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MUSIC EDUCATION IN THE UK: STATE, REALITIES, PROSPECTS

The article attempts to provide an overview of the experience in organising music education in the UK, which is valuable for the reform and improvement of the Ukrainian educational system. The historical stages of the development of British music education are examined, starting from the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988, which laid the foundation for the establishment of uniform standards for music education in schools, up to modern initiatives aimed at ensuring accessibility and equality in the field of music education.

Key governmental and public initiatives, including Youth Music and the National Plan for Music Education, are analysed. The role of these programmes in supporting music education, providing learning opportunities for children from different social backgrounds, fostering young people's creative abilities, and promoting collaboration between educational, cultural, and public institutions is explored.

Particular attention is given to the functioning of music hubs — regional centres that play a crucial role in coordinating music education, providing students with access to musical instruments, orchestras, choirs, and professional mentoring. The article analyses the effectiveness of their activities, funding mechanisms, and their significance for the development of talented youth.

The article highlights the main challenges faced by British music education, including issues related to funding, staffing, and unequal access to music resources across different regions. It summarises the prospects for adapting the British experience to the Ukrainian music education system, emphasising the importance of legislative support, inter-institutional cooperation, and expanding opportunities for students' creative development. The significance of modern digital technologies in the educational process is underlined, as they contribute to the integration of innovative methods for teaching music. Additionally, it is noted that the formation of a national strategy for music education in Ukraine requires a systematic approach that integrates public policy, academic research, and the practical experience of educators.

Keywords: *general music education in the UK, music lessons, music hubs, educational reform, music pedagogy.*

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Introduction

After two world wars, accession to the European Union, and Brexit, education in the UK has received a new lease of life. Ukraine is going through the same path now, when it is struggling to preserve and develop its nationality. Music education in the UK has been transformed into a separate “sector” of citizen development, and music has become an integral part of the school curriculum. The study of the organisation of general music education in the UK is relevant and timely for the creation of A National Plan for Music Education.

Analysis of recent research and publications

An analysis of the sources of pedagogical and artistic orientation shows that Ukrainian and foreign

scholars, in particular L. Volynets, T. Kristopchuk, L. Masol, H. Sysoieva, L. Khaletska, V. Cherkasov, John Finney, Gordon Cox, Ally Daubney and others have highlighted and revealed various issues of the formation and development of general music education in Western Europe from different perspectives. The subject of our research significantly complements the studies of these authors and makes it possible to understand the trends in the development of general music competencies in the UK.

Research methodology

In order to achieve the goal, the research uses theoretical methods, including analysis, synthesis, comparison, and generalisation, to determine the level of theoretical and practical solution

to the problem. In addition, the main focus is on the study and synthesis of primary sources.

Research results

The education system in the UK is constantly adapting to current geopolitical and demographic changes, the challenges of contemporary culture, and new social realities. “The power of music to change lives” is the title of the British National Plan for Music Education, which emphasises the importance of music education in the development of not only musical and creative abilities but also spiritual, cultural, and professional aspects of human development.

In 1988, the Education Reform Act was passed, marking one of the key moments in the development of general education in the UK, including general music education. This Act laid the foundation for the implementation of the National Curriculum, which provided uniform standards for school education. In the context of music education, it was the first time that music was made compulsory as part of the school curriculum for all students 5–14. At the same time, this created new challenges, including providing schools with sufficient resources, teaching materials, and trained teachers.

The Education Reform Act 1988 introduced the Key Stages as part of the National Curriculum. The Key Stages provided a clear structure for school education, allowing for a gradual build-up of knowledge and skills in line with the age of the pupils. This approach created the basis for the uniform development of competences.

A significant step forward was document “Music in the National Curriculum” (1992), which defined the Key Stages for acquiring musical competence.

- *Key Stage 1* (5–7 years): primary students are introduced to basic music concepts, develop listening skills and participate in hands-on music activities such as singing, rhythmic games and playing simple instruments.

- *Key Stage 2* (7–11 years): the programme is expanded to include more structured music theory, ensemble performance, and an introduction to different musical genres and cultures.

- *Key Stage 3* (11–14 years old): in secondary school, the emphasis is on a deeper study of musical forms, composition, improvisation and the development of technical skills. Students also analyse music from different eras and styles.

- *Key Stage 4* (14–16 years): at this stage, music becomes an *elective* subject, but students who choose it can prepare for GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) music exams covering performance, composition and music analysis.

In 1992, the Education (Schools) Act was passed, establishing the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching in the country’s schools. Ofsted played a significant role in raising educational, particularly

in music, where inequalities in access to music education were identified due to variations in school funding and regional differences. In its reports, the Office for Standards in Education has also highlighted differences in the quality of music teaching between state and private schools and emphasised the need for the training and professional development of qualified music teachers.

It is worth noting that between 1988 and 1995, there was strict government control over the music curriculum in schools. The curriculum was highly standardised, and schools were required to comply with its regulations. However, in 1995, the National Curriculum was amended to give teachers more flexibility in choosing methods, repertoire and forms of organising lessons. Schools were also granted the ability to adapt the curriculum to their resources and the specific needs of their students. The reform further simplified the documentation required for planning and reporting.

This change allowed for birth of initiatives such as Youth Music (1999), Music Manifesto (2004), and the National Plan for Music Education (2011).

“Youth Music” was established in 1999 to support young people in their development through music. It is not only a charitable initiative but also a government-supported programme that receives public funding. The main objectives of Youth Music include: supporting music initiatives for young people, especially those without access to music education, such as socio-economically disadvantaged groups or young people with special needs; funding programmes in local communities that provide access to musical instruments and teaching; supporting the functioning of orchestras and choirs and funding concert performances.

“The Music Manifesto” was a government initiative aimed at improving the quality of music education and strengthening the role of music in the educational process. Although independent of the government, the organisation collaborated with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Technology, and the Ministry of Culture, Media, and Sport. It published two reports, which outlined a strategic direction for the future of music education, a joint action programme, and 50 recommendations for its improvement. While the Music Manifesto no longer exists as an organisation, its principles and ideas have directly influenced key reforms in the 21st century.

In 2011, the government adopted the first official *National Plan for Music Education 2011*. This plan was an important milestone in the history of music education in the UK and aimed to significantly improve access to music education, particularly for children from different social groups. Its main aspects include:

- *Music Education Hubs*: Central to the organisation of music education at the local level, music

hubs bring together various organisations, schools, cultural centres, and music institutions to provide music services to children and young people. These hubs have become the primary mechanism for coordinating music education locally, creating opportunities for children and youth to engage in diverse musical genres, including classical, popular, jazz, and electronic music. They also establish collaboration between schools, cultural centres, and music organisations.

- *Accessibility and Equality*: The plan aimed to increase opportunities for students from socially vulnerable groups, including children from low-income families or with special needs. It supported programmes providing access to musical instruments and training both in and out of schools and used funding to organise community music initiatives.

- *Quality of Education*: The plan sought to improve the quality of music education through the recruitment of qualified music teachers and professional musicians, the development of innovative and interactive teaching methods, and the organisation of regular assessments, monitoring, and evaluation of music programme effectiveness.

- *Support for Creativity and Talent Development*: The plan emphasised the importance of fostering creativity among students. It recognised that teaching basic instrumental or vocal skills alone was insufficient. Encouraging self-expression through music, developing *composition and arranging skills* (emphasis added by the author, Bohdan Khrystenko), and forming musical groups, orchestras, ensembles, and choirs were also prioritised.

- *Funding and Resources*: The National Plan included provisions for funding to support music hubs and music programmes at the local level. Funding sources were identified, including organisations such as Youth Music and other state bodies. This funding enabled schools and music organisations to provide students with instruments, teaching materials, and professional teachers.

- *Cooperation between Schools and Cultural Organisations*: The importance of collaboration between schools, music institutions, cultural centres, and local communities to create an integrated system of music education that promotes the development of both the academic and creative abilities of children.

Each school was required to write and publish a “Music Education Development Plan”, which encouraged schools to take a proactive approach to organising and improving music education. The plan aimed to define and make transparent how music education is organised within the school. It includes: details on how music is integrated into the general educational process, including classroom instruction and extracurricular opportunities; information on the recruitment, training, and support of music teachers, the involvement of other specialists, and the qualifications of music educators;

a breakdown of the school’s budget for music resources, staffing, and activities, as well as information about additional funding from external sources; plans for cooperation with music hubs, local communities, and other organisations to enhance music education opportunities.

Out-of-school music education in the UK is an important element of the overall music ecosystem, offering additional opportunities for students who wish to develop their musical abilities beyond the school curriculum.

Examples of Projects and Achievements of Music Hubs:

- *Birmingham Music Service*: This music hub organises regular classes for students from socially vulnerable groups. Free instrumental courses have been established, allowing children from low-income families to engage in music education.

- *London Music Fund*: Provides individual scholarships for talented students who cannot afford private lessons. This initiative has played a key role in nurturing musical talent among children from diverse social backgrounds.

- *Manchester Camerata*: Works with children with special educational needs by offering adapted music programmes tailored to their requirements.

According to UK government reports, music hubs have reached more than 90% of schools, significantly increasing students’ access to music education. Creating opportunities for students from low-income families has been particularly impactful. Through these initiatives, students have had the chance to play in orchestras, participate in music competitions, and attend festivals. These activities have not only enhanced their musical skills but also enriched their emotional and social development. Music hubs frequently organise joint projects with local communities, strengthening the connection between school education and society. In 2019 alone, the British government allocated £79 million (approximately 4 billion hryvnias) to support the work of music hubs.

In addition to the aforementioned Youth Music initiative, the UK also has the following: *The National Youth Orchestra*, offers talented young musicians the opportunity to perform on a professional stage under the guidance of renowned conductors; *ABRSM* (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music), an out-of-school assessment system that includes exams in instrumental performance, singing, and music theory. High achievement in this system grants students access to international music competitions and conservatories; *Open Orchestras*, provides access to music education for children with disabilities by developing adapted instruments and specialised programmes. The UK is also renowned for hosting music competitions and festivals for young people, such as *Music for Youth* and *BBC Young Musician*. These events inspire young performers to enhance

their skills, broaden their horizons, and showcase their achievements to a wider audience.

In 2022, the *National Plan for Music Education* was updated to reflect the evolving needs of music education. The impact of the pandemic revealed significant inequalities in access to music education, particularly for children from vulnerable groups. In response, funding was increased to support digital platforms for distance learning and programmes aimed at addressing learning gaps.

The updated plan emphasises the importance of ensuring access to music education for all children up to the age of 18, regardless of whether music is their primary subject. This marks a significant shift from the 2011 plan, which primarily focused on students under 14 through the Key Stages structure. Additionally, the updated plan places greater emphasis on supporting children with special needs, including the development of programmes that utilise adapted musical instruments and technologies.

A notable feature of the 2022 plan is its active integration of digital tools, such as music composition and arranging software, reflecting modern trends in digital music and aligning with the interests of today's youth. Unlike the 2011 plan, which concentrated mainly on traditional forms of music education (e.g., choral singing and classical orchestras), the 2022 update incorporates modern genres such as electronic music and hip-hop. This

inclusion helps to attract a broader and more diverse audience.

Conclusions

Thus, laws and initiatives in the UK, such as the Education Reform Act of 1988 and the National Plan for Music Education of 2011, provide a consistent framework for learning and access to quality education. Introducing a similar legal framework in Ukraine would ensure standardized approaches to music education nationwide.

The successful implementation of music hubs in the UK, which integrate local schools, cultural organizations, and the community, can serve as a model for organizing music education at the local level in Ukraine. This approach would help expand access to music education across various regions of the country.

Programs such as Youth Music demonstrate the effectiveness of collaboration between the government, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. Adapting such models in Ukraine could facilitate funding for music initiatives and support talented young individuals.

Placing emphasis on developing students' creative abilities through composition, music arranging, and participation in ensembles fosters holistic development. These approaches should form the foundation of music education curricula in Ukraine.

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**ЗАГАЛЬНА МУЗИЧНА ОСВІТА ВЕЛИКОЇ БРИТАНІЇ:
СТАН, РЕАЛІЇ, ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ**

У статті здійснено спробу комплексного дослідження досвіду організації загальної музичної освіти Великої Британії, що є цінним для реформування та вдосконалення української освітньої системи. Розглянуто історичні етапи розвитку британської музичної освіти, починаючи від впровадження Національної освітньої програми 1988 року, що заклала основу для створення єдиних стандартів навчання музики в школах, до сучасних ініціатив, спрямованих на забезпечення доступності та рівності у сфері музичного виховання.

Проаналізовані ключові державні та громадські ініціативи, серед яких «Youth Music» та «National Plan for Music Education». Досліджено роль цих програм у підтримці музичної освіти, наданні можливостей для навчання дітей з різних соціальних груп, розвитку креативних здібностей молоді та сприяттєї співпраці між освітніми, культурними та громадськими інституціями.

Особлива увага зосереджена на функціонуванні музичних хабів — регіональних центрів, які відіграють важливу роль у координації музичної освіти, наданні учням доступу до музичних інструментів, гуртків, оркестрів, хорів та професійного наставництва. Проаналізовано ефективність їх діяльності, механізми фінансування та значення для розвитку талановитої молоді.

Стаття висвітлює основні виклики, з якими стикається британська музична освіта, зокрема проблеми фінансування, кадрового забезпечення та нерівномірного доступу до музичних ресурсів у різних регіонах. Узагальнено перспективи адаптації британського досвіду в контексті української системи музичної освіти, підкреслено важливість законодавчої підтримки, міжінституційної співпраці та розширення можливостей для творчого розвитку учнів. Особливо наголошено на значенні сучасних цифрових технологій у навчальному процесі, що сприяють інтеграції інноваційних методик викладання музики. Зазначено, що формування національної стратегії музичної освіти в Україні потребує системного підходу, який поєднує державну політику, наукові дослідження та практичний досвід педагогів.

Ключові слова: загальна музична освіта Великої Британії, уроки музики, музичні хаби, освітня реформа, музична педагогіка.