One direction: a future for secondary school music education?

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the first stage of an international study addressing the future of secondary school music education. Some music educators have asked if school is the right place for music education, and the music education literature continually calls music curricula and pedagogy to account for its apparent shortcomings, while contemporary education literature criticises education generally for its lack of responsiveness to our changing world. Within this discursive context this study adopts the Delphi method, creating a 'virtual' panel of internationally drawn experts, to collectively consider secondary school music's apparent direction. We utilise concepts from Legitimation Code Theory to frame initial findings from interviewing nine leading music education experts about their current concerns and their vision for secondary school music. The variety of responses in relation to purpose, knowledge, pedagogy, and structures suggest fundamental tensions in conceptualising secondary school music education's direction and future.

Introduction

This paper reports on the first stage of an international study of music educators in English-speaking countries focussed on the future of secondary school music education. Music educators such as Sloboda (2001) and Small (2010) have asked if school is the right place for music education. Moreover, the literature is awash with the identification of music education's various shortcomings (e.g. Elliott 1995; Green 2008; Allsup 2016). The contributions of these authors represent clear and 'seminal moments' in the on-going dialogue concerning the relevance and effectiveness of music education in the school. Within the context of music education these authors are responding to the deeper post-modern forces at work in questioning contemporary Western educational thinking within the context of music education (McPhail 2018). Within contemporary education literature, education more broadly is also criticised for a lack of responsiveness to our changing world (OECD 2012; Scott 2015). We are told in almost apocalyptic terms that life beyond the school is being transformed in precarious ways (Doogan 2009) and that education needs to adapt urgently to equip students to face these changes (Kress 2008; Moore 2011; Morgan 2015; McPhail 2016).

Some responses to this criticism are profound. Most notable amongst recent commentary is a 2014 report prepared for the US organisation *The College Music Society* (www.music.org), 'Transforming Music study from its foundations: a manifesto for progressive change in the undergraduate preparation of music majors' (www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.16.22.1/manifesto.pdf), and the follow-up book (Sarath, Myers, and Shehan-Campbell 2017). Although focused on undergraduate university education, the ideas are certainly relevant to this study and to possible changes to rationales,

curricula, and pedagogy in the secondary school system. Because the manifesto and the subsequent publication consider music from its conceptual foundations, the ideas can be readily abstracted to the context of secondary school music education. Many music graduates also become music teachers so the relationship between the curricula of both spaces will always be related. The authors of the report assert that current university curricular forms, content, and processes do not reflect the realities of the musical worlds in which students live and work – similar claims have been made for school music education (see above): the twenty-first century music graduate needs to be a 'contemporary improviser-composer-performer'. Undergraduate curricula are imagined as structured around three 'pillars': creativity, diversity, and integration. Firstly, fostering *creativity* through improvisation and composition would replace interpretative performance as the foundational focus for music study at this level. Secondly, *diversity* would move curricula beyond hegemonic Western practices and thirdly, *integration* would aim for a more holistic approach combining improvising, composing, performing, and musical critical thinking. Overall, this vision represents a major re-think of what is foundational within current music practices at university level education, in particular questioning the emphasis given to interpretative performance.

Using Legitimation Code Theory (Maton 2014 – see below) we can see a shift in curricular aims and emphasis from teaching and learning musical knowledge to a concern with inculcating musical dispositions: a shift from 'knowledge' to 'knower'. The legitimation of this shift is based on moral/ political ideals where music students are multi-cultural creators, rather than interpreters, becoming 'world-conscious citizens … for the common good of a more socially responsible society' (Sarath, Myers, and Shehan-Campbell 2017, 20). This education is 'not only for personal artistic expression but overall self-realization' and 'transformative human development' (Sarath, Myers, and Shehan-Campbell 2017, 92). Moreover, Campbell (in Sarath, Myers, and Shehan-Campbell 2017, 18) suggests this improvising-composing-performing student 'will grow the capacities and qualities befitting a musical thinker, humanist, social visionary, and sensitive world citizen' (18).

The central assertion then is that current practices are failing to produce adaptable and creative musicians capable of providing musical leadership in a new super diverse world. No evidence is provided to back up this assertion, nevertheless it would be hard to argue against the idea that we need 'new conceptions of the 21st-century public-school music teacher informed by the contemporary improviser-performer-composer model' (Sarath, Myers, and Shehan-Campbell 2017, 84). In the context of the secondary school our central research question is also a foundational one: what are the current issues facing secondary school music education and what might a music education curriculum for the twenty-first century that responds to these issues look like? Are there curricular dimensions and pedagogical practices that participants regard as foundational, and therefore pivotal for music education's development in the future?

Making sense of the data

In light of these challenges, our international study asks leading music educators to identify possible futures for secondary music school education, and whether they are desirable or even likely. We take a realist methodological approach in which abstract concepts interacting with the qualitative empirical data are utilised to create theoretical meaning (Bernstein 2000; Lourie and Rata 2016; McPhail and Lourie 2017; Popper 1978; Sayer 2000).

We use the Delphi method for data collection. Delphi is a systematic interactive method for structuring a group communication process allowing a group of individuals to deal with a complex problem. It involves assembling a 'virtual' panel of experts, their identities known only to the researchers, to collectively consider a complex topic. The views of the experts are gathered via electronic questionnaires in a series of iterative 'rounds' (Mukherjee et al. 2015, 1). After each round of interviews, the researchers provide an aggregated, anonymous summary of the responses to the panel. Through this process, experts are encouraged to revise their earlier answers in light of the replies of other members of the panel. Ideally, the process reiterates until clear consensus or

dissensus becomes apparent – or until response-rates fall so that further rounds have little or no value (Mukherjee et al. 2015). The group members' anonymity ensures individuals' ideas and information are considered on their merit, freeing members to some extent from their personal biases, minimising the 'bandwagon effect' or 'halo effect', allowing them to freely express their opinions, and encouraging open critique and admitting errors by revising earlier judgments.

For the first round reported on in this paper, we recruited a core group of nine *key participants* (or KP) to the Delphi panel from New Zealand, Australia, England, Ireland, Singapore, and the USA. Thus, the research comprises the views of music educators in English-speaking countries. We report on results of preliminary interviews with music education experts here to indicate the range of thought about music education and its possible future directions. This data will be shared anonymously with a wider panel in the second and third rounds of the study. Purposive and snow-balling sampling was undertaken with the initial list of possible participants drawn up from academics who had an international presence in the music education field. All of the participants who accepted the invitation to participate work in (or have until recently worked in) teacher education so have direct links and experience of current music education practices in their respective countries. We decided not to include teachers as the Delphi method requires a panel of 'experts'; participants who have most likely thought about educational issues in a deep, academic way, and published widely. The KPs were interviewed either in person or via Skype (the indicative interview questions are provided in Appendix A). The responses to semi-structured interviews will form the basis for wider consideration by a larger international Delphi panel in phase two of the research. At this stage the participants did not see each other's responses.

This paper reports on the breadth of views held by the KP as identified in these initial interviews held between March and August 2017. Interviews were transcribed, and participants invited to check them for accuracy. Our interviews firstly indicated significant country differences between the US and British/Australasian curriculum conception, notably the US band-teaching system as opposed to British/ Australasian class-teaching.

We utilise aspects of Legitimation Code Theory or 'LCT' (Maton 2014) to analyse the viewpoints and arguments provided by the key participants. LCT provides the means to make visible the factors participants regard as legitimising in their field – those factors considered more important than others – and provides a means for us to categorise those factors and begin to make theoretical sense of the data – a conceptual methodology (McPhail and Lourie 2017). Maton extends and integrates concepts from both Bourdieu and Bernstein to develop a means to make visible 'competing claims to legitimacy' in practices he describes as 'languages of legitimation' (Maton 2014, 17). LCT utilises Bourdieu's concept of *field* in which actors vie for dominance. It also extends Bernstein's (2000) theories of codes and knowledge forms where differentiation between informal and academic knowledge (Bernstein's horizontal and vertical discourses) underpins much of the thinking. Maton claims that LCT 'enables knowledge practices to be seen, their organizing principles to be conceptualized, and their effects to be explored' (2013, 3). For this study, we utilise the concepts of *specialisation* codes to make visible the forms of legitimation that participants draw on in their discussion about music education and its future. These concepts analytically distinguish: *epistemic relations* (ER) between knowledge claims and their objects of study; and *social relations* (SR) between knowledge claims and their subject, author or actor. Each relation may be more strongly (+) or weakly (−) emphasised along a continuum of strengths as the legitimate basis of practices, beliefs, and identity. These two strengths may be varied independently to generate specialisation codes (ER+/−, SR+/−). As shown in Figure 1, the continua are visualised as axes on the *specialisation plane,* generating four principal specialisation codes *knowledge* codes (ER+, SR−), where possession of specialised knowledge, principles or procedures concerning specific objects of study is emphasised as the basis of legitimacy, and the attributes of actors are downplayed; *knower codes* (ER−, SR+), where specialised knowledge and objects are downplayed and the attributes of actors are emphasised as the basis of legitimacy, whether viewed as born (e.g. 'natural talent'), cultivated (e.g. 'taste') or social (e.g. feminist standpoint theory); *élite codes* (ER+, SR+), where legitimacy is based on both possessing
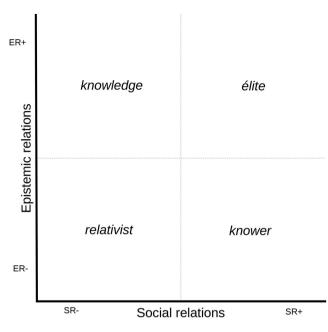
Figure 1. Specialisation codes (after Maton 2014).

specialist knowledge and being the right kind of knower; and *relativist codes* (ER−, SR−), where legitimacy is determined by neither specialist knowledge nor knower attributes (Maton 2014, 29).

Some examples can help clarify the concepts. A music curriculum characterised by a knowledge code might privilege skills such as arranging and propositional knowledge about music (e.g. analysis and music history). In comparison a curriculum characterised by a knower code might emphasise musical dispositions and personal expression appropriate to a particular music world (e.g. Hip Hop, composition, or improvisation). Interestingly, Lamont and Maton's work (2008, 2010) in the area of music education suggests the music curriculum in the UK progresses through a knower code in primary school to a knowledge code in early secondary school and towards an élite code at high levels. However, music's proliferating sub-fields and schools of practice are likely to comprise a dynamic mix of specialisation codes. LCT provides a means to bring some conceptual order and explanatory potential to the data. It provides a particular mechanism for looking beneath the surface of the data to explore the legitimating discourses employed in arguing for a particular standpoint.

Findings

Interviews with the Key Participants (KP) identified a range of views on current concerns and possible futures for secondary school music, drawing on a range of legitimations. These sketch the landscape for next phase of the study; the generation of questions and scenarios to be presented to the wider Delphi panel. We order these initial data into two thematic sections: 'current concerns' and 'likely futures'. These thematic categories were derived from the data following the generally accepted procedures for open coding and developing concepts inductively from data (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Thomas 2006). The four areas are not intended to be comprehensive but represent a version of 'current concerns' of this particular group of participants.

Current concerns

Current concerns focus on purpose, knowledge, pedagogy, and structure of secondary school music pedagogy.

(1) Purpose

The purpose of secondary school music is contested, or at least uncertain. For one respondent, music's lack of purpose was seen as a symptom of wider concerns about the role of school and a lack of clear direction articulated by the academy:

> I'm not really sure school is the place for music … it depends on what you think school is for and the whole discussion is about preparing people for jobs, and it's about employment and skills, and music isn't a useful skill, I mean apart from for itself … . I am not sure there has ever been a coherent argument. (KP5)

All KPs saw music education as a conduit for various developmental aims – musical, social, and political; a range of specialisation codes competing for dominance. Through exposure and access to musical experiences, communities of practice, and specialist knowledge, students' musical development and understanding would be enhanced. One respondent (KP3) argued that at a deep level, music education is about human beings understanding each other and their world, and that music, as a unique human undertaking, has a legitimate place in the school curriculum; an emphasis on cultivating dispositions in a knower, or stronger social relations. All participants noted the importance of music's social affordances, for example:

> the social relationships that the music making affords have to be experienced and you cannot experience [them] if you sit by yourself with your guitar in your practice room or in your own bedroom. So I think it is essential that a larger ensemble be part of the individualised approach to learning instruments. (KP8)

There was some dissensus, however, regarding how various aims might be achieved and what the future of secondary school music education might look like. For example, what balance might be required between 'instrumental aims', such as preparing students for university or work, and more 'humanistic aims', such as utilising music's affordances for no particular pre-determined ends. One respondent suggested that because music education discourses have failed to settle on a clear purpose, stranded in oscillations between 'disciplinary' or 'therapeutic' positions of purpose, that secondary school music education 'is not just under threat, I think it's definitely going' (KP3). KP4 suggested the classroom strand may be under threat because of the rise of the importance of STEM subjects, but instrumental programmes, which sit beside the curriculum, are likely to remain.

KP3 suggested music education needed to respond in more meaningful ways to the neo-liberal ideology pervading the social systems of most western countries; 'Music is essentially about resistance and it's about questioning of things, of the values that have been shoved down your neck by the big conglomerates including the popular music industries'. KP4 agreed: 'with the ubiquitous nature of neo-liberalism, we need spaces for individual thinking and I think music offers one of those spaces'. Music in the classroom is a place where criticality can be developed; 'philosophically enabling people to make value judgements about things' (KP4). However, KP4 notes that 'what counts' is made more complex by examination syllabi which send a strong message about what teachers should be spending time teaching. However, it is often the fact that music teachers carry out multiple curricular intentions that can result in an apparent lack of clarity for music education's purpose. There is a central tension between the need for teachers to prepare students to proceed towards higher study while also providing meaningful and open experiences for those for whom music will be an enrichment rather than a career (Regelski 2007).

Only one respondent called for a total rethink of music's purpose along moral lines not dissimilar to those outlined by Sarath et al. (Sarath, Myers, and Shehan-Campbell 2017). This KP considered that the notion of 'natural talent', and the hegemony of WAM (Western Art Music) have contributed to considerable injustice where the benefits of music education have not been accessible to all: 'we need to undo a lot of bad work … persuading so many people that you have to be a special person and have access to special knowledge to be able to say that you're musical'. WAM requires an élite code, demanding both specialist knowledge and the right kind of knower. Consistent with Sarath, Myers, and Shehan-Campbell (2017), this participant suggested that there is a 'fatal mismatch

between the provision that's available in public schooling and the requirements of higher education, and [the world] of music itself'.

(2) knowledge

All participants were concerned about what a secondary school programme should contain, both experientially and epistemologically. Problems with teaching in various countries were identified (for example, insufficient emphasis of creativity, too much emphasis on WAM, too much emphasis on performance, lack of teacher specialist knowledge), but a common concern was deciding on the emphasis between 'theoretical' and 'practical'; 'knowing that' and 'knowing how' (Winch 2017). One KP's observation:

> So my music curriculum would be about collaboration, and collaborating with creating things … managing relationships that you can learn from. Not necessarily know[ing] what Bach was about. (KP5)

In this comment we see stronger social relations emphasised and epistemic relation weakened, and curriculum is described in pedagogical and social terms rather than epistemologically. KP5 is downplaying specialised musical knowledge per se (weaker epistemic relations) and emphasising the significance of the students' dispositions, in this case their capacities for collaboration and creativity (stronger social relations): a knower code. Participants agreed that musical experiences come first but thereafter diverge in opinion. Most KPs suggested some form of sequential, planned curriculum, as this was most likely to lead to growing expertise and musicianship:

> if you don't understand complex systems how can you appreciate other music. How can you appreciate the difference if you only know bits? … . Focus on performance and audiation[1] is great but it needs to be scaffolded through music literacy. (KP2)

However, one participant reflecting on curriculum content commented:

> I believe in education having a role in facilitating students to discover for themselves the knowledge that they believe they need. I think the crucial thing for music education is that kids have autonomy and that they have control over their learning and that it's led by their interest and their desire to know … my ideology is not to impose … to say to a Sudanese immigrant in Hackney in London that it's really important that they get to know Mozart is, I think, incredibly arrogant and not culturally relevant. (KP1)

For this KP the legitimation of music education embodies a relativist code: the curriculum is determined by neither specialist knowledge nor particular knower attributes. This participant argues for breaking down relative boundaries between contexts (school and the 'real world') and knowledge forms (academic knowledge and socially derived knowledge); 'I'd like to get rid of everything that has put barriers between every single human being and their belief in themselves as a musical being'. This is a critical-constructivist approach that 'does not rank forms of knowledge, but rather promotes a pluralistic epistemological democracy' (Desautels, Garrison, and Fleury 1998, 259). This is a vision with few hierarchies.

Other participants suggested a core body of knowledge would assist students in coming to understand music as a process or object of study;

> There are some things that you have to know … some amount of formal education is absolutely essential. You've got to give people building blocks … . What I mean is you've got to put the building blocks in place in a small way … . (KP3)

Students are considered to have an ethical right to encounter this knowledge: 'it's a responsible thing to do within a learning culture of a school, to be able to expose people to other things just in case they would not have that privilege or the opportunity' (KP2).

In contrast, other KPs emphasised knowledge codes as the basis of legitimacy. They focused on knowledge of various sorts (e.g. both theoretical and practical, and from different cultures) to legitimate the development for the student beyond their everyday experiences of music. For them, access to certain sorts of knowledge increases the student's chances to become an autonomous actor in their

chosen music world. For example, KP8 suggests listening to music as vital, in particular listening to music students might otherwise not hear: 'We probably have to listen more I think. Listen to, and have someone who really loves that music bring it to our attention. So, we share that enthusiasm even though we may not hear it ourselves'. This participant recognises the importance of the sonic and experiential dimensions of music that usually precedes our desire and curiosity to understand more; 'Formal knowledge should be the result of that experience. Not on top of it, but drawn out from that experience' (KP8).

Musical literacy was widely defined – but the term itself suggests understandings of both propositional and procedural knowledge; knowledge as leading to the development of musical autonomy. KP9 suggested a curriculum might be conceptualised around experiences, then concepts, and application.

> The experience of music is like providing the precepts and then from the experience you draw the musical understanding and that's the conceptual, and then application is to apply your understanding in a new context. (KP9)

KP9 suggests where possible and practicable students should have input into these decisions but teachers also guide students to useful knowledge from the discipline. However, the curriculum, which all participants were reluctant to be too specific about, was often conflated with pedagogy and remained something of a blind spot. This reluctance to describe the content was possibly a fear of appearing to support returning to a reductionist 'elements' of music approach or to over specify or prescribe the curriculum, given the emphasis in English speaking countries on personalising the curriculum (The Education Hub 2018). Nevertheless, at the other end of the spectrum KP5 warned, 'there is a lot of focus on creativity. I think it is a bit too easy and it is a bit rubbish often. It's kind of just kids playing with keyboards and it's not really educating anyone'.

(3) pedagogy

Pedagogy is the means to make whatever knowledge content is chosen accessible and engaging for students; 'Over the years different language is used but the idea remains the same; the searching for how can we reach the learner' (KP8). Most participants imagined a varied and flexible assortment of pedagogical approaches from the informal to formal;

> Put the building blocks in place in a small way and then let them get on, possibly informally, possibly group work, possibly individually, possibly using technology, it depends really on what you want, but I think key for me is some fairly formal teaching where you're fairly clearly bounded and then take off from there, explore yourselves and then bring it back into a bit more formal and then a bit more exploration so to me I very much like the backwards and forth formal/informal. (KP3)

KP4 suggests, 'we should be enthusing kids about music and I think we should be taking them on musical journeys'. These journeys can be undertaken in several possible ways: (i) 'you start where they are and you take them somewhere else', (ii) 'you take them somewhere else straight away'; (iii) 'play to the strengths of the individual kids and choose something thematic which they can then go off and explore in their own individual way and so there is a thematic way of doing it'. KP4 also suggests this would involve a mix of contemporary-style composing, guitars, soundscapes: 'let's do something in this vein which also grabs their attention. I think it's involvement of the kids in letting them be agentive which is what I would want'.

KP5 offered a positive vision where the imagined focus was on song-writing and acknowledging the 'amazing things' that many students achieve often through being 'laptop focussed':

> I would have the students variously working on producing songs on laptops or a computer and I would have them writing things, writing songs, working on production and stuff and performing it together in ensembles … they are trying to get better at stuff based on music they have heard, so they already have reference points, so if they want to sound like Led Zeppelin then they are going to have to practise. I would have them performing and writing. (KP5)

KP7 suggests that pedagogy should aim to integrate knowledge in a holistic and integrated manner, and that this should influence the training of music teachers as well:

> We don't see a music curriculum where this is a performance lesson, this is a listening lesson, this is a composing lesson. We wouldn't encourage that. We would want to see how you can use a particular musical context, hopefully something that is relevant to children's own musical experiences … and then you look at how you can blend together the key processes of musical engagement in your curriculum and your units of work and your lesson plans etc. (KP7)

KP1 suggests pedagogically the teacher will be 'a musician, a co-musician and a peer in the learning'. For KP7 an effective music education programme depends on the teachers' skills and qualities;

> It's about them being able to be a musical presence in the classroom as well as just being a teacher of music and using their own musicality to lead the students through whatever it is that they are studying. I think that is absolutely crucial. (KP7)

Participants echoed current educational orthodoxies referring to pedagogy as 'student-centred' with increasing levels of individualisation and personalisation sought in both curricular content and pedagogical approach. However, they acknowledged that approaches to pedagogy would vary according to context:

> I think that when you take a particular approach or philosophy such as that of informal and *Musical Futures* learning, it is one way and it works in some contexts and it doesn't work in others. No matter what it is, I don't agree with the one size fits all approach. (KP6)

(4) structures

In this section we refer to the more 'structural' dimensions that the participants identified as of concern or that effected their work. These are elements (referred to below in no particular order) often beyond teachers' control in the political, policy, and symbolic realms such as teacher training, funding, and the value attributed to the arts in education.

Many participants noted the need to provide greater and deeper expertise within the profession; to train music teachers with ever wider skill-sets. This included not only content and pedagogical areas but also the confidence to advocate for music within an over-subscribed curriculum, and to challenge the STEM focus, arguing for a more balanced learning culture within the school and community. One participant highlighted the importance of collegiality and the need for a music team in a school with complementary skills in creating vibrant, responsive, and confident music departments:

> You need the colleagues around you. You need other people. You need people to share the burden and you need people who have got the creative ideas to keep you activated and keep you enthused and keep you doing new things as well … . We need more teachers and we need teachers with a variety of skills and we need them to be working together in some sort of creative department that has a wide stylistic base to it. (KP3)

The type of relationship developed with senior management within a school was also seen as critical for music to thrive. The devolution or localisation of school governance prevalent in so many countries make such relationships pivotal. One KP summarises these concerns and in particular notes the significance of teachers' confidence to teach beyond the confines of examination prescription:

> The single thing I would do is to facilitate, enable, persuade, head teachers and senior leadership teams to let their music teachers teach musically and not be constrained by having to conform to whole school morays of what is and what is not appropriate in the school and so I think where the teacher can be empowered to do that then good music will result. (KP4)

This respondent also noted the negative trickle-down effect of assessment limiting opportunities for more creative and open approaches in the junior secondary school years.

Several participants highlighted the increasing influence of neoliberal policies such as privatisation of schooling and its effects on equitable access to music education (see comments of KP3 and KP4 above). KP7 notes that in her/his country a growing privatisation of schooling has undermined

the national curriculum for example where independently run schools do not have to adhere to national curricula. This participant argues that students have the right to experience a coherent and systematic music education, rather than *ad hoc* experiences:

> That's why it's important I think that we argue for it [music] as part of a core curriculum entitlement, resourced appropriately and staffed appropriately by qualified teachers who know what they are doing rather than it just becoming hit and miss, an enrichment or an after school club or whatever you might call it. That is not systematic. (KP7)

Likely futures

From these interviews, no single future for secondary school music education emerged, though some tentative broad trends surfaced. A continuing weakening of the boundaries between types of knowledge and stylistic arenas seems highly likely, suggesting a weakening of epistemic relations. In contrast, dominant narratives, at least within the academy, emphasise social relations as music remains inextricably intertwined with the development of imagined identities (Sarath, Myers, and Shehan-Campbell 2017). In short, knower codes may dominate. As one KP noted, as a musician 'you get obsessed, you lose yourself in your world whatever it is, if it's your digital audio workstation or your drum kit, and you become obsessed' (KP5). With the proliferation of sub-genres afforded by technology and creative developments generally, as well as inter-cultural music production, the potential content for a music curriculum is vast. The boundaries between the limited specialised knowledge in the school and broader musical knowledges held in student's wider communities will continue to be broken down. School education will need to be supplemented by connections and collaborations with musicians and organisations in the community along with access to various sorts of knowledge beyond the school both virtually and in person;

> the partnership aspects of music education today are very important. I think we have finally cracked this idea that you can't just be a music teacher in a secondary school and live in your own little bubble and do everything yourself. (KP7)

Music Hubs[2] in the UK provide an example for how instrumental tuition might be provided for in tandem with schools, particularly if classroom programmes continue to attract relatively small numbers of students.

On the other hand, much secondary school classroom music education, along with other subjects, appears to be at the mercy of over assessment and high-stakes exams that tend to constrict curricular and pedagogical creativity (i.e. reverting to 'spoon feeding' and 'rote learning') and compromise student well-being. There seems little on the horizon to counter the drive of neo-liberal educational imperatives (Robertson 2012). Over-assessment and new ideas such as short courses tend to undermine a more holistic and conceptually unified approach to music education e.g. micro or nanocredentials.[3] Finally, a number of KPs suggested that the health of music education at the secondary school level was in many ways dependent on what can be done to ensure improved access and quality in the primary school. KP2 suggested conceptualising music education as a major contributor to the health of society.

Summary

All participants note music-teaching's potential for achieving individual, social, and political ends. The emphasis and means for realising these ends varied, some seeing the need for a structured initiation into music's experiences and meanings, others more concerned with music as means for realising personal potential. Yet others hope music might provide the space for the development of criticality, for example as an antidote to the omnipresence of the market. The effects of deeper cultural forces often mean music has to fight for its place as a valid school subject, particularly against the mainstream of assessment and qualifications. Nevertheless, several key messages common to most KPs do come through: students have a right to access music education as music is a unique

form of human activity; music education is a diverse undertaking requiring a team of specialist teachers; and schools need to foster connections with the wider community – the music worlds beyond the school gates. Overall, we can summarise that there are clearly several competing specialisation codes within the field vying for prominence. In general, music education is being called to account for over-emphasising élite codes and there has been a continual swinging between legitimation of specialist knowledge and the being right kind of knower; emphasising the knower as the basis of legitimacy.

Conclusion and next steps

This paper sets out the starting points for wider expert consideration of the future for secondary school education that we identified from interviewing a group of recognised music education experts. It focused on British/Australasian perspectives. In particular, we were keen to identify what measures of legitimacy are argued for and whether the claims suggest a divided or unified field.

Looking at the interview data more holistically we sought to identify whether any radical reformations were articulated; 'a radical rethinking of not only the curriculum but of the overarching aesthetic and cultural orientation of the field' (Sarath, Myers, and Shehan-Campbell 2017, ix). Most participants identified changes, in particular to a more diverse imaginary for music education. Recurring ideas included a team-style specialisation and reaching beyond the school gates to engage with the wider community where the required expertise does not reside within the school. Nevertheless, these perspectives do not challenge the wider ontology within which music education is produced. Only one respondent (KP1) argued for a total reform of music education – that past curricular practices and procedures are hegemonic and repressive – demanding a new beginning. This view aligns with Sarath, Myers, and Shehan-Campbell (2017), who argue that music education should be regarded primarily as a means to deliver social justice rather than particular musical goals; legitimation is social rather than epistemic. What is most important in this view is the self-realisation of the individual based on the belief in the innate musicality of all students. There is no prescription for how music education might develop this ability beyond offering an open and diverse engagement with music in its multitude of forms (Westbury 2002).

Differences in legitimation are identifiable utilising knower codes and knowledge codes (Maton 2014). For example, we can theorise a shift in the type of knower now legitimated within much of the music education literature from one based on a particular type of 'cultivated gaze' towards a more diversified 'social knower' (Maton 2014) developed through deep engagement with individualised forms of personally relevant music making. We can also identify a growing a growing number of legitimated categories of knowers – the singer/songwriter, the jazz improviser, the remixer, the baroque specialist, the live looper – all legitimated through varied sorts of insider music knowledge. In tandem with these shifts are epistemic changes as well – from formal knowledge of Western analytical and harmonic practices to engagement with oral and experiential driven practices. Is it possible to imagine a secondary school education catering for and developing such heterogeneous musical desires?

The interviews indicate marked differences between our KPs on how secondary school music is and should be conceptualised, challenging the construction of a durable future. The experts included here describe music in ways that show a number of codes struggling for dominance. Overall however, these experts tend to emphasise the need for knower codes of various kinds and highlight the obstacles to doing so presented by formal institutions in which knowledge codes can or continue to dominate. As boundaries in the classification of knowledge shift as a result of these 'struggles', teachers must continually ask themselves whose interests are being served by the newly emerging forms of consciousness and identity. Do moral or epistemological values dominate, and is there an understanding of the differences between such legitimating drivers? Most participants would, it appears favour a gradual or incremental development, only a few favour radical change. The next stage of our research, posing these inherently conflicting positions to the wider Delphi panel, may clarify whether one direction in curriculum design is possible or even appropriate.

Notes

1. The Gordon Institute (2018) defines audiation as the process of hearing and comprehending music 'for which the sound is no longer or may never have been present … when listening to music we are at any given moment organizing in audiation sounds that were recently heard. We also predict, based on our familiarity with the tonal and rhythmic conventions of the music being heard, what will come next.'
2. 'Music Education Hubs are groups of organisations – such as local authorities, schools, other hubs, art organisations, community or voluntary organisations – working together to create joined-up music education provision, respond to local need and fulfil the objectives of the hub as set out in the national plan for Music Education' (www.artscouncil.org.uk/music-education/music-education-hubs).
3. See for example http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/future-state/quality-assurance/micro-credential-pilots/.

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Appendix A

Indicative questions for key informants semi structured interviews

Most people are happy listening within their own taste worlds these days. Do you think we should even teach secondary school music in a 21st context? Why?

What direction *is* secondary school music education going – generally, and in your country?

What direction *should* secondary school music education going?

What are the *desirable/ideal elements* of an effective secondary school music education programme? How important are each of these individually and in comparison, with the other elements (ranking)?

What are the *essential elements* of an effective secondary school music education programme?

Can you identify any key concepts in music education that have the potential to provide music students with new perspectives and wider understandings of music?

What are *desirable/idea elements* of *delivery* for an effective secondary school music education programme?

What are *essential elements* of *delivery* for an effective secondary school music education programme?

Please comment on the actual and desirable institutional forms required for the realisation of the ideal secondary school music programme. What are the blockages to realising such a programme in your experience? What facilitated realising such a programme in your experience?

If you were had a magic wand, what single thing would you change to help achieve this goal?

Can you give an example (real or imaginary) of a musical education system that you think would be a strong exemplar? Explain its strong points.

Any other comments?