

'Listen!' How many times does a music teacher hear that word? How many times does it fall on deaf ears? The answer to both questions is, 'Many'. But what should be of prime concern are those 'deaf ears' which belong to politicians and administrators, who by their very position in society wield the power to determine, ultimately determine, what shall be the main thrust of a child's education.

Education is now very much part of the political game, a game in which the teacher does not know the rules, or rather, is not being allowed to become acquainted with the rules and strategies employed. Whoever plays the game and whatever the rules are, the fact remains that the 'creative' and the 'political' must co-exist. But to what extent are they compatible?

Man has always been creative and we are now in a period of civilization when high technology is one of his major creations. High technology has entered the political arena. Computers - every school must have a computer. The cost is immaterial for the present generation must be taught how to handle high technology. They must be taught how to react to what appears on the screen, how to react at the push of a button. Employment of high technology will ensure that this generation knows how to react. It might not know how to think, nor know how to reason.

Since man stood on his own two feet he has been creative and in every corner of the world his culture is interwoven with music. Man has proved that in society he needs music and within the smaller society of a school one is able to involve that society's population in music.

By ensuring that music in school is creative one is enabling children to be continually involved in performance, composition and critical analysis. By so doing, they are receiving an education in the widest sense of the word for the socializing factor intrinsic in music is not to be underestimated. Inside and outside the classroom music draws together the disparate threads of the social life of the school and in today's fragmented society this is possibly one of its most positive contributions.

The individual can develop, become part of a group, class or school performance and taste the absolute satisfaction, indeed elation, that comes from intimate involvement in the creation or re-creation of an art form. But at the same time, we each have a desire to preserve our own individuality and music allows our minds, imaginations and feelings to find private, personal expression.

However, there are still educationists and administrators who feel that music on the timetable represents a threat to basic numeracy and literacy. After all the examination framework accepted by society dictates that at the end of the education system one should be able to categorize each person. The categories are based on the premise that education is a matter of empty vessels being filled. Filled with what - the ability to react at a given time? And what about the individual who one cannot categorize or mark in percentage terms; it is not possible to feed him through the system again. Yet, who is going to admit that we have failed that individual because we have allowed the examination system to dictate the curriculum?

In 1967 the Plowden Report voiced what many felt that the time, a feeling which is still prevalent, that the place of music in the curriculum has to be justified. The need to justify the role of music education underestimates the importance of divergent thinking in the intellectual development of children. Music is an essential ingredient in a complete education. There has to be a re-think regarding the education of the whole person which is felt to be a hypothesis regarded as a backward glance to the Renaissance concept of education. There must be a positive move against the belief held by many that the curriculum must be constructed upon a hierarchical framework: (a) English, Mathematics, Sciences; (b) Humanities; (c) Arts and Crafts.

We would all accept that man is born with many faculties and it is the basis of education to develop these behaviours of intelligence. In acknowledging this premise we then have to recognise that music education needs to commence in the same period of a child's development when the other faculties are being advanced. The realization of a child's musical potential will be curtailed if at certain periods of his school life the subject has a vague position in the school curriculum or even ceases entirely to be taught.

It is the stimulation and awakening of the senses which enables the child to live in a musical world of thought and feeling and thereby come to understand the language of music. The concept of organised sound and silence can best be understood by cultivating a discerning ear through creativity. Music needs to involve movement, manipulative skills, memory, aural and symbolic perception as well as intellectual and emotional discernment. Bennett Reimer, in his 'A Philosophy of Music Education', defines the crux of the argument as "... the 'heart of the matter' in music is the expressiveness of sound, and the 'heart of the matter' in music education is to help every child experience the expressiveness of sound as fully as he is capable of doing so."

It must be our intention, therefore, to interpret music education as aesthetic education and concern

ourselves with children throughout their school life. To achieve that aim it is essential that bridges are built across the tiered structure of our education system and it is imperative that we develop teaching strategies enabling us to reach our goal - an education for life, not examinations.

Music education is the right of every child, not just the specially gifted. The Plowden Report commented, " ... we are clear that it is the musical education of the generality of children that most needs critical examination and reform". How far have we progressed since 1967? Not very far, for society still demands that the greater portion of school time is given over to numeracy and literacy. In the present climate, it is with a determined effort that the music teacher endeavours not to become disillusioned.

In his autobiography, Stravinsky wrote, "For one can listen without hearing just as one can look without seeing". So, who is really listening?