The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the opportunities and challenges posed by teaching the Ontario elementary music curriculum?
2. What are the differences in perceptions between generalist and specialist elementary teachers of music on this issue?
3. What are teachers’ perceptions of support desirable to teach the Ontario music curriculum effectively?

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Literature

Curriculum: A Definition & Implementation

When selecting a working definition of ‘curriculum’, one must first determine the context in which this word is used because there does not seem to be one precise meaning (Carl, 2009, Henson, 2010, Marsh, C, 2004, Tanner & Tanner, 2007, Wiles, 2009, Wiles & Bondi, 2011).

Regardless of how we define ‘curriculum’, it is, in essence, a plan. It is the teachers who implement it and the students who experience it that make it a reality (March, 2004). Teachers are on the front lines of education and it is in their classroom that implementation of the curriculum meets either success or failure (Marsh, 2004). Teachers are the first to teach, and the last to learn. They are on the front lines of education and it is in their classroom that implementation of the curriculum meets either success or failure (Marsh, 2004). Teachers are on the front lines of education and it is in their classroom that implementation of the curriculum meets either success or failure (Marsh, 2004).

While there is concern here in Ontario regarding generalist teachers delivering the music curriculum, studies in the UK done by Holden & Bunter (2006), Hennessy, (2000) and Mills (2005) reveal that while some non-music specialists are uncomfortable teaching music, there are others who, with support from a music consultant and continued experience, feel confident teaching primary music education.

Mills (2005) also finds that it would be damaging to students’ image of themselves as musicians if there are special arrangements made for music education such as a music specialist required to teach music. It is not believable that if all students learn all subjects, teachers should then teach all subjects.

RESULTS (cont’d)

Main Thoughts

Each participant developed a key thought in their discussions:

Curriculum Writer/Consultant: The curriculum process had more writers and was given more money for curriculum development than any subject area.

Music Education Advocate: Music education across Ontario is inconsistent and varied.

Teacher 1: Music teachers are not protected as French teachers are, therefore can be deemed surplus and the music program is shut down.

Teacher 2: Music literacy is a complicated form of literacy that requires higher level thinking, parallels language literacy, and is underestimated and undervalued in schools. No generalist teachers came forward to be interviewed for the study. Is this significant?

CONCLUSIONS

• Music educators in Ontario continue to believe that the elementary music curriculum is challenging for generalist teachers of music to deliver
• Music instruction to pre-service teachers could be improved
• Music specialists are pleased with the 2009 elementary music curriculum
• OMEA and other music education organizations play important roles in supporting music education in Ontario

REFERENCES