

## **MUSIC EDUCATION IN MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL: IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

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### **Abstract**

Music has been formally introduced in the curriculum of Malaysian Public since 1982. This new curriculum was only implemented in primary school. Only in 1996, the curriculum was introduced in a few selected secondary school throughout Malaysia. Since then, there are lots issues and problems had been raised by various parties about the implementation of this subject meet the objectives of its implementation of this subject in Malaysian public school. The question is, to what extend this subject meet the objectives of its implementation? This paper will briefly discuss about the background of so-called 'Malaysian Music in order to understand the musical culture of Malaysia. In addition, it will also provide some rationales for the inclusion of Music Education in public school curriculum as well as reviewing the present state of Music Education in Malaysian Public Schools. The ending part of this paper will discuss about the issues and problems that had arisen form the implementation of Music Education in Malaysian public schools.

Keywords: Music education, Malaysian public school, issues and challenges, school curriculum, primary school

### **Abstrak**

Pendidikan muzik telah diperkenalkan dalam kurikulum Pendidikan Negara sejak 1982. Kurikulum baru ini hanya diajar di sekolah rendah. Walaupun begitu, bidang ini tidak diperkenalkan di sekolah menengah. Hanya menjelang tahun 1996, kurikulum ini diperkenalkan di beberapa buah sekolah menengah. Semenjak itu, timbul banyak isu dan masalah yang diutarakan oleh pelbagai pihak tentang implementasinya di sekolah-sekolah kerajaan. Persoalannya sejauh mana subjek ini telah mencapai objektifnya. Secara sepintas lalu kajian ini menyentuh latar belakang muzik Malaysia dalam memahami budaya muzikal negara. Turut dibicarakan apakah rasionalnya pendidikan muzik dalam kurikulum sekolah setelah satu kajian semula dibuat.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan muzik, sekolah awam Malaysia, isu dan cabaran, kurikulum sekolah, sekolah rendah

## INTRODUCTION

The current trend of musical preference among Malaysian, especially the younger generation, is more contemporary in nature. Modern technology has encouraged a close connection between Malaysian culture and the western world. Adaptation of western culture has enhanced the influx of western music into Malaysia. Western music, especially popular genres, is now more acceptable than Malaysian traditional music among Malaysian people. Many schools and learning institutions offer courses on western music, either classical or popular genres. Some Malaysian traditional music is only performed on a few occasions such as cultural shows, traditional events or outside the urbanized areas. Some people treat it as second-class music. Moreover, western music also dominates the entertainment mediums such as television, radio, and recorded as well as live performances. Malaysian traditional music is only performed on a few occasions such as cultural shows, traditional events or outside the urbanized areas.

If restoration cannot be afforded, it will be threatened by extinction. This being so, the public schools are among the best agents that can generate the restoration of the nation's heritage in such areas as traditional music. But, to what extend the public school can carry the task and what are the issues arise from the implementation of Music Education in the public school? In this paper I will briefly discuss about the background of so-called "Malaysian Music" in order to understand the musical culture of Malaysia. In addition, I will also provide some rationales for the inclusion of Music Education in public school curriculum as well as reviewing the present state of Music Education in Malaysian Public Schools. Finally, I will discuss about the issues and problems that had arisen from the implementation of Music Education in Malaysian public schools.

## THE BACKGROUND OF "MALAYSIAN MUSIC"

The Malaysian society is made up of diversified ethnic communities and immigrant people. The Malay people are the dominant group in Malaysia. As well as the Malay, there are other numerically ethnic groups categorized as *Bumiputera* (sons of the soil) including indigenous people known as *Orang Asli* (literally, original people or aboriginals) in Peninsular Malaysia and native people in the state of Sabah and Sarawak. In Sarawak, the dominant native groups are the Dayak, who typically live in longhouse and are either *Iban* (Sea Dayak) or *Bidayuh* (Land Dayak). In Sabah, most native people under the term *Kadazandusun*. (Andaya & Andaya, 1982: 3-5). There are also many immigrant groups in Malaysian including Chinese, Indian, Eurasian, Siamese, Javanese, Sumatran, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Arabs. All these groups have make up to 22 million of population in Malaysia. The musical culture of Malaysia is very much influenced by foreign elements, especially Hindu culture from India, Islamic culture from Arab countries, and later on from the Western world.

It is believed that there already existed various types of native musical culture, especially for ritualistic purposes, by the time natives came into contact with Indian and Muslim traders. Furthermore, such musical culture, untouched by Hindu, Islam and Western elements, can be identified based on the existing performances such as in rhythms for mantras and incantations in animistic belief (Mohd Ghouse, 1992: 1).

Undoubtedly, the Indian influence on the musical culture of Malaysia has been very great. Indian musical culture greatly dominated the musical forms of the Malay Archipelago with the setting up of Indianised empires including Funan (1-627 A.D) on the Mekong delta, Thailand; the Langkasuka empire in Kedah, Malaysia; the Sri Vijaya empire (650-1377 A.D) in South Sumatra; and the Majapahit empire (1293-1470 A.D) in Java Indonesia. Over a thousand years under these four successive empires, the native people adapted to the Indianised musical culture and it became part of their lives.

The coming of Islam into the Malay Archipelago in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century changed and added to the variety of musical form in Malaysia. The *frame drum* and various types of chorus singing praising Prophet Muhammad S.A.W and Allah S.W.T., are among the elements of Arabian musical culture absorbed and adapted into the musical culture of Malaysia. The group singing praising God and Prophet Muhammad is the form of various choruses accompanied by frame drum ensembles such as *hadrah*, *rodat*, *kompang*, *dabus* and *dikir rebana*.

Apart from Hindu and Islamic elements, musical form of Malaysia have also been influenced by neighbouring countries, especially Thailand and Indonesia. In the Northern part of the Malay Peninsula, the Malay and Siamese had long diplomatic contact for over five hundred years, during which time the Siamese empire (1403-1909) dominated the Northern states of Peninsular Malaysia. As a result, the Malay people who settled there also adapted to Thai culture and music. Certain musical form such as *Wayang Siam* (shadow puppet), *Makyong* (dance theatre) and *Menora* (musical theatre) were adapted from Siamese musical forms and widely performed in the Northern region of Peninsular Malaysia. Some of the musical instruments used in the *Wayang Siam* are similar to the Siamese instruments used in the *Nang Talung* shadow theatre such as *geduk* (barrel drum), *gedombak* (hourglass dum) and *serunai* (double-reed oboe).

The influenced of Indonesian musical culture enhanced the richness of the Malay musical forms. The Javanese, Minangkabaus, Achenese, Bugis and Sumatran peoples, who migrated into the Southern part of Peninsular Malaysia, brought with them several types of musical form. The Javanese introduced musical forms including *kuda kepang* (dance), *gamelan*, and *wayang purwa* (Javanese shadow puppet) (Mohd Ghouse, 1992: 3). The Minangkabaus, who migrated to the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, especially the state of Negeri Sembilan, brought with them the ensemble of gong-chimes called *caklempong* (Ang, 1998: 50).

Western colonization had a big impact on Malaysian musical culture. Every colonial power introduced their own culture and music to the native people. The notable Portuguese contribution to the musical culture of Malaysia is that of introducing the violin and guitar to the region.

The uses of these two instruments as well as other instruments in the *keroncong* ensemble are evidence of the Portuguese influence. Most notable contribution of the Portuguese contribution to Malaysian musical culture is *joget* which is now has been described as one of the Malay ‘traditional’ music.

By the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, the British had popularized other western musical instruments such as the piano, trumpet, saxophones, clarinet and others in Malaysia. The instruments were mainly used in musical form newly introduced to Malaysia, such as the orchestra, brass band, combo and some mixed form with Malay traditional instruments in the *bangsawan* theatre (Tan, 1993: 8-16). The use of western musical instruments in Malaysia became more popular with the setting up of radio stations in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur in 1930, and recording companies and film studios in the 1930s (Matusky and Tan, 1997: 442).

Consequently, the musical culture of the Malay people is significantly influenced by foreign elements, especially from Hindu culture, Islamic culture, and later on from the Western world. All these elements had been adapted and ‘‘syncretized’’ with local traditions to form a composite culture that has been refined by the so-called ‘‘melting pot’’ and ‘‘toasted salad’’ of Malaysian society.

Being multiracial country, it is inevitable that there are influences of the multicultural and idiosyncratic elements in the musical culture of the Malay people. Thus, many types of the musical genres which originated outside of the Malay culture have been accepted by the Malay people. Recognizing the cultural diversity in the country, in early 1970s, the Malaysian government attempted to invent the so-called ‘‘Kebudayaan Kebangsaan’’ (national culture) as a mean of achieving solidarity among the multiracial groups in Malaysia. The building process of the *Kebudayaan Kebangsaan* is based on three main propositions. First is that the elements of the *Kebudayaan Kebangsaan* must be based on the culture of the native people. Second, elements from other cultures which are suitable and appropriate can be accepted as part of the national culture. Third, Islam is an important element in creating the national culture (Norsiah Sabri, 1998: 3). As a result, today, many types of music and musical instruments which historically came from foreign cultures such as *zapin*, *bangsawan*, *gambus* and *joget* are accepted and considered as ‘‘Malaysian Music’’. This being so, what is the better way to promote the *Kebudayaan Kebangsaan* and ‘‘Malaysian Music’’ other than through the school curriculum?

### **Music in Malaysian public school**

Music had been introduced in the public schools in Malaysia since the first formal school, The Penang Free School, was established in 1816. Later on, this was followed by the establishment of a few English-medium schools at major cities such as Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur and Melaka. At that time, musical activities in the form of singing and marching bands were conducted as a co-curriculum activity. In the classroom, music was only taught in integration with other subjects and used as a tool in teaching, especially English.

Starting from 1972, music as a subject has been offered as an optional examination paper in the Lower Certificate of Education since a few schools offered music on the principal's initiative. However, no proper music curriculum was set up by the Ministry of Education for the public schools. The number of candidates who took the music examination was very small (Johani Abdullah, 1993).

Realizing that music is one of the most important elements in a pupil's inner development, the Ministry of Education set up the music curriculum for primary schools in 1983. All Malaysian pupils were given the chance to learn music formally through singing activities, and playing the recorder and percussion, for one hour a week in the classroom. In some schools, musical activities such as choir, marching band, recorder ensemble and dance are also being offered as a co-curriculum activity outside the classroom.

The implementation of the newly set up music curriculum for secondary schools by the Ministry of Education of Malaysia gave a new impetus towards the survival of Malaysian music. The new music curriculum for secondary schools was fully established in 1996, with only twenty secondary schools all over Malaysia chosen to offer the subject of music as a pilot project. In 2001, the Ministry of Education expanded the implementation of the new music curriculum. More secondary schools throughout Malaysia now offer music as one of the elective subjects. With the expansion of the new music curriculum, more and more students will have the opportunity to learn about Malaysian music. As well as western music theory, keyboard, and western influenced musical ensembles such as choirs, marching bands and orchestras, Malaysian traditional music is one of the elements included in this new curriculum. Students who choose music as one of their elective subjects are exposed to the playing techniques of some of the "Malaysianized" traditional ensembles including the *kompang* (frame drum), *gamelan* and *caklempong* (gong-chimes). The curriculum also introduces the students to Malaysian traditional music in general, including Malay music, Malaysian Chinese music, Malaysian Indian music and music of the indigenous peoples of Malaysia including those living in the states of Sabah and Sarawak. The students also have an option to sit a formal music examination set up by the Ministry of Education at Malaysian Certificate of Education Level.

Now, music is also offered at a higher level as a major specialization as well as in minor courses at local colleges and universities. Currently, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, through its music department, offers courses for music education at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. The undergraduate music programme offered by this university is specially tailored towards the production of music teachers to teach at Malaysian secondary schools. Other university that is also offering music education courses is Universiti Teknologi Mara. Other music programmes, such as performance, music technology and Malaysian music, are being offered by Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak and Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

Music courses are also offered at diploma level at many teacher training colleges. Mostly, the trained music teachers who graduate from these colleges will go to primary schools all over Malaysia to teach music. There are also many private institutions offering music courses throughout Malaysia. However, most of these institutions concentrate more on western music than on Malaysian music. Only a few private institutions offer courses on Chinese traditional music and Indian traditional music. Malay traditional music courses are offered by Akademi Seni Kebangsaan (National Academy of Arts) – now known as ASWARA. This institution was set up by the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Heritage to help preserve and promote Malaysian traditional music.

## ISSUES ON MUSIC EDUCATION IN MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL

Why should we teach music to school pupils? There are many parents out there who are still raising this question because of lack of explanation on the reason why the Ministry of Education introduced this subject into the school curriculum. There are many significant reasons why music education should be taught at school level. The Music Educators National Conference (MENC) (1986) provides at least ten rationales for inclusion of music education in the school curriculum. The rationales listed below are adapted with some reference to their applicability to the Malaysian Music Education.

- i. *Music is just worth knowing.* It is a field of academic discipline with its body of knowledge, skills and ways of thinking with an international flavor. The ability to perform, compose or just to listen to and appreciate music as an intellectual exercise is highly desirable for all Malaysian students. This is on way of training Malaysian to “celik muzik”.
- ii. *One important purpose of the schools is to transmit our cultural heritage to succeeding generations and music is one of the most glorious manifestations of Malaysia cultural heritage.* Malaysian people value tradition as the Malay proverb says “Biar mati anak, jangan mati adat”. Thus, Malaysians can look to music as one way nurturing and transmitting their cultural heritage. What better way to encourage interest in our own music than by studying it in schools?
- iii. *The schools have an obligation to help each student develop his/her musical potentials.* Music potential is one of the basic abilities, along with linguistic, physical and others potential that exist in every individual.
- iv. *Music provides an outlet for creative activity and for self-expression. It enables us to express our noblest thought and feelings.* Music stimulates both the cognitive and aesthetic aspects of human mind. It also allows the students to be imaginative and to assert their uniqueness as individuals and as a nation. These aspects become important functions as Malaysians increasingly put more stress on science and technology in education.

- v. *The study of music can help the student understand better the nature of mankind.* It reveals unique aspects of our relationship with other human beings and with our environment. Through music, Malaysian students can learn about various other culture.
- vi. *Music in school provides an opportunity for success for some students who have difficulty with other aspect of curriculum.* Every student need to secede in something. Success in music may help to build a positive self-image to student.
- vii. *The study of music can increase the satisfaction that the student derives from music and enable them to deal with more sophisticated and complex music.* Formal study of music can sharpen one's sensitivity, raise the level of appreciation and expand musical horizon. This help to musically understand the rest of the world better from a different perspectives.
- viii. *Music is one of the most powerful and profound systems that exist.* Just as we require every student to learn the symbol systems of languages and mathematic, everyone also should learn the symbol systems represent by music and art. All these symbol systems make humankind uniquely human and therefore should be cultivated studied and strengthened when opportunity exists.
- ix. *It is important for young people to realize that not every aspect of life is quantifiable.* One must be able to cope with the subjective, not every question has a right answer. Music teachers this very well as it is fundamentally different from the other disciplines.
- x. *Music exalts the human spirit.* It enhances the quality of life, it transforms the human experience. It has played a major role in society, and it will continue to do so in the future. People around the world spend a lot of money, time and energy just to achieve some sorts of satisfaction in their life through music. So, why should Malaysian children ne deprived of this opportunity?

All the ten reasons mentioned thus far a generally in line with the Malaysian government objectives of education which are based upon the following principles:

- i. To ensure functional literacy among all citizens.
- ii. To provide children with the essential intellectual and psychomotor skills, and proper work habits for continued study and work.
- iii. To develop proper attitudes towards the dignity of labour, respect and love for fellow human beings and a sense of responsibility and commitment to contribute to the well-being and progress of the nation.
- iv. To transmit our national heritage and culture and the capacity to enrich this heritage.
- v. To acquire and acceptable code of individual and social conduct and moral ethics in accordance with our religious beliefs.

At the beginning of the implementation of music as a subject in primary schools, the schools faced many problems. These included there not being enough qualified music

teachers, the lack of proper music rooms in schools, and shortage of musical instruments and materials. In order to overcome these problems, headmasters selected a few teachers in the school who had a “sense of music” to teach music in his/her school. These chosen “instant music teachers” were given short courses on how to teach music at the primary level. They were also equipped with a cassette player and pre-recorded music tapes as a tool for teaching. The teachers were also provided with an acoustic guitar and electric keyboard, but many of them cannot play these instruments. Instead, the “instant music teachers” used the “canned music” in the form of pre-recorded tapes to teach music lessons and accompany the singing as well as instrument playing activities. At this stage, besides western music and notation, the pupils were also introduced to some of the Malaysian folksong and traditional beats such as inang, zapin and masri. However, in most cases, the pupils only learned music through cassettes, and the teacher acted like a classroom assistant. This was because many of the “instant music teachers” lacked knowledge and skill. However, there were only two options – either teaching the subject or not doing so.

The Malaysian education system, being exam oriented, puts pressure on schools to achieve higher levels in every examination, especially the ones set by the Ministry of Education. Music, as one of the non-exam subjects at primary level, is being ignored. In some schools, the time allocated for music lessons is often used for other “important” subjects such as mathematics, science and English. Low interest and poor attitude among some of the “instant music teachers” towards music give the music subject a second-class status in schools. Realizing that these problems have arisen, the Teachers Education Division, Ministry of Education, has revised and set up a new curriculum to train music teachers in many teacher training colleges in Malaysia. As a result, many qualified music teachers are being produced and sent to public schools to teach music.

As mentioned earlier, there are only three traditional ensembles – *Gamelan*, *caklempong* and *kompang* are formally offered to the student for practical participation in the classroom. Being a multicultural nation, Malaysia has many types of traditional music performed throughout the country. Each ethnic community has its own music unique to itself. Moreover, every region in the country has its own traditional music, which is normally performed in its own region. For example, *wayang kulit* Kelantan (Kelantan Shadow Play) is only popular in the northern east coast region, *kuda kepang* is performed in the state of Johor, and *hadrah* is popular in the states of Perlis and Kedah. Students normally enjoy their own traditional music much more than any other traditional music from other regions because they can relate to it, feel it and easily understand it. So, they should be given a more flexible choice to participate in their locally practiced traditional music. Schools should be encouraged to offer various types of traditional music based on their own interests and expertise rather than be forced to offer the three proposed ensembles included in the curriculum.

Some parents argue that learning music at school is wasting time. Moreover, especially at the early stage of its implementation, some extreme parents said that learning music opposes the Malays culture and Islam. This reason had discouraged some pupils learning music at school. It is obviously the music teacher's job to convince parents and pupils about the benefits of learning music at school. Furthermore, teachers also have a duty to make clear to parents and pupils that learning music at school is not in opposition to the Malaysian culture and Islam. In order to carry out this duty, teachers must first understand the benefits that pupils will gain from learning music. Music teachers, either Muslim or non-Muslim, must also be aware of what kind of music are allowable or prohibited in Islam.

Another important issues to be addressed here is – should we teach music to Muslim pupils? My suspicious about whether we should teach music to Muslim pupils came after a few incidents occurred to me as a Muslim who involve in music teaching. In Muslim community, it is not surprise if you hear some people said that music is *haram* (unlawful/forbidden). This means, to some Muslim people, play music, listen to music, teach music and learn music is *haram*. Even though this issues is no longer a major concern in the discussion among the parents in Malaysia, but it is still a controversial issue to some people. A few incidents happened to me when I was teaching music in primary school show the case. One of them is, in a music lesson, I asked a student why he did not brought his recorder to the lesson while other students brought their own one. He told me that his father did not allow him to blow the wind instrument because of *haram*. For that, he only can observe his classmate playing the recorders from a corner of the class because I did not want him to play the instrument as a respect to his father's belief. Deep in his heart, I knew that he really like to join the group playing the instrument.

The second incident happened when I conducted a singing lesson in a school in a Malay community. In a group singing, I found that one student did not sing even she stood in the middle of the group. When I asked why she did not doing so, she explained that according to her parents, woman's voice is *aurat* (part of human body that should not be exposed to non-close relatives) and singing will expose her *aurat*. Again, to respect her parent's belief, I only can let her observed the lesson from outside of the signing group. From the corner, she showed that she really interested in singing according to her body gesture following the rhythm of the song that I noticed.

These two examples out of many similar cases that I experience showed that some Muslim clearly oppose to the music lesson. But, in the other hand, I wonder why some of them favour the music lesson.

Similar problem also arise in other parts of the globe where some Muslims be in opposition to their children to learn music in school. In United Kingdom, for example, I observed a few secondary schools which are attended by a high proportion of Muslims pupils take a music lesson offered by the school or take expressive art course which combine music, drama and dance activities in one course. Curiously, I talked to a few Muslim parents about their view of not allowing their children to learn music at school. A Muslim father from Northeast of England said that, expose children to music will lead to much bad behaviour such as liquor drinking, adultery, and low morality behaviour.

The same problem is also happen in higher education. I met a few Muslim people from the Middle East countries in the United States when I was studying for my first degree in music. They asked me about my field of study and when I answered "I study music", they straight away commented that "it is *haram*" without further inquiry about what actually my study is. The similar phenomenon also occurred in the United Kingdom when I was studying my doctorate degree. Based on such incidents described above, is that true that music is *haram* in Islam?

In recent years, certain developments have taken place which has brought the subject of music as an extremely significant issue. To some Muslim, music has spread to such an extent that it is afflicting them in this modern era. Today, individuals are being confronted by a situation where one is forced to listen to music whether by choice or without. Music played in nearly all department stores and supermarkets. Even whilst walking in the streets, we find cars blaring with music. No matter which direction we go, we are blasted with music. The increasing popularity of music, which is prevalent in our society, poses a tremendous contradiction for some Muslims. Why is this happen?

For some people, singing is always a safer activity than playing music instruments. There are two main reasons for this. First, music, for most Muslims, is allowable when it is linked directly to praising Allah s.w.t. Unlike in the Western tradition where instrumental music is deemed equally to be praise of God, for Muslims there must be words. Not only must there be words but they must also be the main point of the music.

This is the reason that in most Arabic, and much Eastern music, the only accompaniment is a single instrument playing the same line as the voice, usually without harmony. Secondly, musical instrument have traditionally been associated with dancing girls, drink and debauchery especially during *Jahilliah* era (pre-Prophet's time).

On the question of singing there are two further points to consider. To most non-Muslim eras the call to prayer (*azan/bang*), and recitation from the Qur'an, sound like music, but culturally, Muslims will be offended by the use of this term. 'Music' itself is confused concept. It comes from the Arabic word *musiqah* which is only associated with secular music. There is also confusion as to what it refers to: for some people 'music' is only singing and for others it is only playing musical instruments. Al Faruqi<sup>1</sup> suggested using the term *handasah al sawt*, sound arts, as an alternative to music. I found linking music, dance and drama under the same team term 'expressive arts' on the school timetable made all three subjects more acceptable. On the question of terminology try changing the word 'concert' to 'cultural evening', and include music from several culture and perhaps some poetry for your evening to be better attended by Muslim parents.

The most important is that all music teachers in Malaysia need to know that the arguments against music are, and be able to listen sympathetically to people with these views, but also know about Muslims who are in favour of music<sup>2</sup>. As music teacher (either Muslim or non-Muslim), he/she should handle this issue brilliantly. For that, below are a few suggestions for teachers to minimize the controversial.

Firstly, if possible bring in a local respectable Muslim (*Imam, Ustaz, Ulama*, etc) who can also talk about the positive reasons for music, and quote acceptable *hadiths* in favour of music<sup>3</sup>. You could also bring in a good Muslim musician to work with you, although this has problems of its own because in many Muslim countries, normally, musicians have no respects.

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<sup>1</sup> Al Faruqi L I (1986) 'Islamisation through Sound Arts' *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* Vol 3 PP 171-180

<sup>2</sup> If you would like more information there is a list of suggested reading at the end.

<sup>3</sup> There are a lot of Hadiths confirming the approval of music in Islam. Please refer to the suggested reading list.

Secondly, it is also a good idea to ask Muslims to bring in music from their own culture. Many from the Southern part of Malay Peninsular, for example, will know the music of *zapin* and *ghazal*. When interviewing a father in Johor about their children doing music in school, they did not appear to be concerned about music from a religious point of view, but because they were afraid of their children losing their own culture if they only heard western music in school. However, it is not safe to assume that because it is music acceptable to one Muslim family it will automatically be acceptable to the rest.

Thirdly, choose musical examples carefully to avoid offending, particularly during Ramadan (the fasting month) and the holy month when the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet. Do not to expect Muslims to take part in music with an overtly Christian content or references to the Holy Trinity. However, try to include music from Islamic culture on occasions to balance it. In so doing, it is very useful to have some examples of Muslims poetry, such as *nasyid* for Muslims to use for music lesson. These are poems about all aspects of Islamic life, written in a metre and rhythm which make them ideal for use when composing songs.

Fourthly, integrating music into other objects has been successful in many cases. It is the idea of performing that is anathema to some Muslims, so where music can successfully be incorporated into humanities, math's, languages and sciences this is good. Of course it is the very idea of creativity, self-expression, performing that gives music its essence for many of us, so this is often a poor substitute. Interestingly enough, the use of computers or keyboards, and other ICT related activities, will often make music more acceptable. Most Muslims are very keen for their children to be computer literate and somehow producing sound from an electronic source removes the performance from the child. This is pure sophistry in my view but if it makes music possible I am prepared to go along with it.

Finally, invite parents who object to music in the curriculum in to school to see what you actually do in classes. Many have no idea, but have been told that music is bad. Imam Badawi (Zaki Badawi, 1993) said that about 90% of the people who objected to music in schools had never been inside a school let alone a music class. The myth that as music educators we will be playing rock music with disgusting lyrics, or making children sing songs which are unacceptable to their faith, really must be laid to rest.

## CONCLUDING TAUGHT

It is a fact that Music Education in Malaysia is relatively new and is still in the stage of development and implementation. Lots of issues and problems need to be precisely handled in order to make this subject equally important to other subjects in the school curriculum. Music education as a medium to promote our national heritage as well as government's objectives of education as mentioned earlier demands more attention from all parties. The survival of Music Education in Malaysia is now depended on how music teachers, school administrators and education officers deal with the issues and challenges in its implementation. Tough, there is a form momentum for survival because of the following reasons. However, if this is going to happen, all parties should answer all the questions attached to the given reasons.

- i. The music curriculum at public schools still takes care of traditional music. Is there enough space in the current music syllabus at school for Malaysian traditional music to survive?
- ii. The subject of music, with the inclusion of traditional music, is being offered at a few secondary schools throughout Malaysia. But to what extent does it prompt the students' interest to learn Malaysian traditional music?
- iii. Universities and colleges offer various course on Music Education for music teachers so as to prepare them for going to schools. Do the music teachers who graduate from these institutions have appropriate knowledge and skill to teach music at school?
- iv. A few scholars are still doing research, transcription and documentation on Malaysian music. The question is, how far has this work proceeded?

All the above questions need to be precisely answered in order to plan for the survival of Music Education in Malaysian public school. The key is, if scholars accept the challenge to do more research and document the music, then Music Education maybe can survive in the school curriculum.

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