
A Training Model for Black British and Electronic Music.

Diversifying music education by building teacher capacity to bring these genres into the classroom

Written by Mykaell Riley, University of Westminster; and Sophia Loizou, Young Sounds, Hussein Booth, University of Westminster; Amna Smith, University of Southampton.

Partner Organisations: EQUALIZE is delivered by Young Sounds UK; The Black Music Research Unit (BMRU) at the University of Westminster (academic lead Dr Mykaell Riley), Punch Records (Birmingham), Bradford Allstar Entertainments, and Bradford Music & Arts Service.

Executive statement

Current music education in mainstream schools displays a nexus of representation and diversity and GCSE music has the highest GCSE attainment gap for access, inclusion and SEND.

Context

Current music education in mainstream schools displays a nexus of representation and diversity¹. There are vast socioeconomic disparities amongst music provision, with only 15% of state school students accessing musical tuition². Similarly, Black-British musicians are severely underrepresented in the employment sector³. The evidence therefore points to an inaccessible music curriculum, which prevents pipelines to careers in music⁴.

Key messages and recommendations

The EQUALIZE project aims to address the core issue of access to inclusive electronic and Black-British music education for young people.

- A nationwide electronic music training model for music teachers and facilitators.
- EQUALIZE as a model for inclusive and culturally responsive teaching.
- Enhanced representation of electronic and Black-British music in schools and educational settings.

¹ Arts Council England. (2021). *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. A Data Report*. Arts Council England Report. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-data-report-2020-2021>

² Department for Education. (2025). *Curriculum and Assessment Review*. HM Government report. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/690b96bbc22e4ed8b051854d/Curriculum_and_Assessment_Review_final_report_-_Building_a_world-class_curriculum_for_all.pdf

³ UK Music. (2026). *Black Music Means Business 2026*. UK Music Report. <https://www.ukmusic.org/research-reports/black-music-means-business/>

⁴ UK Music. (2026). *Black Music Means Business 2026*. UK Music Report. <https://www.ukmusic.org/research-reports/black-music-means-business/>

What EQUALIZE did

EQUALIZE is a project led by Young Sounds UK in partnership with the Black Music Research Unit (University of Westminster) and regional partners Punch Records (Birmingham), and Bradford Music & Arts Service⁵. EQUALIZE brought electronic music workshops to young people in the Bradford and Birmingham areas, collaborating with school partners, music hubs and expert researchers in music education⁶. This facilitated learning opportunities and made young people feel seen and heard⁷.

“It’s a lot easier to express yourself if it’s the music you already listen to.”

[Birmingham workshop participant]



Key Findings

Main barrier: Teacher capacity, not student interest (skills, confidence, time, funding).

Teacher perspective: Genres seen as engaging and empowering, but many feel unprepared.

Wider context: Reflects uneven, often deprioritised music provision.

Key insight: Pedagogy matters more than technology.

Engagement drivers: Learner choice and agency boost confidence, creativity, and participation.

Effective tools: Genre-authentic, reverse-engineered Ableton templates support all skill levels.

Scalability: Most teachers believe the approach can transfer to classrooms with adaptation.

Overall implication: Targeted, genre-authentic DAW-based teacher training is key to widening access ⁸.

Acknowledgements

The Authors would like to thank The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Judith Robinson, The EQUALIZE workshop participants, The University of Southampton AHRC Music Hub and Public Policy Southampton Colleagues, Young Sounds UK, The Black Music Research Unit and The University of Westminster.

Publication details: ©EQUALIZE, 2026

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication are those of the author/s and should not be attributed to the organisations mentioned in this document and/or their funders.

Scan for the full report and references.



⁵ Robinson, J. (2026b). *EQUALIZE Final Report, 2026*. Young Sounds UK, University of Westminster Black Music Research Unit Report, 2026.

⁶ Robinson, J. (2026b). *EQUALIZE Final Report, 2026*. Young Sounds UK, University of Westminster Black Music Research Unit Report, 2026.

⁷ Robinson, J. (2026b). *EQUALIZE Final Report, 2026*. Young Sounds UK, University of Westminster Black Music Research Unit Report, 2026.

⁸ Robinson, J. (2026b). *EQUALIZE Final Report, 2026*. Young Sounds UK, University of Westminster Black Music Research Unit Report, 2026.