

Steelbands in Schools:

the Instructor Dependency Model vs. the Teacher Transferency Model

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In an educational context, any discussion on globalisation and regionalisation of knowledge is fraught with questions of power, multiculturalism and educational practice. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the introduction of steel bands in British schools. Recent educational reforms have done little more than maintain continuity, with a long history of educational inequality on outcomes in the British education system. One of the great challenges to the system was to develop strategies for social inclusion to encompass all the varied stakeholders within the system. This paper discusses the role that the teaching of steel band music in schools can play in this context.

The in-flow of new migrants to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s from Trinidad and Tobago heralded a conceptual change in musical education in inner city areas. These migrants brought with them musical instruments which were relatively new, and not yet accepted as the Caribbean's 'musical orthodoxy'. At that time, the steel pan was frowned upon by the island societies' elite, who were very suspicious of the musical expressions of the underclass. As the instrument had been invented only some twenty years previously, it was then (and maybe still remains) at the fringe of the musical establishment. However its spread within Europe and, in particular, in English cities with high concentrations of Caribbean populations, was very swift, and the conditions were right for the big cities to absorb this new cultural input.

Models of settlement have explained the introduction of new migrants in waves of patterns of segregation, invasion, conflict and succession, after which the natural processes of assimilation take place:

"First groups sorted themselves into separate neighbourhoods; as one group gained economically, it invaded another area and conflicted with the group already there; after a certain populational 'tip point', the new group would replace or succeed the old. Until an immigrant group had been properly assimilated, - researchers found it usually took two or three generations, - formal means of social control were needed". (Hennon 2000, pp. 251).

Hennon's model represents a view of immigrants as a social threat to the fabric of the community. The 'invasion' from alien cultures needed to be quickly assimilated into the acceptable norms of the host. What they brought with them was not considered important. Within the popular discourse, the very notion of multiculturalism conveys the idea of a collection of cultures operating within a geographic area, sharing ideas and borrowing from each other. Steel band culture is a testament to this interplay, the impact of which is already evident.

History of Steel pan

The steel pan, a product of the Caribbean, is the only major musical instrument to be invented in the 20th century. It was first forged out of old rusty American army oil drums in the islands of Trinidad and Tobago. Over fifty years, it has evolved into a fully chromatic and internationally recognised instrument. A modern steel band now consists of tenor (melody) pans, second (rhythm or alto) pans, guitar pans, cellos and bass. Today, Trinidad and Tobago exports musicians to every part of the globe, expanding the diversity and instrumental range in calypso, jazz, pop, world and classical music (Rossing et al, 1996).

The precursors to the steel bands were the Tamboo Bamboo carnival bands, which used bamboo percussion instruments made from bamboo tubes of four different sizes. Metal was introduced into these bands as additional percussion, comprising kettles, pots, biscuit tins and dustbins. Soon the dustbins and biscuit tins were being experimented upon to produce instruments with varying notes (Stuempfle 1995). Though there might have been some experimentation with drums in Trinidad before the end of World War 2, most commentators credit the emerging instrument as having made its entry between 1942 and 1945. Through chance events and acoustic experiment, the first melody pans with three to eight notes were made and produced and the increasing availability of oil drums heralded the shift away from the large biscuit tins and dust bins. In 1945, the spontaneous carnival which followed the war, saw for the first time several bands consisting of only steel pans – the first real steel bands. The setting up of a steel band association of Trinidad allowed pan men to work together, sharing their knowledge to change the crude steel drums into finely tuned and highly crafted steel pan instruments (Kronman 1992).

In 1951, the Steel Band Association embarked on its first major project – to select a group of musicians to represent Trinidad and Tobago at the Festival of Britain, in August 1951. This steel band, Trinidad All

Steel Percussion Orchestra (TASPO), was the first steel band to leave the Caribbean to tour overseas (Goddard 1991). Membership of this band ensured status and as such the competition was fierce. Those chosen were Lieutenant Joseph Griffith (director), Ellie Mannette, Anthony Williams, Sterling Betancourt, Andrew de la Bastide, Philmore 'Boots' Dadidson, Theo Stephens, 'Patsy' Haynes, 'Spree' Simon, Granville Sealey, Belgrave Bonaparte and Dudley Smith. After the Festival, the members of TASPO were local heroes, receiving tremendous acclaim on their return to the Caribbean. One member of the group – Sterling Betancourt – chose to remain in the United Kingdom and established a steel band in London (Blake 1996).

Steel Bands in British Schools

The survival of the steel band in Britain today owes a lot to the introduction of steel bands in schools. In 1969, Gerald Forsyth, a steel band musician, pan tuner and musical arranger, approached Islington Green School in North London, with a proposal to set up a steel band in the school. The success of this venture saw more steel bands appearing in schools and Forsyth was appointed to the post of special Instrumental Organiser, to oversee the development of steel bands in Inner London (ILEA) schools. Gerald Forsyth recalls that early period when pans were introduced in London.



Nostalgia Steel Band members [photo: Annette Hudemann]

“In early 1969, I met an English teacher, Julian Rutherford, who was very important for my development in the education field. I suggested to him that it would be a good thing if pan was introduced in schools in Inner London. Julian Rutherford was at that time a House Master at Islington Green School. He agreed to an experiment and we introduced pan to Islington Green School. For that project, I took four pan players with me to demonstrate to the head teacher of the school, how the instruments were set up and the range of skills involved. The head teacher was impressed and I was employed to teach pan. In the initial stages, I supplied the pans to the school to enable the project to get underway. At that time (1969), I was not aware of any other project where pan was being taught in schools in the United Kingdom.”

Soon more and more schools, e.g. Paddington Lower School and John Kelly Boys School, were added to the list of schools with steel pan music programmes – taught by Gerald Forsyth (Francis 1999). Central to ILEA’s policies was the support of ethnic minority cultures in areas where there were high concentration of ethnic minority pupils within the education system. Underpinning all this was the assumption that African Caribbean children with low levels of academic achievement would perform better if parts of the curriculum reflected their cultural background. Also, it was believed that providing non-academic black children with steel pan music lessons could solve the notion of challenge and support in relation to the black community and the education system - and the delicate relationships between teachers and black pupils in schools.

Forsyth combined his role as special Instrumental Organiser by setting up a steel band panel of recognised pan tutors for ILEA’s schools. Frank Rollocks, another pan pioneer of school steel bands, joined him. School steel band festivals were organised and the London Schools Steel Orchestra was founded. Rollocks and Forsyth worked closely together to recruit steel band tutors. They ran courses to enable the tutors selected to function effectively in the classroom. Though he is criticised as simply providing jobs

for the ‘boys’ in the early days, Forsyth insists that all pan tutors were screened to ensure that they were of sufficiently good character to be allowed in schools; that they were highly skilled with a knowledge of the music and possessed grounding in the history of the instrument. Gerald Forsyth recalls a particular incident in 1972.

“One of my first interviews in the job was with a man of Caribbean descent, who had never played pan in his life. He did not know the layout of the instrument, but he was confident that he could teach the steel pan to children. I brought out a number of pans for him to identify, but he did not know one from the other. I told him I could not continue with the interview, because we were looking for individuals who were familiar with the instrument, who could

play, as well as passing on practical knowledge to the children. The gentleman took objection to this and told me that he was a pianist – and as such, adequately qualified. I told him he should go and teach the piano.”

ILEA’s multicultural education policies (the birth of multiculturalism – unity and diversity) were repeated in many inner city areas with large Caribbean populations, e.g. Manchester and Leeds. In the last thirty years, the introduction of Steelbands in schools has been widespread. Through community funding and regeneration initiatives, funds have been made available for the purchase of instruments and many school steel bands have been set up in both inner city and rural areas. The notion that the steel band would only be of interest to African Caribbean children is now gone for good. For educators the main issue is recognizing and valuing this specific knowledge and identifying the numerous benefits that children can derive from it.

Two Teaching Models

This paper looks at two models of steel band teaching in schools. The **Instructor Dependency Model** is where a specialist steel band teacher, generally of Caribbean background, is employed by a school or Local Authority to teach the steel pan in schools. The school perceives them as capable professionals in their area, and these peripatetic teachers exercise autonomous decision making over the repertoire and teaching methods used. The **Teacher Transference Model** refers to a professionally trained music teacher in a mainstream school who, after coming in contact with the instrument, takes on the role of steel band teacher or sets up a steel band in their school.

Over the years, there have been tales of uneasy relationships between the school system and the traditional steel band teacher. The first steel band teachers were themselves pan players, who in the 1950s and 1960s were usually (but not always) from Trinidad and Tobago and found themselves employed as peripatetic teachers during the growth of school steel bands in the 1970s. Many did not quite understand the framework within which employees and the education system operated. Attendance and punctuality were not always adhered to and on many occasions, schools were often without a steel pan teacher - sometimes for weeks at a time. This way of framing the problem seems to leave open two ways of responding: abandoning steel band classes altogether, to concentrate on traditional musical instruments; or abandoning the practice of employing a Caribbean specialist steel band teacher, opting instead for a qualified teacher with some knowledge of pan to teach the classes. A third response has often been aired but never implemented: providing

training (for all peripatetic steel pan teachers) that results in a professional accredited qualification within the education system. However, since demand for pan teachers has always outstripped supply, the training option has never been fully explored or accommodated within a policy framework.

As little training was offered to the steel band teachers, attitudes among the early groups of selected tutors, did not always fit well with expected professional practice. There were few black teachers within the education system, and those employed were expected particularly to play an important role within inner city schools - the key role as facilitators - to encouraged black pupils to understand the value of a good education. But steel band teachers were not themselves a homogenous group. Some understood the roles expected of them and carried out their duties in an exemplary way. Others did not quite understand the way local structures worked and the lack of awareness and information produced a gulf between some schools and their steel pan tutors. Gerald Forsyth, in his role as ILEA’s co-ordinator of steel bands, recalls a steel band teacher sending him a ‘greeting card’ from Japan, informing him that he was on a three-week tour with his own professional steel band, and asking that his job be kept open until he returned. In another case, the headteacher of a school noticed a strange individual taking the steel band music class at his school. On enquiring who the individual was, he was told that he was there to take the lessons as a favour to his friend. That friend was abroad for a few weeks. Neither had thought it necessary to inform the school of their arrangements.

Methodology

In order to evaluate the two models, I set out to conduct an ethnographic study of steel band teachers in schools. Twelve steel band teachers were interviewed, six can be categorised as being within the ‘instructor dependency model’ and six from the ‘teacher transference model’. I also collected multiple sources of data, through observation, interviews, and conversations with other teachers and with pupils. I spoke to pan tuners who make and tune the instrument for schools and to education officers who have commissioned or confirmed the order for steel pans. Policy documents and school structures / population were also examined to identify current educational thinking. Lastly, three managers of community steel bands were asked to comment on the benefits derived from the increasing number of school steel bands now emerging in inner city and rural schools.

An increasing demand for steel pan instruments

All the pan tuners interviewed confirmed that there was increasing demand for steel pan instruments, and

the demand clearly indicated the availability of huge expenditure grants. All tuners were presently busy completing orders from schools and local authorities and most had already turned work down. Ben, a pan tuner with more than fifteen years experience of making steel pans for schools commented:

The demand for pans in schools seems to have exploded in the last year or so. Never has it been busier for pan tuners. My understanding is that the government is putting a lot of money into the arts and music and schools in areas with high ethnic populations. Even schools with very few black children are fulfilling a need to project multiculturalism and music through setting up steel bands in schools. Schools see it as an easy instrument to master. You do not need to learn music to play the instrument.

Another tuner, Sam, added:

“It is very cost effective if you consider that a set of steel pans can last for up to 25 years – maybe more – without being replaced. In the last year, I have taken orders and fulfilled demand for new instruments in six schools. I know that all the pan tuners are very busy at the present time. I have had to turn down orders, as I do not have the time to complete them.”

The fact that there are more schools with steel bands has increased demand for steel pan teachers. However, schools have always found it difficult to attract competent and reliable steel pan teachers to support their programme. Although schools seem to access funds to purchase steel pans, many seem unwilling to invest in specialists with the expertise to teach the instrument. Many have resolved this problem by passing on the duties of steel pan teacher to a member of the music department in the school. For the purpose of this study, this model is referred to as the Teacher Transference Model.

The Teacher Transference Model

Specialist teachers are usually required for their subject areas. Within music education, peripatetic teachers may be required for brass, woodwind or percussion instruments. However, within subject areas and across the curriculum, transfer of training

does occur. Teachers are always expected to upgrade their skills and have shown flexibility in switching to new areas within the curriculum. In this study, the transference model refers to teachers, usually music teachers who – with little or no training – have taken on the role of steel band teacher and set up successful programmes within their respective schools. Being musically trained works as an advantage and holds them in good stead – particularly in the transfer of knowledge. Though their skills on the instrument may not set them apart as competent pan players, they are however highly skilled in getting their ideas across to the pupils.

One teacher (Jo) explains her role as such: “I teach the steel pan to every child in the school. In Key Stage 3, the pupils will all use the pans as it is written into that programme as a project within the fashion music option. The school is obliged to teach music from other cultures and parts of the world, alongside Westernised music.”



Teaching steel pan in junior school [photo: Annette Hudemann]

Jo trained as a percussionist at the Welsh College for Music and Drama, and taught percussion as a peripatetic teacher in a number of schools and also worked part-time as a freelance teacher. Jo later retrained as a classroom teacher in Music for secondary schools. After three years, she became more

and more interested in Special Needs. She applied for and was appointed as head of music in a special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, in Herefordshire. Being a charity, the school was the recipient of corporate largesse offered by Allied Dunbar, and the school resolved to spend the money on steel pan instruments. As head of the music department, Jo was given the task of setting up a steel band at the school. Eight single pan instruments were ordered from a pan-tuner: two single tenor pans, two single alto (second) pans, two single guitar pans and two single bass pans. Jo opted for a holistic programme, introducing it across the school and the band has since gone from strength to strength.

“I went on a training day at the local education centre, as part of my professional development. It was geared towards Special Needs Education. The

Special Needs Musical Advisor asked if I could give a talk on the benefits that children derived from steel pans in schools, and maybe do a session with staff on the course. I explained that if they wanted to see the benefits the children got from the instrument, they needed to see the children working. We took a few of our children over and they played a piece that they knew well. I then started teaching them a piece they did not know (La Bamba), so staff were able to see how I taught the children. This is a real confidence booster for the kids who, by the time they reach us, have failed in so many things. We have found that the children who have reading difficulties, writing difficulties, and behavioural difficulties - have all benefited from the steel pan sessions in some way. The nicest compliment that was made by the staff at that training session was that our children all looked so confident and happy within the lesson situation."

Listening to teachers' stories of their experiences of steel pan within the curricula, it was clear that children enjoyed the success they got when their skills were validated and were keen to learn. Another teacher, Heather, had a similar story to tell.

"When I decided to commission the making of the steel pans for the school, I contacted pan tuners and asked them to give me a quote on the number of pans I needed. I had a budget and had to work towards that to see what I could get that was suitable. I did not ask for a particular style, and he did not tell me what I would be getting, but the pans he delivered were sufficient for our needs. From the beginning, I did all the arrangements and the music myself. I wrote out the notes for the pupils and taught them to play. In this school of 160 children, all the children would, at some stage, have steel pan classes on their school timetable. I use the pans in the classroom and they all get to use them. I will usually have six pupils on the steel drums and another five on other percussion instruments. I arrange all the tunes in the repertoire."

Heather was born in New Zealand, and came to the UK to complete a degree in music, and to train as a classroom teacher. Her main instruments were the piano and the violin. She became interested in pan at her previous school in the London Borough of Brent, where she was a teacher of music. Clyde Dias was the specialist steel pan teacher there and he introduced the instrument to both teaching staff and pupils at the school. Heather would accompany the school steel band when they performed off site. She became involved in the band at an administrative level, and later became a music tutor with the Black Music Co-operative. It seemed a natural progression to introduce the steel band in her new school, a special school for children with moderate learning difficulties. "The pans at the school were specially ordered to

fulfil the needs of the schools. The instruments are single pans, single tenors, single seconds, single guitars, and single bass. As this is a special needs school, I felt that these pans best fit the collective needs of the pupils. The examination board for the GCSE in performing Arts requires the integration of music and another subject area. We chose Music and Art. The students then came up with a design for the pans. These designs were painted on the pans as part of their Art project. As part of the assessment process, they were required to play their musical pieces on the pans designed by them. The designs were taken from Salvador Dali's 'melting clock'. We hope to reproduce the same designs on greeting cards for the school."

Both Jo and Heather have received the full backing of their respective head teachers, as well as members of staff. Jo also set up a staff steel band of mainly teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff, which meets once a week to practice their repertoire. As the steel band became more and more in demand, due to the number of requests for performances at local festivals and fairs, Jo has been inundated with requests from other schools for advice in setting up school steel bands of their own.

"The school's steel band is invited out to play at many events and concerts and we are only too happy to accept invitations. It is the only time that pupils from this school have been invited to perform outside the school and we are all very proud of our steel band. If you were to ask anybody in the school, they would tell you that the best result, in terms of value for money, was the investment we put in on steel pans."

A slightly different scenario is the one presented by Karen, a young teacher in her second year of teaching. Karen completed a degree in music and a PGCE (Post-Graduate Certificate in Education). She is now employed as a music teacher at her school, which she attended as a child herself. It is a large comprehensive school with a good academic reputation. Karen teaches year groups 7-13, about half the school's 1500 pupils. Although she specialised in playing piano and clarinet, Karen has a wide range of musical taste embracing world music, popular and classical. A large percentage of the children have private lessons in a number of musical instruments, whether piano or the clarinet and trumpet. The school employs a number of peripatetic teachers who offer specialisms in woodwind and brass instruments. The school holds good memories for Karen. It was her first contact with the steel pan.

"When I was a student at this school (about 10 years ago), the then head of the music department introduced steel pans in the school. She had heard a

steel band performing at a local festival, and thought it would be a good idea for the school to have its own band. She would take the pan classes herself, arrange the tunes and teach us to play the instruments. I was in the steel band and we would practice for performances in school concerts and Christmas carol services. I left school to pursue my studies, and this teacher left a few years later. The new teacher appointed to her post had no interest in pan and never used them. They were just put in a cupboard and forgotten. Two years ago, a new female teacher was appointed to the post of head of music and she took them out and used them, arranging the music and teaching the kids how to play the instruments. Now I have replaced her, I am carrying on with the steel pans because I have a genuine interest in them.”

There was never any question of Karen’s school employing a peripatetic teacher to teach steel pan. The tradition of steel pan in this particular school is that of an interesting instrument which can easily be accommodated within the duties of a classroom music teacher. Popular folklore suggests that the steel pan is easier to play than any other instrument. It is not necessarily accompanied by the rigours of reading music. ‘Hitting a note with a stick is a very simple task’, as one head teacher has pointed out. Why employ a specialist to teach this simple instrument? Some steel band teachers have set out to change this stereotype. Derrick has been a steel band teacher for the past twenty years. An Irishman by birth, he is now an authority on Steelbands in schools, as well as an international steel pan judge at festivals and panorama competitions.

Derrick completed a degree in Music History at The University of London, and then got a job as a music teacher in a local school in Lambeth. There he came into contact with steel pans for the first time.

“When I arrived at the school, in 1977, there were a number of steel pans at the school, but the steel pan teacher was seldom seen. He would turn up every now and then, and then he disappeared altogether. I filled in for a time, teaching the pan when there was no steel pan teacher. Another steel pan teacher was appointed at the school and he invited me to become the musical director of my main steel band, the British Airways Groovers. So I did. First I attended an adult evening class/ Pan workshop, which was run by Ricky DeCairos at Goldsmith’s College, University of London. From 1982 – 1988, I played, arranged and conducted the Groovers Steel Band. I was still a mainstream class teacher, with an interest in the steel pan. I moved to another school in Leytonstone, in

1982, and again, there were pans at the school. The steel pan teacher there would turn up every now and then – the same story. I decided to take it over and put a lot of effort into setting up a school steel band. I began to believe that this suited me more than my job as a classroom music teacher. I wanted to teach pan in schools. I resigned my post as a classroom teacher and began to teach pan in a number of schools in the area.”

Derrick is very critical of pan teachers who dismiss the importance of music theory in teaching pan. He is convinced that the only way musical institutions would respect steel pan as a worthy instrument would be if it achieves parity with other musical instruments. He insists that the attitude towards pan could affect both the people who play it and the people who have never played the instrument. He believes quite strongly that people should be able to read pan from written music. Too many people completely misjudge the techniques and knowledge that pan embraces.

“The attitudes of some head teachers towards pan seem to have a familiar ring in most of the schools I

“Too many people completely misjudge the techniques and knowledge that pan embraces.”

have been in. Pan was seen as a dumping ground for the academically less able children, and they were almost always African Caribbean kids. It was also used as an avenue to get rid of the disruptive elements of

the school – a sin bin, so to speak, for the kids with behavioural difficulties. Don’t teach them anything, just keep them in that room and let them get on with hitting a piece of metal. The more academically able children within the school were steered away from it. The mainstream education system did not seem to appreciate fully how much the children got out of playing the instruments, especially children whose self esteem was low.”

Derrick has no doubt that classroom teachers are best placed to do a good job when teaching the instrument, and in so doing will eventually advance the status of the steel pan within the school and in the wider community:

“The teacher within the school could get the best out of the children. His/ her potential is realised much better than someone who comes in once a week. If it was made absolutely clear to the schools that the part time, pan teacher, coming in was part of a two-person team, the structure would have been much better. Schools should ensure that a classroom teacher is always present – to support the class; to observe ideas; to learn to play the instrument; to make sure the environment is safe – to be able to fill in should the pan teacher be unable to attend a lesson.”

Today Derrick works in Milton Keynes teaching pan in 13 schools every week. Pan is spreading into areas it has never been in before. Manchester city has over 40 school steel bands and every term, more bands are being set up in schools. Derrick feels that pan is perceived by the public only as background noise, and is determined to challenge the stereotypes.

“Pan has been in schools for more than thirty years, yet the stereotypes remain. One of those stereotypes is, you can only play calypso on the steel pan. There is a head teacher in North London who would not allow the ‘Blue Danube’ to be played on pan in her school. ‘It does not belong on that instrument,’ she said. ‘Pans should only play black music.’ There are a lot of people in schools who never seem to understand that pan is a universal instrument, capable of any musical range. They just want the steel band to play a few simple tunes at Christmas – but nothing classical, no musical compositions”.

The Instructor Dependency Model

This model suggests that steel pan can only be taught well and will only receive the respect it deserves if experienced specialists teach it in schools. That status is afforded to the piano, brass and woodwind instruments. In the case of the steel pan, it is argued that anyone could teach the instrument. Teachers with little or no skill level take over the role of steel pan teachers, producing very poor results. For this study, four specialist steel pan teachers were interviewed and their views were remarkably similar. Irvin, a steel pan teacher of twenty years’ experience explained.

“I think that to be a steel pan teacher you need to be a specialist. You have to be able to understand the versatility of the instruments – individually and collectively. It is a feeling that comes within. To be a steel pan teacher, you have to know at least a little of the history of the steel pan. You have to know where it originated. You need to have an idea of how the pan is made, how it is tuned, so that you can relate to your students. I would say categorically that steel pan tutors should be individuals who were brought up in the culture of steel bands, and even with that background, those individuals should be trained to teach in schools. Most people will acknowledge that to teach piano and violin you need to be a specialist, so why not the same respect for steel pan?”

Irvin was born in the Caribbean island of Dominica. He has been involved in steel band culture for over 35 years. For 10 years he taught the steel pan in schools on the island. Upon arrival in the UK, he was appointed as a peripatetic teacher of steel pan in the London Borough of Newham. Since 1993, Irvin has taught in six local schools in the Newham area, as well as running weekly pan classes at the New Vic College and the local university. Irvin is an

accomplished pan player and even runs workshops in the East London area for pan musicians and gig men wishing to enhance their skills. Irvin is methodical in his teaching approach, employing a range of techniques to teach the chromatic scales and musical chord progression.

“I was very much interested in the development of the steel band universally and I felt that one of my duties to the pupils is to project a positive image of pan to my students. I was mostly self taught along these lines, but I read a lot about the pan internationally and set up links with steel pan ventures the world over. I am also the Musical director and leader of Forest Gate Steel orchestra, and I do try to feed players from the schools and colleges into Forest Gate Orchestra, as it is my ambition for Forest Gate Orchestra to become one of the top steel bands in the United Kingdom.”

David, a pan teacher of twelve years experience, is concerned about the image that pan gives to the general public. He was born in Trinidad and is proud of his achievements in using the steel pan to cross cultural boundaries. David has no connections with a community steel band, concentrating on gigs instead to supplement his income. David teaches the steel pan in two schools across North London. In one of the schools he teaches, a large proportion of the girls in the school are Muslims of South Asian origin. The girls are required to attend the steel pan classes.

“They are my most dedicated players. They are very enthusiastic about playing the pan and look forward to the lesson. Needless to say, they produce very good results. They are very interested in the instrument, are always punctual and very skilled players. I can say that if these Muslim girls were to continue playing the pan after they leave school, they would develop into very good players indeed.”

David is, however, very worried about classroom teachers taking over as steel pan teachers. He remembers having to take a test of competence when he first applied for the job as a peripatetic teacher of pan with the ILEA. This test required him to demonstrate to a panel how he would approach the teaching of selected musical pieces to a group of 12 year olds. He had to play the full range of musical instruments to show he understood tonal quality and the variety of instruments within a steel band.

“I am very critical about schoolteachers taking on the role of the steel pan teacher. Not only does it devalue our art form, but also it takes the best that the Caribbean has to offer, and excludes the Caribbean specialists from this venture. Steel pan is an instrument that the practitioners have to be dedicated towards. You need to have proper phrasing,

timing, and a particular rhythm for the instrument. If you are an arranger, you need to have the arrangements for the piece validated within the whole spectrum of the orchestra. This is something that has taken me years to develop and perfection for me is still a long way off. I cannot see someone picking that up in a few weeks. Some classroom teachers who take over the teaching of pan are not experienced in this field at all. They feel that because they can read music, they can teach steel pan. That is not necessarily so. Steel pan must have a feel within it, a sense of identity, proper phrasing, you need to be able to arrange the music properly, for it to be a successful venture.”

Steve, born in Trinidad is also very sceptical about classroom teachers, transferring to teaching pan. He sees it as the abandonment of one’s culture.

“I am not saying steel pan must be only be taught by a black teacher with Caribbean roots. I know many white classroom teachers who do a good job - as good a job as any. Providing they go through the training courses to ensure that their knowledge level is to a certain standard. You may be a brilliant pianist, or a saxophone player, but teaching pan is something quite different. It is very creative. It is not like other disciplines - reproducing a classical piece in the same key and musical tone as the composer’s. The arrangements should always be original. As such, you need to have that feel for the music.”

Lyndon, a pan teacher from Guyana, welcomes the new breed of steel pan teachers in schools and feels that we have a lot to learn from each other. There are definitely more steel bands in schools than there are steel band teachers, and the steelband fraternity could only become stronger with the introduction to its fold of more musically trained teachers.

“There is a feeling that if classroom tutors took over the teaching of pans in schools, there would be no jobs for the Caribbean pan players, who rely on teaching to supplement their income. There was certainly a feeling of insecurity among some members of the pan playing fraternity that we are merely giving away our birthright to others – but the more open we are about our art form, the better it is for everybody. More people would want to play the instrument. There would certainly be more jobs for everybody, and more pans to be made and sold. It’s a ‘win win’ situation.”

Lyndon sees this ‘win-win situation’ as a wonderful opportunity to develop a more systematic approach to the teaching of steel bands in schools. There seems to be an ongoing demand for steel pan teachers, and he has been approached by schools many times and has had to turn down many offers. At times he may recommend someone he knows, but is very reluctant to do so, as individuals are not always reliable. He recalls that most pan players of his generation have very little knowledge of music theory. Some did not even know the rudiments of simple chord progression. They can play the pan well, but seem not too keen to ascend to a higher level.

Steel Pan classes in schools, under qualified music teachers can do just that. The young pan players are attending educational courses, becoming literate in music and reading of musical scores. These youths are now entering the musical field, in pan jazz and other classical areas. Some are seeking employment back into schools as pan teachers and that bodes well for the next generation of pan musicians. Pan is now ascending new heights – the European and the World Steel Band Festivals are a testament to this. Steel pan needs all the assistance it can get to be recognised as a world instrument.



members of Pan Kultur from Dortmund, Germany, after a workshop in Andalusia [photo: Annette Hudemann]

Conclusion

In considering the roles of the classroom teacher, and that of the peripatetic teacher, the overriding focus should be on how to improve the quality of education provided to children in music education. It is difficult to quantify scientifically the benefits derived by children through the teaching of steel pan music, but the anecdotal evidence is overwhelming. The requirement that all specialist pan teachers must demonstrate a satisfactory standard of competence in the instrument had been a prerequisite in the 1970s and 1980s when there was an upsurge of steel bands in schools. No quality assurance body exists to ensure that standards are maintained today. Perhaps the steel band umbrella association [The British Association of Steel Bands] may now be ready to embrace this huge responsibility. Other practical suggestions are listed in the recommendations box below.

There is a feeling among some members of the steel pan fraternity, that if classroom tutors took over the teaching of pans in schools, there would be no jobs for the Caribbean pan players, who have given much of their lives to the advancement of the steel pan. However this is not substantiated by the facts. The steel pan fraternity can only benefit from a buoyant and rejuvenated art form. However, cultural sensitivity dictates that qualified specialist pan tutors be sought in areas where these staff are available.

In conclusion, the importance of taking account of background factors, including the history and struggles, from which the instrument was forged, cannot be overstated. There is evidence that steel band in schools will thrive, if consistency and stability of schools' efforts are maintained. A wide range of

outcomes, including increased self-esteem, transfer of training, and value-added educational benefits are all positive results of well-run steel pan programmes.

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Recommendations

1. Specialist Steel Pan teachers should have easy and constant information about avenues of assistance they access within the education system to enable them to perform their roles effectively.
2. Additional funding should be available for staff development/ assistance for specialist steel pan teachers to acquire additional music training, e.g. music theory, to enable them to function effectively within the classroom.
3. Specialist Steel pan teachers in schools should be shadowed by another music teacher preferably with an interest in the steel pan to enable the exchange of ideas and practical skills. Schools may find that the augmenting of peripatetic pan teachers and a classroom music teacher is cost effective in the long run.
4. Classroom teachers of music with an interest in pan should be encouraged to attend workshops whenever possible, particularly if the workshops are run by qualified, experienced pan musicians.
5. The problem of unreliable steel pan teachers needs to be addressed. Schools rely on staff to exhibit a degree of professionalism, an essential ingredient in the smooth running of educational institutions. Peripatetic teachers need to be made aware of the role required of them when accepting the post.
6. Many schools seem unable to find a replacement school pan teacher when a pan teacher leaves a post. This could seriously affect the school timetabling. There may be a need for a register of qualified pan tutors