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## Some direction: towards a C21 secondary school curriculum

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### ABSTRACT

In this third and final paper from the Delphi study *One Direction*, we report on participants' responses to four secondary school music curriculum scenarios. These scenarios present four possible directions for a C21 secondary school music curriculum. The scenarios were devised from a combination of ideas derived from the data from the earlier stages of the study (McPhail, G., and J. McNeill. 2019. "One Direction: A Future for Secondary School Music Education?" *Music Education Research* 21 (4): 359–370; McNeill, J., and G. McPhail. 2020. "One Direction: Strategic challenges for Twenty-first Century Secondary School Music." *Music Education Research* 22 (4): 432–446) and the concept of specialisation from Maton's Legitimation Code Theory. By asking an international panel of leading music education researchers and teachers to respond to the scenarios, we are able to argue that 'one direction' is unlikely to emerge for secondary school music education, but we discuss the responses, and the scenario dimensions regarded as most likely and desirable. What appears certain is that there will be a continuing weakening of the boundaries between types of knowledge and stylistic arenas suggesting a dialectic relationship between the legitimating principles most valued.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

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Secondary school music education; secondary school music curriculum; Delphi study; Legitimation Code Theory; international survey

## Introduction

School music in English-speaking countries at least are facing a crisis of confidence. We are told that it is no longer appropriate or fit for purpose or, indeed, even relevant for the twenty-first century in its current forms (Allsup 2016; Powell, Dylan-Smith, and D'Amore 2017; Sarath, Myers, and Shehan-Campbell 2017; Hess 2019; Kelamn 2020) and criticised for its lack of response to the real world of multifaceted musicking beyond the school gates (see for example, Humberstone 2019; Tobias 2012, 2013; Wright 2019). Agreeing on the need for change, its critics are less unified as to what that reform might be. From this starting point, we have undertaken a strategic three-part study, *One Direction*, asking an international panel of leading music education researchers and teachers to identify what the future for secondary school music might look like. We suggest a canvassing of international views about music curricula at this time may make a useful contribution to the literature since most studies tend to be contextualised in one particular jurisdiction. In the first part, we found a plurality of views for the future of secondary school music education, with no preferred 'one direction' emerging (McPhail and McNeill 2019). In the second part, we explored the strategic challenges facing the sector using a Delphi study (McNeill and McPhail 2020). Our panellists identified topics around four themes: the core purpose of music education, curriculum content, curriculum delivery, and the institutional context within which music education is delivered. Somewhat depressingly, while our panellists identified need for change, they saw little likelihood of change occurring.

In this third and final paper from the study we report on participants' responses to four secondary school music curriculum scenarios. These scenarios present four possible directions for a C21 secondary school music curriculum intended to concretise elements of the strategic themes identified in the first round of the Delphi. The scenarios were devised from a combination of ideas derived from the data from the earlier stages of the study and the concept of specialisation from Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) (Maton 2014).

In the first section of the paper we briefly recap on the Delphi approach used to collect the data for the project, as well as the theoretical ideas that underpin the study. The main section of the paper presents the four scenarios and summarises the responses from the Delphi Panel. In the discussion section, we consider the implications of the response to the scenarios and offer thoughts on a possible approach for curriculum conceptualisation that could provide some direction. Our suggestion, which draws on Maton's Semantics from LCT, would allow the space for legitimating knowledge and knowers within the dialectic space the study confirmed between experiential and epistemic dimensions of the subject.

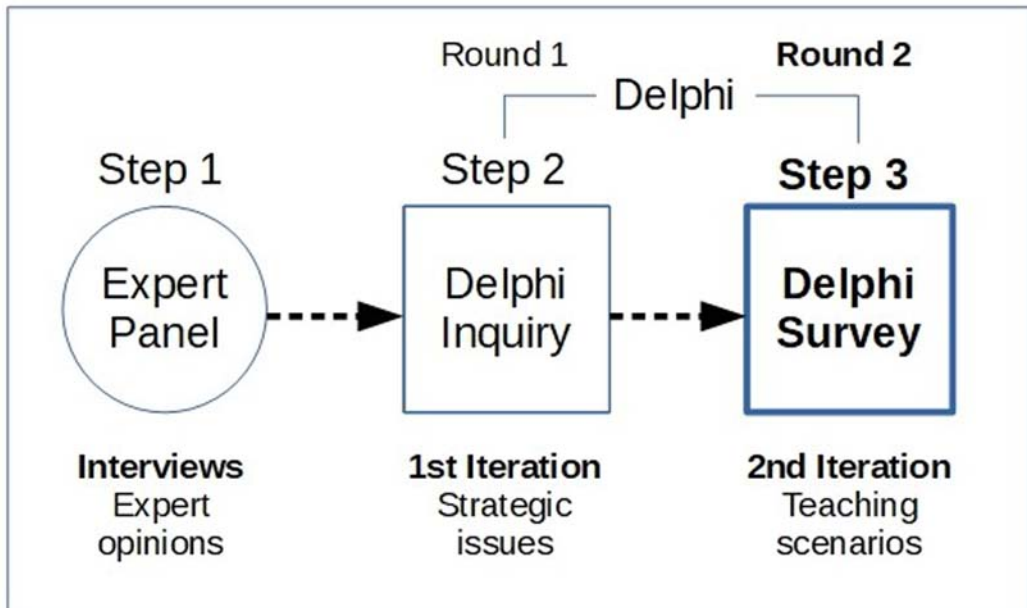
### **The Delphi Study and the theoretical framework**

We utilised the Delphi method to explore the question of what a future for secondary school education might look like. This method involves bringing together experts who have given sustained thought to the issues and challenges facing a particular field (Mukherjee et al. 2015). Used widely across disciplines (Mukherjee et al. 2015), though rarely in music education (Phelps et al. 2005; Millican and Forrester 2017), Delphi is a systematic interactive method for structuring a group communication process allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem or problems. Importantly, the group members remain anonymous so that the ideas and information proffered are considered by the group based on their merit. This anonymity allows members to express their opinions freely and encourages open critique and admitting errors by revising earlier judgments. The researchers' task is to analyse and re-present the key ideas back to the participants for further consideration in a series of rounds. A Delphi panel is not randomised but consists of invited members considered by their peers to be experts. Responses are therefore not statistically significant. While a majority gives an indication of strength of support, strong differences of opinion are also important. Dissensus may be reconciled in a later round as participants review their opinions in the light of others' propositions, but they may also persist, marking clear differences of opinion. This can indicate where future research might be focused.

We chose to employ a three-step Delphi, consisting of interviewing an initial group of key informants to obtain a set of expert opinions, followed by two rounds of in-depth survey questionnaires to a larger group of experts (Figure 1). We terminated the Delphi after two rounds, considering that we were unlikely to obtain significantly more information, while at the same time we ran the risk of the panel becoming too small to be effective. This paper reports on the scenarios presented to the panel in the third and final iteration of the study.

We had recruited nine recognised experts from the international music education field as our key informants (the Interview Step), based on their publishing record, but also reputation, and then the 'snowball' technique – asking participants to nominate other experts they considered could be useful to participate in the wider Delphi Panel. Twenty-two people, including the key informants, were then invited to participate in the first round of our online survey that ran for three weeks over July 2018 with thirteen responding. Eleven panellists participated in this second round, run in October and November 2018. The panellists work in countries across the western world: three from North America, three from New Zealand, and one each from Australia, United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, and Singapore. All have long experience in the music education sector; all but one had worked in the sector for over 20 years.

The Delphi panel had identified what the members considered to be the strategic issues facing secondary school music in the C21 in the first Delphi round. We now wanted to explore whether the



**Figure 1.** Approach used to conduct Delphi inquiry (adapted from Mohorjy and Aburizaiza 1997).

different challenges, especially those around the purpose of music education could be reconciled, choosing to build a set of four scenarios to concretise these challenges. Scenarios can provide an organised setting to discuss a wide range of views and perspectives among actors (van der Heijden 2003), to communicate and to stimulate cooperation among involved actors. Predictive scenarios, such as forecasts, seek to address the probable – what is likely to happen in the future. Normative scenarios in contrast address how targets can be met. Explorative scenarios, used in our research, describe the possible and can respond to the question ‘What can happen?’ Explorative scenarios are not forecasts of the future but are useful in providing a framework for the development and assessment of policies and strategies (Börjeson et al. 2006). According to van der Heijden (2003), at least two scenarios are needed to reflect uncertainty, though more than four is considered impractical. Each must be plausible, related through cause–effect lines of argument and grow logically from the past and the present (Rikkonen 2005).

The scenarios were constructed and then distributed to all panellists in an electronically administered questionnaire. We asked the panellists to respond to a set of questions, asking for each scenario firstly how keen they were to see the scenario realised in their own country using a Likert scale. We then asked them to comment on each scenario’s perceived strengths and weaknesses; its attractiveness or otherwise to stakeholders (teachers, parents, and students); and how students would derive a sense of progress and achievement from learning under the scenario. Questions specific to each scenario were also posed. These questions were all open-ended to facilitate response. Responses that rejected, affirmed, developed, or offered alternative possibilities indicate for us the hoped-for direction the study is investigating.

To assist with bringing some theoretical order to the data, we utilise a number of concepts from Maton’s LCT (Maton 2014). LCT has been utilised in a growing number of music-related studies beginning with two papers by Lamont and Maton (2008, 2010) that used LCT to consider the low uptake of students into higher school classes in the UK. More recent work by Carroll (2019a, 2019b) also uses LCT to consider issues related to popular music and the hegemony of western art music in the Australian context. We utilise the *Specialisation* dimension of LCT as a means to identify the

varied legitimisation principles at play in the data. Specialisation considers legitimisation as driven by two key principles drawn on by actors in a field of practice – epistemic relations (‘what can legitimately be described as knowledge’) and social relations (‘who can claim to be a legitimate knower’) (Maton 2014, 29). While the two dimensions co-exist empirically, having relative strengths rather than being ideal types, the ability to distinguish them analytically increases visibility of the legitimating process; identifying who is arguing for what and with what justifications.

Epistemic relations foreground the possession of specialist knowledge and techniques over knower dispositions (for example, a scientist’s knowledge of the scientific method is paramount for knowledge production in science). Social relations foreground knower dispositions and attitudes over specialist knowledge and skills (for example, the type of ‘gaze’ and ‘feel’ required to be a jazz musician). Maton theorises four codes of legitimisation: *knower* (SR+, ER–), *knowledge* (ER+, SR–), *elite* (requiring both knower and knowledge attributes – SR+, ER+) and *relativist* (neither possessing specialised knowledge nor acquiring a particular disposition – SR–/ER–). Moreover, dimensions can ‘co-vary infinitely along continua of relative strengths and weakness’ (Jackson 2016, 538). An actor’s position within a field of practice is more commonly determined as a consequence of possessing both legitimate knowledge (ER) and the correct disposition (SR) – a unique combination of both epistemic and social dimensions simultaneously (Carroll 2019a).

While the data in our study show code clashes, for example, between espoused ideals (SR+), pedagogy (SR+) and curriculum content (ER+), knower codes tend to dominate in music education discourse more widely (e.g. Philpott 2010; Allsup 2016; Sarath, Myers, and Shehan-Campbell 2017; Wright 2019). A knower code can be detected where language stresses the importance of music education as a means to personal fulfilment, responsive to student’s personal interests, and expertise is defined in terms of a type of ‘know-how’ derived musicianship; a certain type of ‘gaze’ or way of being that places the knower in an authentic connection with music itself.

We devised the scenarios primarily based on the data from the first stages of the study; however, in addition to this, we kept in the back of our minds Maton’s specialisation codes, so the scenarios do reflect varied degrees of knowledge, knower, and elite (specialised) codes but the scenarios do not map specifically onto Maton’s model. Scenario A draws on a particular narrow specialisation with music production requirements driving the curriculum (SR+/ER+). Scenario B lies at the intersection of relativism (the students can choose to follow whatever interests them and there is no ‘vertical’ curriculum or assessment) and a knower code (the aim is for the student to develop a specific musician identity and ‘way of being’). Scenario C is not dissimilar to Scenario B in that there is no hierarchal view of knowledge (relativist curriculum) and the subject music is really a conduit for developing a particular type of person. Scenario D is the closest we have to an elite code drawing on a hierarchical and specialised view of knowledge first in foundational years (they will learn about western tonal harmony in practise) and then opening out towards the students realising personally chosen specialisations (ER+/SR+). But these codes are dynamic, not static and various codes will predominate at various times within a course, or even a lesson. Maton does suggest however that one code does tend to dominate at the overarching level of the regulative discourse (Bernstein 2000) ‘the moral discourse which creates order, relations and identity’ (Bernstein 2000, 32). The regulative discourse functions ideologically in that it generates theories of instruction and a model of the relation between learner and teacher.

Once the responses to the scenarios were received, we used the widely accepted processes for coding qualitative data; line-by-line coding of the responses and organisation of initial codes into descriptive themes (Thomas 2006). The data from this analysis are reconstructed in the discussions below to elucidate the recurring and outlying responses for each scenario.

## The Four Scenarios

In the third round of the Delphi study, we created four scenarios for the participants to consider. Each scenario attempts to capture in condensed form, different aspects of the key and strategic ideas

and issues that surfaced in the data of the previous rounds. Each scenario attempts to broadly describe in vignette style form, a four-year secondary school course of music study. One possible future for music education that did not feature explicitly in our data but is present in the wider education literature is the idea of work readiness and facility and fluency with IT. We thought this idea needed testing so devised scenario A accordingly.

## Results

We first asked our Delphi panellists how keen they were to realise each particular scenario by rating it on a scale of 0–10 and then asked them to consider its strengths and weaknesses. No one scenario was favoured by all panellists, while all received at least some support (Table 1). Scenario A was least supported, with eight panellists against implementing it in their countries; only one supported it, with another indifferent. Six out of 10 panellists considered Scenario B undesirable, with four indicating support. It is clearly a polarising scenario and indicates significant dissensus among the panel. Scenario C also found mixed support; nearly half the panel were against it, but over a quarter supported its introduction. Scenario D was clearly supported by most panellists, with only 1 of 11 participants not supporting its introduction. The largest single score for each scenario is indicated in bold.

We now present the scenarios in order of least to most highly rated and include a summary of the responses shared by the participants regarding strengths, weaknesses, and stakeholder acceptability.

### Scenario A

*In this curriculum, the focus is on making students work ready for the music industry. Popular music practices and developing fluency with digital-based music technologies such as recording, editing, digital composition, remixing, and music video production are the key drivers of curriculum content in a 4-year programme that culminates in students preparing a folio of work for potential employers. Marketing and entrepreneurship are also part of the curriculum in the final two years. For students interested in more traditional classical pathways, the culmination would be a performance examination or tertiary institution audition or a composition portfolio. The key ‘industry’ dimensions sit beside students’ tuition (state funded) in their chosen instruments. Optional short courses either on-line or locally taught (depending on teacher expertise), are available for students who wish to develop skills in particular areas such as music theory, analysis, or history.*

An age-old tension is highlighted by including this scenario; that between instrumentalist and humanist aims for education, one that Bowman (2002) has described in relation to music education as the distinction between training and educating. Most respondents were less than keen for the emphasis in this scenario on preparing students so blatantly for the music industry. One participant suggested that the scenario with its ‘vocational justification [was] pandering to the worst instincts of late capitalist neoliberal nightmare social policy’. Further weaknesses identified included the challenge of resourcing, both human and non-human, and that students would need to make early decisions about their learning trajectories. The underling discomfort with the

**Table 1.** Support for scenarios.

| Scenario | Support for scenario (%) |           |             |         |                  | Sample size |
|----------|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|---------|------------------|-------------|
|          | Strongly against         | Against   | Indifferent | Support | Strongly support |             |
| <b>A</b> | 20                       | <b>60</b> | 10          | 10      | 0                | 10          |
| <b>B</b> | <b>40</b>                | 20        | 0           | 20      | 20               | 10          |
| <b>C</b> | 9                        | <b>36</b> | 27          | 9       | 18               | 11          |
| <b>D</b> | 0                        | 9         | 27          | 27      | <b>36</b>        | 11          |

training emphasis identified by all participants in this scenario is well-articulated by one participant who argued:

Music learning is not about preparing students for a job, although that may be an outcome for some students. It is an academic as well as an applied subject and to focus only on the applied aspects short-changes the students, depriving them of opportunities to engage deeply in significant learning. Students may be prepared for some kind of music industry, but this scenario is vocational training not education.

We asked respondents to acknowledge any strengths they saw in each scenario and in this instance they identified likely high levels of ownership, inclusivity, and relevance including highlighting for both students and parents post-school employment possibilities that music might provide. One respondent suggested that the type of music making required would likely be highly challenging and complex requiring engagement with important musical concepts in a context of application and that the skills were likely to be satisfying and exciting to acquire.

### **Scenario B**

*Students undertake a personalised four-year spiral classroom curriculum. The music 'teacher' acts as a conduit and facilitator connecting students of like interests with each other, with community musicians (either in person or via internet video), and digital and other resources (e.g. instruments and state funded instrumental tuition). The curriculum has neither formal assessment requirements nor any required or sequenced content but is based entirely on real-world music practices. All music classes in the school are timetabled at one time across year levels, with multiple teachers in the music building with many varied spaces and studios. Students form ensembles of various sorts and sizes, and perform, improvise, compose, arrange, conduct, and/or co-direct, and research music as a set of integrated problem-solving challenges that are self-devised and largely self-directed. Theoretical classes are provided but are not compulsory, e.g. theory of music, music history, and music analysis. Various performances and projects (e.g. composing – including digital technologies, arranging, video, combining with drama) are the outcomes.*

Scenario B was interesting since despite an average of 4.7 on the rating scale (pointing towards indifference or neutrality), it was in fact very polarising: four participants strongly disliked it, three were very keen, and just over half (six) scored it less than 5. A clear *dissensus*.

This scenario is a response to the idea that 'situated and local' music practices can be utilised to create a curriculum of musical problem-based learning. The scenario emphasises the apparent needs of the student and their interests and recasts the teacher as a facilitator in line with the student-centred pedagogies emphasised world-wide, particularly in C21 narratives (ER-/SR+). The scenario also attempts to dislodge the ubiquitous presence of assessment and to allow grouping of students according to interests rather than age and expertise levels.

The strengths of this scenario were described by participants at quite an abstract level with words such as democratic, exploratory, creative, personalised, and empowering (SR+). Devising the curriculum from student interest, skills, and ability levels, focused on performing with access to a range of mentors/facilitators including community musicians in a collaborative, problem-solving context was viewed as positive and in alignment with C21 learning ideals. This scenario is also attractive because it imagines high levels of engagement and flexibility centred on peer interaction.

What then were the perceived weaknesses and points of dissensus? Several respondents found the scenario too idealistic and therefore inappropriate as the sole model of curriculum design and delivery. For example, teaching in this scenario would likely negatively impact knowledge coverage and

entirely relies upon excellent teacher practice, skilful sophisticated team management, highly informed and sophisticated task design and a really, really well-equipped school. If done well, then it could be very powerful indeed, but if not, then students are at serious risk of missing out on the very concepts that they need to complete what could be very challenging tasks.

A further concern highlighted by one respondent was that under a scenario teaching is likely to accommodate the cultural capital students already possess or have access to and would not necessarily ‘add value’ for those students with less cultural capital; ‘the conceptual understanding that supports and scaffolds practical skill, is not guaranteed. It is likely that learners with the “right” backgrounds will acquire such knowledge, while others do not’. This is Bernstein’s insight from the 1970s and a key contradiction in current discourse surrounding learner-centred pedagogies as a means for realising social justice in education: ‘an invisible pedagogy [student centred, progressive, student-led] ... is likely to create a pedagogic code intrinsically more difficult, at least initially, for disadvantaged social groups (from the perspective of formal education) to read and control’ (Bernstein 1990, 79). So, while such approaches may appear more democratic and emancipatory than pedagogies with more explicit teacher direction, they may not be.

Another contradiction, generated by the intrusion of neoliberal ideas of relevance and choice into education, was noted by one respondent; ‘students are able to go into their areas of interest very deeply, but there seems little opportunity to develop a breadth of musical experiences and understandings’. A third contradiction worthy of mention that surfaced in the data is that between learner-centred pedagogies and managerial demands such as quantifiable outcomes. One participant noted that this scenario could not fly because ‘at present, the national context of all education is relentless assessment and STEM. Until the broader discourse changes, the proposed model here would be anathema or offensive to stakeholders’.

### **Scenario C**

*Students are taught a classroom curriculum that draws on the diverse multi-cultural musical practices of the wider community where the music ‘teacher’ acts as a facilitator and guide in providing students with exposure to and experiences in a range of culturally diverse musicking practises. Cultural bearer guests are a regular component of this curriculum. Students learn to listen, perform, improvise, and inquire in a range of musical languages with the aim of becoming sensitive and culturally aware world citizens. Music is a means to increase inter-cultural understanding and enhance the possibilities for social justice. The learning culminates in students demonstrating through performance, improvisation, and/or composition (including digital technologies) their growing facility with several diverse musicking practices.*

This scenario was the second most highly supported, perhaps reflecting wide-held aspirations for culturally responsiveness in education. It was interesting that some weaknesses the scenario has in common with some others were not identified here, for example, the likely difficulty of sustaining a broadly sequential programme over time, and, despite the positive ranking, the comments were generally quite negative. There may have been some inner tensions for participants as they tussled with ideas they know to be morally preferable but were difficult to conceptualise being developed to sustain a curriculum. The positive features identified included transfer effects such as the positivity of links with the community that were likely to be developed and likely increased levels of cultural awareness and sensitivity through ‘opening their ears, eyes, minds to new musics’. Curricular positives cited included developing awareness of music’s social and cultural context and awareness of the varied ways in which music can be structured and represented. However, one participant noted that

While this is an attractive concept, the realisation of this model is difficult ... culture bearers may have their own agendas, they are not pedagogically attuned to engage students, and the difficulties would be intensified if their music is vastly different from the students’ lived experiences. The teachers may not always be confident to facilitate music learning from different cultures even if they have attended short courses in pre-service education.

Another participant noted that despite the hopes that teachers may have for a causal connection between exposure to varied musics and cultural tolerance, such an outcome is certainly not



guaranteed. One participant pointed to the potential challenge of providing unifying concepts for such a potentially varied curriculum, suggesting that rather, ‘a mish-mash of confused concepts could result’. Another noted that

there could be a lack of rigour because this scenario does not focus on musical knowledge, but rather citizenship with music as the conduit. There are not enough opportunities for students to develop strengths and skills in one musical practice.

At yet a deeper level of ambiguity the issue of cultural appropriation was raised; ‘I still feel the teacher (if they are of the dominant culture) would be controlling the narrative so I am not sure if this is partly appropriation, and perhaps a shallow way of appreciating the music of other cultures’. Moreover, the complexity surrounding the possible paradoxes of cultural inclusion was noted – ‘Culture cannot be “re-enacted” in a classroom context, it is always a recontextualisation. I also think that students might be as alienated by “diversity” as they might be by “classical music”’.

### **Scenario D**

*Students embark on a four-year specialised classroom music curriculum in which the first two years comprise a comprehensive and sequential introduction to the key generative concepts of a number of musical languages and the history of their development, e.g. jazz, Indonesian gamelan, hip-hop, western classical. Students learn an instrument or voice ‘outside’ the classroom system in government-funded lessons available at school. In the classroom curriculum, teachers choose examples of musicking for study from a national set of examples that are agreed to be high quality and/or creative exemplars of various and varied genre and styles. Students listen, analyse, perform, compose, and arrange music informed by these exemplars, which may at times include student chosen examples that are justified by the student according to some criteria. The exposure and analytic understandings developed begin to equip students with understandings of ‘the languages of music’: how musics work, and the affects musics can have within and across various socio-cultural and political contexts. Large ensembles run outside of school time and the curriculum comprises mostly medium- to small-sized ensembles as well as theoretical content that is used to develop analytical and musicological knowledge. In the second two years, students develop their own musical identity by choosing areas of specialisation in which they perform and/or improvise and/or compose and/or arrange and research and analyse music in styles to which they are most connected and interested. Formal assessment occurs only in the final year in the form of a number of culmination projects.*

This scenario, which could be seen as a knower code strengthening to an elite code, was the most strongly supported of the four. Participants liked the broad approach to curricula inclusion – ‘grounding in a range of musical languages’, the balance of know-how-to (applied knowledge) and knowledge-that (conceptual knowledge) (McPhail 2020), while retaining a visible structure that might enable development of the knowledge and skills required for students who might wish to pursue higher levels of music study. Participants liked the downplaying of assessment, moving high stakes assessment to the final year, but some thought this approach to assessment would be unacceptable to many stakeholders and managers and so unlikely to be put into practice.

A few participants found the scenario too teacher-led and worried that the early years might alienate younger students because of a perceived weighting in favour of theoretical work: ‘This feels a bit like you have to eat your vegetables before dessert’. This may have been the fault of the scenario description where the phrase ‘a comprehensive and sequential introduction to the key generative concepts of a number of musical languages and the history of their development’ was intended to indicate as much performing as theoretical and historical content. Further weaknesses of the model included ‘the danger that you would neglect to

develop individual musical identity in the earlier years, upon which the latter years seem to depend' (SR-).

### **Scenario D – other matters**

Because this scenario highlighted the development of 'a number of musical languages' as a key component, we asked the participants what they thought these languages should be, prompting them with the examples Cook Island drumming and American contemporary jazz. Eight out of nine responses to this question highlighted local languages and contexts as key determinates for deciding inclusion although the emphasis varied somewhat:

First, whatever is regionally present and then, concentrically, away from one's own region.

WAM, Jazz, Popular music, as well as the indigenous music of the country in question.

It entirely depends upon the context, the needs of the students and the musical cultures within which they live.

I think there is no hierarchy, so this decision should be made locally and regionally.

This focus on acknowledging the local seems to contradict other data where popular music is regarded as the base language for musicians in a global world. On the other hand, the responses (eight out of nine referring to the local) clearly demonstrate the pervasive effects of the concept of localisation, where curriculum decisions should reflect local communities and their interests.

We pushed the respondents a little further on this issue of musical languages by asking if they considered there to be a language that could form the core of the music studied. For example Sarath in, Sarath, Myers, and Shehan-Campbell (2017) considers it to be Jazz. Our participants provided a range of responses ranging from 'I wonder' to 'not possible' and beyond:

I think a western framework is useful as it pervades most of our cultures but perhaps the most interesting aspect is honouring and respecting how it is absorbed into other cultures.

Probably contemporary pop (!) because it is so universal - But I would rather work on a conceptual framework for understanding/analysing/discussing music, then applying it to different genres.

The responses that moved beyond the idea of languages to more abstract concepts pre-empted our next question in the survey which asked, 'What do you consider to be the generative concepts<sup>1</sup> of music that should be included, i.e. the concepts that generate more knowledge'. Again, there were a range of responses to this which directed participants perhaps a little uncomfortably towards universalism:

Musical elements: pitch relations, rhythm patterns, harmonic density, structure of lyrics in relationship to melody

Groove!

Some participants avoided suggesting particular concepts and one suggested perusing particular questions might be a useful place for a curriculum to begin:

How is the music organised? What are the contexts and meanings? Who are the musicians and what are their stories? What are the instruments used? How is the music transmitted/received/consumed?

Other concepts included: tonal systems, rhythmic/metric systems, timbre/tone colour (including IT digital manipulation in music production techniques), linear (notated) and spatial (digital) textures, expression/dynamics (key to interpreting and realising stylistic contexts), structure (macro and micro forms), and values (underpinning the music that determine its characteristics).

This scenario (D) also suggested that teachers could be guided in curriculum choices by drawing on examples of musicking from a national set of exemplars. With this question, we were interested to 'put our toes' in the water in regard to the vexed issue of national prescription. On the one hand,

localisation is a widely accepted concept but on the other, as societies become increasingly diverse, there is an argument to be made in favour of some shared content as a means for societies to cohere around shared ideas; to encourage a shared sense of how they 'see themselves' – as Durkheim described it – our 'collective representations' (see for example Rata 2018; McPhail and Rata 2019). One participant responded pragmatically with the observation that some prescription could be 'important as not all teachers make good choices in this regard. I think the exemplars should be chosen wisely and then changed regularly with support in terms of classroom materials provided'. In post-structuralist mode, another participant asked, 'Agreed by whom?'

## Discussion and an argument for a possible direction

The panellists' responses to the scenarios clearly indicate that there is no preferred 'one direction' for secondary school music in the C21. All four scenarios had their supporters and detractors. While Scenario D was supported by most panellists, it was not supported by all, while Scenario A showed strong bifurcation (40% for and 60% against its introduction) indicating dissension within the discipline on identifying broadly acceptable goals for secondary school music in the C21. The challenge is whether the elements of these different scenarios might be amalgamated in some way or whether they are perceived as mutually exclusive. Participants certainly cited practical pragmatic institutional grounds as barriers likely to impede the adoption of the more idealised aspects of the scenarios, e.g. ideal facilities and staffing.

The utilisation of Maton's concepts associated with specialisation has allowed us to clearly identify the two key dimensions that the majority of respondents identify as significant for the future of music education: (i) musical experiences that are individually meaningful for students and (ii) the development of knowledge to bring understanding to and enrichment of those experiences. In Maton's terms, these represent social and epistemic relations, respectively. We theorise these aspects to be in a dialectical relationship, but in the music classroom, potentially in a productive dynamic relationship. Such dynamism however would rely on teachers' greater cognisance in acknowledging the affordances of both forms of legitimation and working to bring both dimensions into some form of mutually reinforcing balance. Social dimensions incorporate students' right to be recognised and to develop the dispositions and values appropriate for their chosen music world; a particular 'gaze' they will bring to their practise (Maton 2014). Epistemic dimensions incorporate student's right of access to powerful conceptual knowledge; to music's conceptual systems of meaning.

Associated with both dimensions is the potential for aspects of students' every-day informal knowledge to be recontextualised as part of the vertical discourse of the school (Bourne 2003, 2004; Carroll 2019b). Making these forms of legitimation, and the potentially productive relationship between them, more visible could assist in moving the classroom beyond binary conceptions and unproductive 'code clashes'. Our data suggest that teachers do espouse a dynamic curriculum drawing on knowledge, knower, and elite codes in both their curriculum choices (what music to study, perform, compose, etc.) and their pedagogy (how the curriculum will be put into action) as they respond to the curriculum level and the prior knowledge and interests of their students. Our data also suggest that the more 'extreme' relativist code is inappropriate for the secondary school. In such a scenario, too much is left to chance and the school becomes simply a bigger place to play. It offers little musically that the wider community could not. Our participants suggest the school has an ethical obligation to offer more.

We have utilised Maton's specialisation codes to 'uncover' the legitimating principles of various varied arguments about the future for secondary school music. We now turn to LCT's Semantic dimensions to suggest a means by which the identified tension between the social and epistemic concerns of our panellists might be addressed; the dialectic between epistemic and social dimensions of legitimation. Our data suggest that the school should offer a combination of applied and cognitive experiences for students, but the data also highlighted the tensions that exist in realising this educational aim. For example, where practical experiences without cognitive strengthening

dominate, students' access to conceptual knowledge (knowledge-that) is weakened. Where concepts are taught without connection to their material realisation access to applied knowledge (know-how-to) is weakened.

We now consider how this tension might be dealt with in a practical way in terms of curriculum design. We suggest the utilisation of the concept of *semantic waves* (Maton 2014) in curriculum design and delivery so that students encounter a balance of context-dependent and context-independent forms of knowledge, and the school fulfils its function of providing access to 'powerful knowledge' and 'powerful experiences' to students (Young and Muller 2013, 2019; McPhail 2014, 2017).<sup>2</sup> This aim requires both applied and conceptual work which Maton's concept of Semantics makes visible.

The Semantics dimension of LCT (Maton 2014) suggests that pedagogic practices can be theorised using the concepts of semantic gravity (SG) and semantic density. SG refers to the extent to which meaning in a context relates to that context. SG as a concept makes visible the degree of context dependence. For example in a music classroom if students can play a *chord progression* – applied knowledge – but have little or no knowledge of the concept of *chord progressions* and the inferential concepts condensed within the main concept, then the SG is strong; the meaning is context bound and context determined. The semantic 'gravity' keeps meaning close to a context. In practice, the students can play only one chord progression and the meaning is experiential only. If, on the other hand, the students have had access to the system of meaning associated with chord progressions they can then refer to and utilise the system's meanings to achieve other musical ends, for example, transposing the chord progression they know to another key or intentionally altering the chord progression for expressive ends. In this case, the SG is weaker as students utilise context-independent knowledge to apply concepts and 'move them around'.

The movement from context-dependent to context-independent meaning can be captured in the idea of a semantic wave. This can be an effective pedagogical manoeuvre in and across lessons (Macnaught et al. 2013) as the concept of a wave makes visible the unpacking and repacking of meanings for students, often moving from every-day experiential concrete understandings (e.g. 'a chord progression' – strong SG – bound to a context) to generalisations and abstractions ('chord progressions' – weak SG – context independent). With cognisance of such pedagogic manoeuvres, teachers are more likely to be able to move seamlessly *but visibly* between experience and the conceptualisation of that experience; embedding 'theory' in 'practice' contexts so it is meaningful for students. Significantly, it is the 'repacking' of knowledge 'back up' the semantic ladder, increasing its semantic density (condensation or complexity of meaning), that teachers are less cognisant of (Macnaught et al. 2013). The individual components of chord progressions can be 'unpacked' in a number of lessons on the topic (weakening SD) but they can also be gradually 'repacked' (strengthening SD) into a symbol or theoretical concept used to represent a broader range of ideas that are then understood as a condensed term (strong semantic density) and used in practice and in the specialised conversation of musicians. Maton (2014; cited in Jackson 2016, 4, emphasis added) suggests that 'weaker semantic gravity and stronger semantic density is associated with transfer of knowledge across contexts and time, and thereby with *cumulative learning*'.

The concepts of semantic gravity and density provide a means to make visible both the structures of knowledge and a pedagogical means to make both concepts and action central to curriculum enactment. Procedural activities are likely to be characterised with strong SG and less conceptual density but in segments of lessons or whole lessons where cognitive strengthening takes place, for example, where a teacher introduces conceptual knowledge to elucidate practice, the semantic wave moves towards weaker gravity and stronger density. As the relative strengths of SG and SD alter in lessons and across lessons, so too can strengths in epistemic and social relations. For example, the teacher may cede some curriculum decisions to students, but the teacher may invoke a knowledge code to introduce key concepts of the style being practiced, or indeed the students may be able to do this for themselves if they are already stylistic insiders with sufficient expertise (the utilisation of their informally acquired knowledge). The significant point is that the teacher has a

panoramic conceptual or epistemic view of the subject and its likely sub-topics and is able to guide students in their developing specialised understanding in a conceptually driven practical pedagogy. The ideal result may be a specialised knower (musician) with a particular gaze; a gaze founded on intelligent knowing-how, knowing-that, and knowing-why (McPhail 2020). Jackson (2016) suggests that it is important ‘not to reductively equate one set of knowledge practices as inherently superior’ (150) i.e. applied or conceptual, but we suggest is likely to be beneficial for students if their teachers have an enhanced semantic range to call on in their pedagogic practice. As Winch (2017) reminds us, true expertise occurs from extended experience in a field in which know-how-to (applied knowledge) and knowledge-that (conceptual knowledge) are combined. The result is knowing-why something is the case in order to make informed judgements about possible applications of knowledge to new and challenging contexts.

## Conclusion

This Delphi study has made it clear that ‘one direction’ is unlikely to emerge for music education in the foreseeable future in terms of curricula. The responses to the scenarios show that a unified vision for music education in the secondary school is far from settled; ‘one direction’ is unlikely to emerge for music education. What appears certain is that there will be a continuing weakening of the boundaries between types of knowledge (informal and formal, western and non-western) and stylistic arenas suggesting a broadening of the legitimating codes valued. This aligns with dominant narratives within the fields of symbolic control (of both music education and education more widely) that emphasise social relations as the means for education to realise social justice aims, particularly for music, since as a subject it remains inextricably intertwined with the development of certain imagined social identities. At the level of pedagogic enactment however, we have suggested a more nuanced direction acknowledging the deep affordances of the interplay between social and epistemic identity formation for students. This is not an either-or scenario but a scenario in which social and epistemic dimensions of knowledge forms are brought into a mutually beneficial balance for the benefit of deep student development.

## Notes

1. By generative concepts, we mean concepts that are fundamental to knowledge production in a discipline, e.g. tonality in music, narrative in writing, scientific method in science. In music’s case, knowledge production includes most fundamentally composition and performance, often simultaneously, and then concepts that can be utilised to bring understanding to those fundamental processes such as analysis, historical knowledge, and so on.
2. Powerful knowledge refers to the generative concepts within the discipline or sub-discipline. It does not refer to content or specific musics although powerful knowledge is likely to be exemplified through the most creative or compelling exemplars in a field of production.

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