978) noted a difference between chant and song and reinforced the desirability of developing both aspects of voice work. Levinowitz (1989) has suggested that children are working on language skills when they chant, and on melodic skills in their creative singing. A concern in the area of singing was raised by Ritchie (1995), reinforced by studies from Boyack

(1999a, 1999b) and Bodkin (1998), that many teachers avoid using their voices because they feel that they cannot sing in tune.

Playing musical instruments

Exploration of instruments is a most attractive experience for infants, toddlers and young children (Temmerman, 2000). Campbell and Scott-Kassner (1995) have developed a useful chart (below) showing the developmental sequence for playing instruments. This gives an indication of some appropriate activities for teachers and children in early childhood education.

Developmental Sequence for the Playing of Instruments

Age (yrs)	Musical-Motoric Development	Instruments; Instrumental techniques
Less than 2	Rocking, nodding, swaying, Capacity to grip/grasp	Rattles (shaking) Jingle bells (shaking)
2-3	Short periods of rhythmic regularity	Hand drum (hand tapping) Sticks (striking)
3-4	Longer periods of rhythmic regularity Sensitivity to pulse Swaying of arms	Claves (striking) Sticks (rubbing) Woodblock (Mallet – striking, rubbing Sand-blocks (rubbing) Tambourine (shaking, striking) Guiro (rubbing) Maracas (shaking) Gong (Mallet – striking) Cowbell (Mallet – striking

Campbell & Scott-Kassner, p. 219

Moorhead and Pond (1978) found that at first the instrumental explorations of children are more about tone colour, volume, and pattern than about rhythm but, as skills and growth increased, co-ordination and control developed. Campbell (1997) similarly found that as her young instrumentalists became more skilled, they increasingly showed a desire to match and extend familiar music in the environment.

In the contemporary full-day early childhood education setting, the musical instruments may be 'found' sounds (materials discovered in the environment, such as pot lids, not intended as musical instruments) as well as more conventional instruments, such as tambourines and maracas. All of these offer exploratory experiences that can lead to creative musicking.

Young (1995) points out the importance of the active role of the listening adult in the development of children's musical expression. Teachers need to recognise and know how to respond to the "…spontaneous and playful impulse, of that creative space between certainty and chaos. Here is the potential for imaginative and exciting discoveries about children as music-makers on instruments" (p. 57).

Music and *Te Whäriki*

Listening to music, singing, and playing of musical instruments by children is a way of achieving goals linked to the strand of Communication, in the curriculum framework *Te Whäriki*. Goal 1 of Communication states that: "Children…develop non-verbal communication skills for a range of purposes…an ability to express their feelings and emotions in a range of appropriate non-verbal ways". Music also relates to goal 4, that: "children …develop different ways to be creative and expressive" (p. 74). Non-verbal communication includes the expressive use of voice, body or instruments.

Using musical expression in play develops from much exploration over time, and usually occurs in solitary or small group play (Moorhead & Pond, 1978). To achieve this,

instruments need to be available to children in the course of the day, preferably with teachers taking the role of warm demander by talking about the sounds made by the children and being creative themselves (Meade, 1997).

In Strand 2, Belonging, "children and their families experience an environment where connecting links with the family and the wider world are affirmed and extended" (p. 56). Choice of songs and listening material to incorporate the cultures of children and their families can significantly enhance children's feelings of belonging (Woodward, Fresen, Harrison & Coly, 1996).

Strand 3, Contribution, Goal 2, is that "children experience an environment where they are affirmed as individuals…children develop abilities and interests in a range of domains – spatial, visual, linguistic, physical, musical…" (p. 68). This also has a number of implications for the inclusion of music in early childhood education. In particular, the playing of instruments provides opportunities for problem-solving and communication and involves the visual, aural, and kinaesthetic intelligences (Gardner, 1983). The music programme works in all these domains when the teachers are mindful of the potential of the activities and plan to encourage emerging interests in music, as in other things.

On quality in teaching, Meade (1997) states: "To achieve best practice which is educative there needs to be:

- an extension of policies, especially to do with curriculum appropriate for early childhood programmes and with the training and qualifications of teachers;
- the development of professional codes and practices; and
- changes in habits of those who work with children to raise children's awareness of their mind's activities, that is, a shift to practitioners educating children" (p. 39).

Music play contributes to children's knowledge and understanding, including: scientific discoveries about sound; exploration into cause and effect; and the perception and recreation of patterns.

EXPLORING MUSIC IN A CHILDCARE SETTING

Against the background of this literature, I was interested to find out what opportunities children might be given to participate in music in their daily programme, and how teachers encouraged children to talk about music, asked questions, extended and challenged their skills. With the help of the reference group I had established to support my research, I chose a full-day childcare centre to work in, which I called Harakeke House. The centre was considered to have good practice and the teachers were engaged in professional development in a number of ways. My intention was to explore the role of music in the centre from the point of view of all participants: teachers, parents and children, and, in terms of the official documents of the centre.

I devised the following criteria to indicate a moderate level of musical activity in the centre:

- regular group sessions in which music-making was a part;
- shared musical rituals, such as Happy Birthday, and greetings or farewell songs;
- spontaneous singing and exploration of sounds occurring during play;
- use of tapes to provide recorded music for movement and for listening;
- a collection of musical instruments;
- availability of musical instruments for exploration.

Data Gathering

In the centre I took a participant-observer rolewhich meant that I was able to interact with children and teachers in a small way, and thereby acknowledge the impact of my own presence on the participants. I was noticeable, with a laptop computer on which I recorded data directly, my bag of back-up notebooks and pens and, after a time, musical instruments,

occasionally a tape recorder and, on one occasion, a video camera. Teachers and children became used to me and I was always welcomed into the group.

I spent a total of a hundred and fifty-eight hours, observing over 9 months of 1999. I made sure that I was observing a range of days of the week and at different hours of the day, including several full days from 7.30p.m. to 5.30p.m. When possible, I attended the evening staff meetings. The notes I took during the day were typed up each night more fully, and made available to staff to read and comment on.

After five months of visits, I felt that I had a clear picture of the programme and its routines and that I knew all the children and teachers reasonably well. I elicited a set of tentative themes and from these I developed a series of interview questions for the teachers. We discussed the transcripts of these interviews, I considered their responses, changed some of my ideas, and carried out further observation to test the new themes. These themes were discussed with my reference group.

I then interviewed the teachers again, to confirm my ideas, and in the last month I interviewed the parents. Throughout the study, at appropriate moments, I asked questions of individual children and noted their responses. At different times I read through the centre documents: the charter, the guiding principles, planning charts, the parents' handbook, the children's scrapbooks and the infant day-books.

The themes that eventually emerged from my data arose from a wide range of 'voices': that of the teachers, the parents, the researcher and writer's, the reference group, the children, the official documents and my observation notes.

Reflective journal

I kept a reflective journal of thoughts, impressions and questions as the data gathering progressed. After three months, changes were apparent in my initial impressions:

- my first impression was that there was little music in the centre programme;
- my second impression, after a number of visits, was that there was a great deal of music in the centre programme;
- my third, and lasting, impression was that there was a great deal of music in the centre programme, but this was confined mostly to certain areas and times and that different approaches were used by the teacher for different age-groupings.

On reflection I realised that my first impression was based on the expectation that music would be happening throughout the day, with instruments available all the time.

This expectation was borne out with the infants, where music did happen spontaneously throughout the day. However, for the toddlers and young children, music was most evident at specific times each day. Some adults sang spontaneously during play, but the opportunity to engage in music activities was more limited than with the infants. I discuss some reasons for this gap in the music programme later in this paper (see also Willberg, 2000). Active music for all children was most evident at mat-times and taped music was sometimes used at the start of the day for informal music and movement, for toddlers and young children. In addition, all of the children experienced taped music at sleep time.

In the following pages I will examine the programme in more detail, and reflect on my findings from the perspective of a teacher of music.

The centre routines

The programme was organised around the routines of eating and sleeping. Sleep times were on demand for the infants (under 2 years), and after lunch for the other two groups: toddlers (2 to 3 years) and young children (3 to 5 years). Children were divided into three groups for mat-times and for sleep (figure 1). For informal play, including music, children were divided into two groups (figure 2).

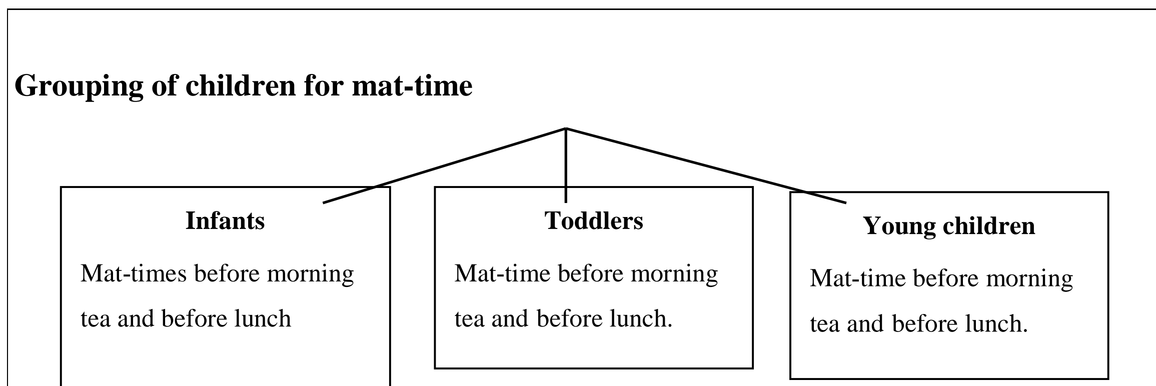

Figure 1. Diagram of the groupings of children for mat-time

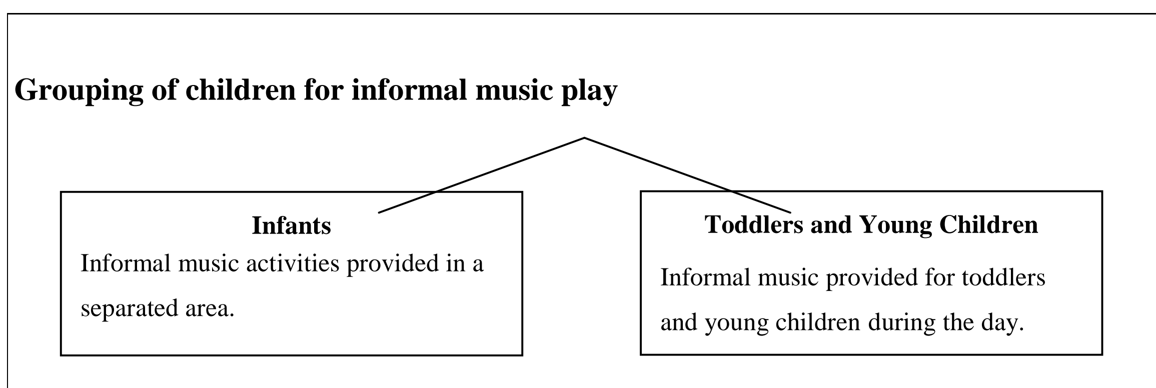

Figure 2. Diagram of the groupings of children for music play

EMERGING PATTERNS IN MUSIC

Children's music experiences over the day included mat-time music, sleep time music and spontaneous or informal music through the day. These experiences included use of music tapes, movement activities to music tapes for the toddlers and young children, singing and some 'music-making' play with instruments for the infants. Music-making with instruments was rare for the toddlers and young children.

Mat-time music		
Infants	**Toddlers**	**Young children**
Songs and finger-plays at both morning tea and	Songs, finger plays and games at both morning tea and	Songs and games at morning tea. Stories at

lunchtime	lunchtime	lunchtime

Figure 3. The content of mat-time music for the three different groups.

The mat-time before morning tea always included music, while the mat-time before lunch offered music for the infant and toddler groups, but stories or discussion instead of music for the three to five year olds. The teachers explained the difference in the young children's mat-time content as taking advantage of mat-times to provide the three to five year olds with opportunities for age-related activities as a group.

As the data accumulated, I began to perceive patterns in the music offerings at Harakeke House. These fell into three themes: music for fun; music for learning; music for relaxation and sleeping. The following diagram indicates these three themes in relation to the different groupings of the children, and also indicates the role the teacher tended to take in relation to each theme.

Theme	When		What	For Whom			Teacher role
Music for Fun	Spontaneously Daily		Children's tapes for movement	Infants	Toddlers and Young Children		Participant
Music for Learning	Mat-times		Singing Games	Infants	Toddlers	Young Children	Teacher or performer
Music for Relaxing	Infants In own sleep patterns	Others after lunch	Instrumental tapes, singing, radio	All the resting children and their teachers			Participant

Figure 4. The music in the programme divided into the three themes.

Music for fun

The theme "music for fun" came from the teachers' descriptions of their sessions. It was used to describe any music occurring during play, and, in particular, teachers' almost daily use of tapes in one of the internal rooms of the centre. This usually occurred early in the day and consisted of the teacher putting on tapes of children's songs, then encouraging movement responses from the children who were present. These sessions were unplanned and the teachers participated actively in these sessions by following the sung instructions on the music tape, and by leading and modelling locomotor movements to the music.

A typical song tape asked the participants to interact with the music using a bean bag, by carrying out instructions such as "*B, back, put it on your back…*" , then played some bars of music, asking children to move around the room in time. Another tape encouraged the use of soft toys, with songs about *"Me and my Teddy"*.

The children responded in ways related both to their age and their familiarity with the music. Some of the four-year-old children used the opportunity to be physical and ran or galloped around the room. Children under four years tended to comply more with the intention of the tapes and participated with the teacher, carrying out the actions to the best of their ability. Toddlers and infants, brought in by the other teachers, watched their older peers closely. Infants were often patted, rocked, jogged, or had arms and legs manipulated by the adult in time to the music, which both parties seemed to enjoy. On cold mornings these sessions served the purpose of letting off steam and allowing for physical movement until the children were able to go outside.

There was much incidental learning in these sessions, with the music providing a steady beat, a cheerful sound and repetitive activity. Some children became increasingly skilled in moving in time with the music; however, some simply ran around, barged into the walls and each other, and generally caused difficulties for the teachers trying to supervise a mixed age range of children. Twice during my observations, pop music was used, with an

increase of noise and boisterousness. The teachers managed the situation for safety, as well as participating alongside the children.

From my perspective

From my perspective as a teacher of music, I would have liked to see these sessions planned to do a number of pedagogical things, for example: to expose the children to different kinds of music, particularly instrumental music and music from a range of cultures, and to develop expressive physical responses to the music, including learning to keep in time and to match movements to the mood of the music. Instruments could have made a valuable contribution to these sessions and extended those children whose actions indicated over-familiarity with the musical offerings.

Music for learning

Music for learning appeared to have two purposes: *music* learning (learning to sing in tune, understanding the common shapes and patterns in music, enjoying the experience of singing together in a group) or *non-music* learning (using musical songs and games to learn to count, learn vocabulary, learn to take turns, to communicate and to control children in group situations). Fun, as well as learning, was inherent in both purposes, but there were interesting differences noted in the role of the teacher which distinguished these two purposes (Figure 4, "teacher role").

At Harakeke House, the twice daily mat-times were clear instances of music for learning, although the teachers described the purpose of these mat-time sessions as being for settling down, calming and quietening children before eating. Two teachers managed each group on a roster system and the music activities invariably used voice. One teacher led the music, the other supported the activities.

There was a range of approaches by the teachers: some teachers planned beforehand, but most operated spontaneously, including asking the children to choose what songs they

would like to sing. I noted a few occasions when props were used, mostly when teachers planned, even if only a few minutes in advance of the session. Props included puppets and soft toys that represented the different items in songs such as "*Hot Potato*".

There were some differences in the ways the teachers approached the three groups. The infant group leader usually sang a continuous stream of fingerplays and songs with simple actions and worked hard to keep these infants focused. Infants who responded with hand movements or vocalisations were encouraged and much delight was taken in evidence of learning and anticipation. Applauding and vocalising 'Yeahhhh', were common. Music with the toddler group often included simple musical games such as *Jack-in-the-box, This is what I can do, Hot potato pass it on.* Time was taken to allow each child to express a choice and to have a turn.

The young-children group was more likely to have a story than music but this was also the only group that I observed using instruments at mat-time (once).

Pre-meal grace was chanted or sung regularly, and the young children's group repertoire included a listening game and a song (*Tommy Tittlemouse* and *Five Little People in a Flying Saucer*) that released the children one by one. These two activities facilitated the smorgasbord, help-yourself nature of some lunches, reinforcing the idea of music as a tool for social learning.

The teachers at Harakeke House felt that the music made these mat-times fun. However, with the teacher taking a strong directive role, and with the non-musical purpose of settling the children as a goal for the session, they clearly constituted music for learning. The teachers' approach, and goal, affected the repertoire and restricted the activities to those which were conducive to group control and social learning.

From my perspective

From my perspective as a music teacher I would have liked to see planning focused more deliberately on the development of musical skills in these sessions, for example: the skills of singing in tune, including breathing games and voice warm-ups; more attention to the pitch of the songs (particularly with the toddlers and young children); more listening games; and some introduction of instruments.

It was interesting to me that tapes were never used in these sessions. It could have been a time to enjoy a few minutes of music from the sleep room repertoire to develop children's focus on musical language. However, the pattern in this centre was for the use of voice. This had the very desirable result that all the teachers sang and knew a common repertoire which they shared. One teacher with strong motivation learned and taught songs in te reo Maori, including teaching staff to know and use these with children. The teachers put effort into learning the words and actions, and took pride in the children's lively performance.

Music for sleep-time

The category of music for sleep-time contained a paradox. Taped music was used to provide an atmosphere that was soothing and relaxing prior to sleeping. However, although it was not seen as a music activity, this music provided a potentially valuable listening experience for the children.

The teachers each had their own preferences for choice of music and selected tapes in line with these. These preferences ranged from tapes of singing ("songs they know, lullabies"), radio ("I like to use Radio Pacific because the music is pleasant and the children cannot understand the words"), to ambient music ("I like my *Deep Forest* tapes"), piano (a Richard Clayderman tape was a popular choice), guitar music, and a collection of classical orchestral music ("Classical music works well").

Judging by their comments, these teachers had clear principles on which they based their choices of music: they had ideas about what constituted peaceful soothing music for

themselves and the children. However, until I asked questions about it, the teachers did not consider this music as part of the music programme and there was no reference to it in the parent literature or centre documents. This was quickly rectified when I pointed out the omission. I saw this as a small benefit to the centre to have come from the research project.

From my perspective

From the perspective of a music teacher, I felt that the playing of music at sleep-times contained real potential as a way of exposing children to a range of interesting musical styles, tone colours and rhythms. To realise this fully would require planning and some knowledge on the part of the teacher, but such music, when used in the sleep room, could then be integrated into the general play activities with the bonus of familiarity.

In addition, music chosen for its cultural relevance to the children would support the goal of *Te Whäriki*, Strand 2, Belonging: that "children and their families feel a sense of belonging".

Teachers' own preferences already allowed for some range of musical styles, tone colours and genres, through a roster that allocated different teachers to sleep times on a cyclical basis. More could be achieved however with wider choice of music.

TEACHERS' VIEWS OF THEIR MUSIC PROGRAMME

In the context of the daily programme, teachers actively offered music activities of singing and moving to children's tapes, and passively offered listening experiences by playing tapes in the sleep rooms. Playing instruments was offered spontaneously in the infant programme, but sessions with musical instruments with toddlers and young children were rare, and the musical instruments were not, as a rule, freely available to these children in their play.

Reasons for these aspects of their music programme were clarified by teachers in interviews and other discussions. In their interviews, teachers articulated their pride in their music programme and felt that they did a lot of music. For example, after attending a course on music for infants, teacher A "..felt proud of the way we do things here". Asked what she thought the teachers got from music in the centre, teacher B said "I think we are special here and we do a good job. We haven't got a behaviour management problem here – because of ratio (of teachers to children) teamwork and consistency. You can do so much with music".

Teacher C said: "I sing a lot more with the babies, maybe because they are not talking. You get their attention through singing".

Teachers also reflected on their own musical backgrounds in their interviews. Four teachers enjoyed singing at school, and were involved in choirs, and one talked about her grandmother who played the piano.

In answer to the question, "If I could wave my magic wand and give you anything you wanted musically what would you ask for?", teachers indicated a desire for more confidence in their singing voices and a strong wish to play a musical instrument: piano (3); guitar (3); "piano accordion, anything!" (1).

Two teachers wanted to understand music better: how to listen to it, and to discover reasons why they liked a particular piece or type of music.

Teachers' lack of skills and knowledge was explicitly cited as the reason for not doing more music:

"I'm shocking with instruments"

"Not being able to read music limits my ability to pick things up".

"I can't play an instrument".

Such comments offered considerable insight into the personal factors that impacted on the provision of music in the centre and illustrated the teachers' ideas about the purpose of music in the centre.

In the category "*Music for fun*" the teachers' responses indicated that music was a means of managing the environment and the children within it. Music calmed, soothed and communicated but, most of all, the teachers felt that it created a sense of fun, providing enjoyable letting-off steam.

Music had an uplifting impact on teachers as well as children. Teachers commented:

> "Music "…should be fun, enjoyment, including the teacher."
>
> "I like doing music because it relaxes me."
>
> "It is acceptable in these sessions to be nutty and relaxed."

In the category "*Music for learning*", music was seen as a means of teacher management, and, more specifically, as a tool for learning. In the case of the infants, their response to finger plays indicated to teachers and parents that learning was taking place. For toddlers, the teachers felt that learning a song facilitated learning how to behave as a group, learning to sit and do actions together, and to follow instructions.

This constituted a rationale for the mat-time sessions, whose purpose was also expressed as "calming and soothing before eating". This rationale is corroborated by Blanchard (1994) in her study of mat-times.

In our second interview I asked teachers about my division of music into fun and learning. They expressed the view that music could not be used for learning unless it was fun. Fun was a significant reason for doing music. There are the beginnings of a theory of practice

here (Dalli, 1999), which is also discussed in other New Zealand studies (Bodkin, forthcoming).

From my perspective

These comments are to my mind highly significant. Music has benefits for everyone and teachers experience the uplift and the relaxation as well as the children. However, in an educative setting, I would have expected a more pedagogical approach to the planning of music to extend the range of activity. Such an approach would in no way detract from the beneficial aspects enjoyed by the teachers.

For example, playing music with a range of styles and genres for the daily exercise would expand everyone's horizons. Instead of the "*Barney*" tape, or the *Ringrose* tapes, all of which suggest a series of prescribed movements, a diversity of music genres could be used to develop locomotor skills, expressive body shapes and movement in a planned sequence of activity. Examples could be: a lively march or Scottish Pipe Band music for vigorous walking, exploring pathways and different fundamental movement patterns; lively orchestral music, such as "*Galop*" or "*Polka*", from New Zealander David Farquhar's *Ring Round the Moon* suite, for galloping, skipping, including both upper and whole body movement.

In singing with young children, a knowledge of development processes in early childhood is crucial to such things as pitching songs to suit young voices, and responding to creative vocalisations in the outdoors, and throughout the programme.

Teachers' confidence in their musicality

Teachers' views of their own musicality contributed background relevant to the lack of instrument play in the music programme. The teachers were aware of the desirability of musical instruments in the programme and expressed their own lack of confidence:

> "I do not feel very confident, don't play an instruments – bit of a disappointment"

> “I feel guilty – I know I should have the instruments out more often, but they are so noisy, and it is hard to manage with a mixed age-range.”

Of the nine teachers, five said they did not learn an instrument; two talked of starting and not enjoying it, also citing “no persistence”; one teacher started to learn the guitar in training and would like to continue; one teacher played guitar and said she “can vaguely read music”.

Three of the teachers talked about loving to sing in the choir at school. On the other hand, in answer to the question: “what would you ask for if I could wave my magic wand and give you anything you liked musically?”, instrument playing featured high on the list of desirable musical skills.

Play with music instruments

Clearly, in the teachers’ minds, musicality was strongly connected to proficiency with a musical instrument. They are not alone in their concerns about their capability. Bodkin (1998) commented “…for some teachers music is something that is feared and avoided if possible. They do not feel confident about their own musical skills and their ability to take music sessions. There is fear of rejection as well as fear of failure. I believe that it comes from a strong sense in the cultures that these teachers are members of, to label specific individuals “musical” or “non-musical”.

Bodkin describes the “myth of talent” (Elliott, 1995), which perpetuates the mistaken idea that only those who can play instruments or read music are “musical”. The damaging effect of these ideas showed in the teachers’ comments.

For the teachers, the main barrier to regular play with musical instruments was a lack of confidence in knowing what to do. Other barriers cited related to management and organisational issues such as:

- noise levels;
- cost of bought instruments (which are easily damaged);
- the timetabling of mat-times and routines;
- the wide range of children's ages.

With reference to timetabling, analysis of the centre group times and routines (figures 2 & 3) showed that group music at mat-times was directly followed by morning tea, lunch or sleep-time. This meant that any interest aroused at mat-time could not be explored further by individuals or small groups because of the closed end of the session.

From my perspective

Play with music instruments has intrinsic interest for children of all ages through the exploration of sound and for the expressive possibilities it contains. But as seen at Harakeke House, play with music instruments was rarely seen except in infant play. This vexed question of music-making with instruments was a big issue for me. The relative invisibility of music instruments at Harakeke House removed one valuable aspect of the music curriculum.

The lack of confidence of the teachers in their musicality, combined with the difficulties in organising opportunities for exploratory play with instruments, were identified as the main barrier to the regular use of instruments in the programme. These difficulties highlight issues that are probably widespread; certainly they are a common problem in early childhood education centres. Teachers are often inexperienced and may have a poor self-concept in relation to this aspect of music. There is a "fear of chaos" (Hildebrandt, 1998).

CONCLUSION

The three themes emerging from the data in this study describe approaches to music in a full-day early childhood education setting. These themes include activities important to a musical foundation: listening, singing, moving to music and playing instruments. Implicit

in the themes and activities are the principles and strands of the early childhood curriculum framework, *Te Whäriki*.

This study points to the influence that the confidence and skills of the teachers have on the music programme and indicates areas that would benefit from further study. These include: encouraging the use of instruments for music making by children; providing both planned and spontaneous opportunities for individual and group participation in music expression; and exploration by infants, toddlers and young children through singing, creating, listening and moving to music on a regular basis.

In particular, the study highlights the need for professional development and support for teachers to enhance their confidence and skills in providing a music programme.

The Ministry of Education (2001) document, *Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* sets out a clear pathway for music to happen in the school system. The early childhood curriculum framework *Te Whäriki* includes a visible and an implicit role for music, but there is an urgent need to develop a music curriculum and resources for early childhood education, based on *Te Whäriki's* principles and strands.

In addition to the need for some musical background and knowledge, early childhood teachers responsible for the implementation of the music in integrated early childhood curriculum need opportunities to develop the confidence to apply their knowledge.

To do this, the amount of music education in teacher training courses should be increased, with a stronger focus on building musical confidence, particularly in singing and playing a range of instruments, together with strategies to support and extend children's expressive use of rhythmic patterns and melodies.

In addition to increasing the music component in tertiary training programmes for early childhood education, there is an immediate and on-going need for professional development support for teachers in ways of providing music effectively within their particular early childhood education context.

An increased focus on music, both at pre-service level and through on-going professional development support for teachers in their early childhood setting, would contribute to the weave of learning experiences described in *Te Whäriki*, and encourage a shared sense of well-being and enjoyment between children, teachers and parents in the context of the early childhood education programme.

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