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Issues and Challenges in the Delivery of Secondary School Music Education in Ireland : A Regional Case Study

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Degree of Master of Arts (Research)
2014

Cork Institute of Technology
(Cork School of Music)

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Education in Ireland: a Regional Case Study

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Music Education in Ireland: a Regional Case Study

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Degree of Master of Arts (Research)

Cork Institute of Technology
(Cork School of Music)

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Abstract

**Issues and Challenges in Secondary School Music Education:
A Regional Case Study**

Marita Murray

Research in effective music experiences during childhood and teenage years has shown the potential for significant developmental effects. However, the number of students studying music as a subject in secondary school in Ireland is statistically low in comparison with other areas of schooling. International literature points to a number of key issues and significant challenges in the delivery of music as a subject, yet there has been little Irish research carried out in this area.

This study aims to examine the delivery of school music education in a sample of Irish post-primary schools. It is a case study in delivery of a school program based in five research sites in Cork city and Cork county towns, seeking to investigate the relationship between various issues and challenges in the delivery of secondary school music education. Data was collected through individual interviews with four second-level teachers, and from two minor studies. The study aims to find whether issues surrounding education delivery, identified in the international literature, are also issues and challenges in an Irish context, and to what extent. Also, it seeks to investigate how teachers respond to the challenges, and how teaching circumstances and strategies may alter these challenges.

The key issues that were investigated are the status of music as a subject, the diverse experiences of music amongst students, the three strands of the curriculum, composing, performing and listening, and extra-curricular music. Themes arising from existing research include issues of continuum from primary to second-level schooling, the diversity of genre, the benefits of informal learning practices and Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and challenges that these issues create for the teacher. It also examines the delivery of curricular and non-curricular school music, and identifies its perceived successes, challenges and benefits.

Declaration

The dissertation here presented is entirely the work of the presenting candidate, Marita Murray, except where otherwise accredited. This dissertation has not been submitted for an award at any other institution.
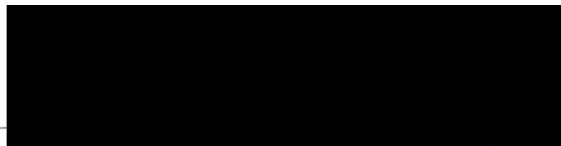
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Dr Susan O'Regan (Supervisor)

Date _____

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Acknowledgments

Introduction

I believe that when we encourage the seedbed of creativity in our communities and ensure that each child and adult has the opportunity for creative expression, we also lay the groundwork for sustainable employment in creative industries and enrich our social, cultural and economic development (Higgins, M.D., 2011).

In his Inaugural Presidential Speech in 2011, Michael D. Higgins acknowledged the importance of the arts and the need to encourage creativity in the lives of citizens, especially the youth. His vision is that giving children access to 'creative expression' is an investment for the future and in the development of a country in economic turmoil (Higgins, 2011). McCarthy (2004) states that preparing youth for participation in the cultural life of Ireland is one of the goals for formal education. However, certain types of music learning in Irish formal education are surrounded by issues arising out of questions as to the nature and purpose of music, and how it should be studied. In her article 'Ireland: Curriculum development in troubled times', McCarthy discusses the 'complicated and vulnerable nature of music as a school subject and the contradictions that inhere in its status as a school subject' (McCarthy, 2010, p. 73). Keith Swanwick (1999) also draws attention to the complex nature of music as a school subject: 'Music education is not problematic until it surfaces in schools and colleges, until it becomes formal, institutionalized' (Swanwick, 1999, p 36). In England, Boal-Palheiros and Hargreaves' study investigated the distinction between the functions of school music and music at home, and found that 'home listening was linked with enjoyment, emotional mood and social relationships, whereas school music was associated with motivation for learning and being active, and particular lesson content' (Boal-Palheiros & Hargreaves, 2001).

However, debates surrounding music education have circulated for centuries. In ancient Greece, Aristotle argued that music should exist in practice, or 'music as praxial' (in Greek, *praxis* means deed, act or action) (Lucas, 1968). Elliott (1995) continues the idea millennia later by writing extensively about and promoting praxial music education. Although he acknowledges Aristotle's intention of the term *praxis* as 'doing' or 'acting with purpose', he develops the interpretation of the term as going 'from action alone to the idea of action in a situation' and uses it to represent a 'multidimensional concept of music' which requires a 'unique form of thinking and

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knowing' (Elliott, 1995, p. 14). In his book *Music Matters* (1995), he highlights the importance a praxial philosophy places on music.

> By calling this a praxial music philosophy I intend to highlight the importance it places on music as a particular form of action that is purposeful and situated and, therefore, revealing one's self and one's relationship with others in a community. The term *praxial* emphasizes that music ought to be understood in relation to the meanings and values evidenced in actual music making and music listening in specific cultural contexts... [it] refutes the belief that music is best understood in terms of the aesthetic qualities of pieces of music alone... [It] is fundamentally different from and incompatible with music education's official aesthetic philosophy. As such, it offers music educators a clear alternative to past thinking (Elliott, 1995, p. 14).

Elliott believes that this argument lies at the root of music education (Elliott, 1995). Reimer (2003), in his book *A Philosophy for Music Education*, acknowledges Elliott's praxial approach in his experience-based philosophy for music education. However, he views as 'extreme' an emphasis on a single aspect of music education, either the action of making music or the process of making a musical product. 'They put so much emphasis on one or another aspect of a larger, more complex whole as to tend to exclude or severely diminish other aspects, yielding a skewed vision' (Reimer, 2003, p. 50). He emphasises a more 'balanced' approach and an appreciation for each facet of music:

> In this case, viewing form and action as compatible – even as codependent – rather than contradictory, allows one to give appropriate attention to both, sometimes focusing on one, sometimes on the other, and often focusing on their necessary interrelationship. This, I would argue, portrays music more faithfully and realistically than the severely imbalanced positions of extremist thinkers, and benefits our students in helping them to understand and to enjoy the multidimensionality of music (Reimer, 2003, p. 50).

Koopman (1996), on the other hand, makes a rationalization that is related to Elliott's praxial philosophy. He presents a number of arguments for the question 'why teach music at school?' According to him, the only argument that provides grounds for music to be included in the school curriculum is that the value of music is to be found in musical experiences. 'The value of musical experience can be experienced only; it cannot be conveyed with words' (Koopman, 1996).

These views of music education have influenced recent curricular developments in Irish education, as well as in other countries. For example, in Britain, the multi

dimensions of music, i.e. performance, composition, and listening, are aimed to be developed simultaneously through practical music making (National Curriculum in England, 2013).

In the historical context of music education in Ireland, McCarthy (1999b) showed that post-primary music education before the 1960s was based on 'Catholic, classical ideals of education' (McCarthy, 1999b, p. 156). She pointed out that the syllabus had a limited range of areas, was difficult, and provided few musical experiences. Around this time, music was heavily based on the aesthetics of Western art music and was viewed as an elitist subject (Lane, 2005, 1, p. 7). Major steps towards curriculum change took place with the revision of the syllabus in 1966 with options of reduced requirements for harmony and compositional skills, and more emphasis on musicianship skills. With the introduction of Irish traditional music and popular music in the 1980s, efforts were made to 'link music in school culture with students' out-of-school experiences' (McCarthy, 1999b, p. 160). However, specific curriculum guidelines to engage students in many types of music were not provided until the revision of the current second-level curricula in the 1990s. The process of curriculum development since the 1960s has provided many positive changes to second level Irish music education in the 21st century, and the current curriculum has been received with an overall positive response from teachers (Lane, 2005).

Reimer's (2003) concept of music being 'multidimensional' has influenced the current curriculum, with both Junior and Leaving Certificate curricula containing broad divisions of listening, performing, and composing. However, debates around how the subject should be taught still exist, and music teachers in schools are currently facing many challenges in a society that is becoming increasingly influenced by technology, as well as students being exposed to a vast range of music genres in their lives outside school. This case study seeks to explore these challenges in a single region of Ireland.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction – definitions and functions of music

In the past, there was a strong emphasis on the aesthetics and ideals of music education. Historically, the term 'aesthetics' appeared in the 18th century in Europe, to describe the science of investigating beauty within the fields of architecture, sculpture, poetry, painting and music. Colwell's (1992) *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning* describes aesthetic questions as the consideration of what is beautiful and how beauty should be judged. He states that they challenge 'the validity of extant ideas and practices [...] they address central questions relating to music education and challenge its very reason for being' (Colwell, 1992, p. 96). Aesthetics in music education, according to Reimer, are 'changeable and flexible, attempting to capture the best thinking about music and to apply it to practices of music education' (Reimer, 2003, p. 10). He considers music education to be multidimensional, and examines its value within five areas: music as formed sounds; music as practice; music as a means for social change; the boundaries of music and of music education; and music as serving a variety of utilitarian values (Reimer, 2003, p. 38).

However, in recent times, there has been a shift in value from the aesthetics of music education towards practical music making, or music as practice. According to Regelski (2006), music as practice holds a higher value for students. He states that 'instead of some speculative theory of appreciation based on connoisseurship as aesthetic or otherwise disinterested contemplation for its own sake; instead, it directly promotes musicking that adds value to individual lives and enlivens society'. He adds that 'music in particular makes a special contribution to individual and social life in comparison to most other school subjects'. According to him, all students will have gained an appreciation for different types of music prior to and outside school whether through private tuition or being in a particular musical environment. He believes that music educators 'must think in terms of a *value added* approach where students are *newly or better able to 'do' music* as a result of instruction' (Regelski, 2006, pp. 21-22).

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Christopher Small (1998) supports music as practice in his book *Musicking*, and discusses the complexity of relationships between both the music and people, which are established in the process. This theory is especially relevant to the school environment.

> The act of musicking establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies. They are to be found not only between those organized sounds which are conventionally thought of as being the stuff of musical meaning but also between the people who are taking part, in whatever capacity, in the performance; and they model, or stand as metaphor for, ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be: relationships between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world and even perhaps the supernatural world (Small, 1998, p 13).

Swanwick (1999) highlights the differences between the social and cultural functions of music, and music education. He describes school music as a 'special case, especially when it is statutory or is expected to form part of everyone's schooling'. According to him, a music education should allow students access to several 'metaphorical processes', which he describes as being internal yet visible in the 'various layers of musical activity'. He debates how this vision of 'what music is' often gets lost in state education (Swanwick, 1999, pp. 43-44):

> This, then, is the vision: of music permeating and expanding our minds at every level. Why is it, though, that a vision of what music is, so often gets lost in what music education actually turns out to be? Perhaps it is that music is particularly hard to manage in the relentless schedules of schools and colleges and for teachers to hold on to its nature and value during the long processions of students through private teaching studios. There are also issues of status and resources (Swanwick, 1999, p. 44).

2.2 Second level curriculum

In England, the National Curriculum for Music was introduced in 1992, after a slow progression of changes to the subject throughout the twentieth century. Pitts (2008b) reflects on the changes brought about and highlights how performing, composing, and listening formed the core of the subject, all of which were 'explored through active participation, drawing on a wide variety of genres and repertoire'. She identifies the purposes of the music curriculum as giving all children access to musical opportunities, rather than it being for a talented minority. Pitts (2008b) also highlights how the curriculum has since been influenced by musical organisations, mainly *Musical Futures*, a non-government funded organisation which invests in bringing

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non-formal and informal learning approaches into formal contexts (Musical Futures, 2003).

In Ireland, the National Curriculum for Music in England has influenced the current second level music curricula. In its present form, the Junior and Leaving Certificate music examinations take place in the third and sixth years of secondary school respectively. The current Junior Certificate music curriculum was implemented in schools in 1989 (NCCA, 1996c, p. i), with the Leaving Certificate music curriculum being revised between 1993 and 1996 (Lane, 2005, 1, p. 61), which was introduced into schools in 1996. It was first examined in 1999 (Lane, 2005, 1, p. 46). The methods of assessment include a combined aural and written examination in composing and listening to music, and also a practical examination in individual and/or group performing. The curriculum offers choice to students in terms of constructing an examination that suits their musical experiences. For example, students can choose from a wide variety of performing activities, from a range of prescribed composing exercises, and the listening section spans many different musical periods, genres and styles (NCCA, 1996a).

Students are examined at two levels, Ordinary Level and Higher Level. Higher level students undertake similar exercises to Ordinary level students, but at a more advanced standard, as well as additional material in a chosen specialist area. This specialist area is called the 'higher elective', where students can specialise in one of the areas of performing, listening or composing. Students can study one of these sections as a higher elective to obtain fifty per cent of the total marks. The curriculum guidelines state that 'this will allow Ordinary level and Higher level students to gain up to 50 per cent of the total marks in the musical activity that best suits their talent' (NCCA, 1996a, p. 4). The Leaving Certificate syllabus also states that 'Today, individual differences in musical values and experiences are an indication of the diversity and vitality of the nation's musical life. In accommodating these differences, this syllabus also accommodates divergence in students' musical needs, interests, and ambitions' (NCCA, 1996a, p. 1). Continuity and progression between both stages of the curriculum are also acknowledged in both the Junior and Leaving Certificate syllabus aims.

Since the constitution of the Irish Free State Act in 1922, second-level music in Ireland has undergone many revisions to get to its present state. Stephen Lane's (2005) thesis *Government Policy on Irish Music Education at Second-Level since 1921* examined the developmental history of music education in secondary schools, investigating the syllabus documents and the according policy changes from 1921 to 1992. It revealed that before the current Leaving Certificate music curriculum was revised in 1996, parents and students had negative attitudes towards the subject and it was in sharp decline in schools (Lane, 2005, 1, p. 47). Apparent reasons for this included music being marked harder than other subjects, school music being irrelevant to students' own musical experiences, and a perception that it was an elitist subject (Lane, 2005, 1, p. 47-48). The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Music Course Committee held a meeting in 1993 to discuss the many issues that surrounded music as a secondary school subject in Ireland, and to consider possible solutions. The new Leaving Certificate Music Curriculum (Higher and Ordinary Level) was published in 1996. It was designed 'to incorporate the concerns and views of all groups who had a vested interest in second-level music', of whom many shared a 'common desire to see a fresh wind blow through second-level music' (Lane, 2005, 1, p. 95).

Lane carried out a survey of second level teacher's responses towards the new curriculum. Positive opinions included that music seemed equal to other subjects with reference to standard and accessibility, that it attracts more students, that it is accessible to all students including those who did not study music for Junior Certificate, and that it has a smooth transition from Junior Certificate. Also, most teachers agreed that it 'has brought about an invigoration of the subject' (Lane, 2005, 2, p. 69).

There were criticisms about how difficult or easy the new examination syllabus is – some felt that the new course is not challenging for musically developed students, whilst others considered it to be difficult, demanding, and long (Lane, 2005, 2, p. 69).

Although there are still criticisms regarding the new Leaving Certificate Curriculum, Lane's research showed that teachers regard it as a vast improvement to previous curricula. In 1998, less than 1000 candidates selected Leaving Certificate music in the

state examinations, while in 2008 the numbers taking Leaving Certificate music rose to 5280 (Downey, 2009).

2.3 Music education at primary level

Formal music education begins at primary level, and is the foundation for further music learning at second level. However, questions have been raised with regard to the standard of music teaching in Irish primary schools. If there are problems at the root of state music education at primary level, we must consider what knock-on effects this has on music in secondary school. Lane's survey of post-primary teachers showed that although primary level teachers are satisfied with the curriculum, they questioned whether many teachers were implementing it in the classroom (Lane, 2005, 1, p. 74). The majority of teachers also felt that the quality of primary-level music education was varied, and that this was reflected in the level of musical experience amongst first-year students. They also believed that there was no communication between the two levels and that primary teachers were not aware of the requirements for second-level. Overall, the second level teachers were of the belief that if a music education system were properly implemented in primary schools, the standard of music would be raised in second-level. (Lane, 2005, 2, p. 74).

This issue has also emerged from studies conducted in other countries. In England, Gordon Cox's (1999) research into the National Curriculum showed that secondary school teachers feel their counterparts at primary-level 'suffer from low-esteem as musicians, with insufficient access to in-service training'. Additional research showed that 41% of primary-level teachers in England were dissatisfied with their teacher-training in music (Rainbow & Cox, 2006, p. 372). They also felt that this affected their responsibility as teachers to 'maintain or build up a strong extra-curricular tradition' (Rainbow & Cox, 2006, p. 369).

In the USA, there have been arguments for specialist music teachers to replace the generalist class teachers in primary-level music education. In a study based on schools in the USA, Wiggins and Wiggins (2008) questioned the quality of music instruction that generalist teachers are able to provide. They argue that teachers who have 'no personal experience studying the substance of music […] had not learned to intrinsically appreciate music. Therefore, they are unable to implement the curriculum

"with disciplinary integrity"; at best teaching "isolated musical tidbits devoid of context"' (Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008).

On the contrary, O'Callaghan (2003) in an Irish study considers the role of the class teacher to be crucial. To support this, he discusses the 'temporary' nature of music teaching at primary-level when it is confined to a small number of staff. By this he means a small number of staff in a school having the ability and confidence to teach music. He believes that students may therefore view music-making as a practice that only some people can do, or that it depends on a specialist rather than the class teacher. However, he is of the opinion that any teacher can acquire music skills, and that the problem to overcome is self-esteem.

McCarthy (1999a, p. 46) also highlights the importance of building the self-esteem of the primary teacher, and draws attention to teacher training. She states that 'one of the most widely discussed and persistent problems in Irish music education seems to be the qualification and education of teachers of music'. She recommends building the classroom teacher's confidence in his/her music skills, and also suggests maximizing the music specialism that already exists in primary schools amongst staff and teachers in their training.

> Tapping the musical impulses of these teachers or student teachers, nurturing their self-confidence, building self-identity as musicians, and developing in them a personal conviction of the value of music in their own lives and in their students' education ought to be the main goals of perspective and in-service education for primary teachers (McCarthy, 1999a. p. 47).

Another Irish study by Stakelum (2008) shows that teacher confidence in implementing the music curriculum existed in Ireland as far back as the establishment of music education, when there was a profound focus on music literacy skills. The ideals of John Hullah, who developed song singing and solfa in British schools in the seventeenth century, formed the basis of the curriculum. Solfa entails the use of various hand signs to indicate different tones and semitones. Stakelum notes that 'the method was product led and featured a progressive and graded syllabus in singing and music literacy. However, as it unfolded, some difficulties began to emerge for those charged with implementing the Hullah method – namely, the teachers'. Stakelum continues that it was not surprising that teachers lacked confidence and enthusiasm to

teach the curriculum, stating that although some may have been incompetent to implement the music curriculum, that also these set of practices 'may have held little value for them' (Stakelum, 2008). This is in contrast to today where solfa is more or less gone in secondary music education. Instead, listening and performance, as well as composition are present. There is also an emphasis on a student-centred approach where the teacher plays the role of a 'mentor'. Stakelum suggests that the nature of the relationship between primary teachers and music must be acknowledged as central to their teaching, and that their music teaching should not be confined to the curriculum, but based on using the curriculum as a guide for their practice, and drawing on their own experiences and understanding of the music that is meaningful to them. Stakelum describes her vision for how the primary teacher teaches music: 'There is an opportunity for teachers to use an amount of freedom in adapting the content of the curriculum to suit their own particular educational situation. In this sense the teacher is curriculum-maker, engaged not only with transmitting but with transforming the curriculum' (Stakelum, 2008).

2.4 Primary to secondary level music education continuum

McCarthy (1999a) believes that continuity throughout primary and second-level schooling creates the pathway for a lifelong music education into adulthood. According to her, the Irish education system is not structured to accommodate and support a primary-secondary continuum in music education. Hence she refers to this as a 'fractured continuum'. However, she believes that the frameworks of the present system could be extended to provide continuum.

> In the process, innovation would have to outweigh tradition in certain practices and perspectives, and music educators at all levels would need to create new pathways that connect students and teachers within the primary-secondary continuum in imaginative ways, to linking music in schools with music in communities and nurturing continuity in the child's own experience of music in the world (McCarthy, 1999a).

She offers suggestions of how to realise continuum, which include having children involved in music making that is 'meaningful' to them, learning from confident teachers who believe in the value of their subject, linking school music with music in their personal lives, performing from a common repertoire that enables shared music

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making, as well as developing a sense of value of music in their lives (McCarthy, 1999a).

The fractured continuum between first and second-levels is an issue both in Ireland and England. At second-level there remains the issue, to varying degrees, of previous music experience amongst students who present in the first year of this phase. There may be a number of reasons for this, for example the standard of music education students receive in primary-level or, whether or not they have been able to avail of private tuition. Little effort has been made in Ireland so far to develop continuity between primary and second level music.

In England, the National Curriculum was introduced in 1988, with aims that included the promotion of 'continuity and coherence' amongst all subjects at primary level. Music was introduced as part of the new curriculum in schools in 1992 (National Curriculum in England, 1999, p. 12).

Marshall and Hargreaves (2008) subsequently sought to establish if there were any improvements as a result in primary to secondary transition for class music. They found that it appeared to have 'done very little in terms of providing a "common language" among teachers from different phases of education'. Also, that 'curriculum continuity and progression was similarly found to be poor or non-existent' (Marshall & Hargreaves, 2008).

If students are entering first-year with varying levels of music experience, how do teachers measure their musical knowledge and understanding? Mills (1996) suggests five common approaches that secondary teachers use to teach new students, which contribute to an unsuccessful introduction to the secondary music education experience. These are:

1. Categorizing students into groups of similar music experience based on a 'superficial' test, for example by singing a song, asking questions to find out what students had learned in primary school.
2. The teacher uses questioning techniques to find out how much musical knowledge students had.

3. The 'back to basics' or 'start from scratch' approach because students come from a large number of feeder primary schools, praising students regardless of their music results.

4. Students were praised by the teacher regardless of their musical outcome.

5. The 'no keyboards until Christmas' approach, where students are not allowed to use enjoyable musical resources for some time in case these got damaged in the process.

Mills criticized these approaches while listing their various negative outcomes. A study by Marshall and Hargreaves (2007) examined whether or not evidence of Mills's five approaches could be seen in the English schools that were used in her research, and found evidence to suggest that the student experiences reported within the approaches were evident in many schools, contributing to the disruption of transfer between primary and secondary levels.

> Our main contention would be that various incidents, experiences and teaching approaches can occur within each area of experience and that negative experiences within these areas create disruption and anxiety, and contribute to an unsuccessful start to music education in secondary school (Marshall & Hargreaves, 2007).

Although the National Curriculum in England aimed to improve continuity between primary and second-level education, Marshall and Hargreaves (2008) found that the 'start from scratch' approach is still commonly used amongst secondary teachers. Interestingly, they argue that continuum is not essential to successful secondary school teaching, and that it can in fact be beneficial, challenging students to adapt and become confident in their new environment:

> Further studies have also suggested, however, that the 'start from scratch' approach and lack of appropriate liaison do not necessarily have to mean a 'negative introduction to secondary music'. Our study of pupils' views suggest that where and when teachers are prepared to start from scratch with new, interesting and highly *musical* activities which benefit from the pupils' readiness to be challenged and take on more mature approaches, to include all pupils regardless of instrumental ability, and to be prepared to change their teaching style to accommodate the pupils' need to revert to primary ways occasionally, they are able to transition well and to increase their interest in music as a subject (Marshall & Hargreaves, 2008).

Measor and Woods (1984) previously supported this argument, advocating substantial differences between the primary and secondary curricula to match the expectations of

students moving to second-level education. They mentioned the benefits of 'planned discontinuity' to encourage intellectual and emotional growth in students (Measor & Woods, 1984, p. 76).

2.5 The three strands

Both the Junior and Leaving Certificate curricula are divided into three areas or 'strands' of composing, performing and listening. Although literature on the current second-level curriculum in Ireland is sparse, Lane's study gives a comprehensive account of Irish teachers' opinions of the current curriculum, which emphasises the question of whether 'the course is now entirely class based with equal and fair access to all students' (Lane, 2005, 2, p. 77). Although positive on many areas, Lane's survey of second level music teachers throughout Ireland revealed their concerns on some aspects of the curriculum.

Listening is a section of the curriculum, which has become more inclusive of other genres of music in recent years. However, Lane's study showed that 60% of teachers felt that it was the section that students found most difficult (Lane, 2005, 2, p. 21). Criticisms existed amongst music teachers with regard to the content of the listening material, with arguments which include: (a) that students are already heavily exposed to popular music and that they would benefit more from studying other types of music; (b) that classical music is not relevant to students' lives and is therefore demanding; (c) that students' attitudes towards music have already formed before second-level; and (d) that the introduction of western art music in secondary school makes it difficult to change their attitudes. Teachers also consider the content of listening material to be weighty and that the time they are required to spend on meeting its demands are not in proportion to the marks awarded (Lane, 2005, 2, p. 70-71). Positive remarks included Irish traditional music in the syllabus being a positive addition in exposing students to the music of their culture, that popular music is a 'good starting point' for students, as well as popular music providing an introduction to the study of form and composition (Lane, 2005, 2, pp. 70-71).

Performance is an area in which students diverge widely, ranging from little or no performing experience, to being considerably focused as a result of years spent in private tuition. The curriculum guidelines for performance state that students are

expected to show 'appropriate musical and technical fluency' (NCCA, 1996a, p. 6). Lane draws attention to the vagueness of this guideline by stating that 'it is not clear whether this means appropriate musical technical fluency for the age of the student or appropriate for a five year period of studying music, or appropriate for the amount of preparation involved relative to other subjects; or whether it means something else entirely' (Lane, 2005, 1, p. 96). The curriculum provides guidelines but students have freedom to choose from a range of genres, styles, instruments and ensembles to perform. The study revealed teachers felt that fifty per cent was too high a percentage for one activity and that its demands were 'light'. There was a call for 'more specific requirements' and also suggestions 'that there be set pieces for each instrument' rather than guidelines for non-prescribed pieces (Lane, 2005, 1, p. 71). Lane's research also raised the question of the standard of performance expected for the final examination: 'Should that standard be determined by the student who has been receiving one-to-one tuition from an early age or by what can be achieved in a classroom setting over five years?' Teachers felt that although the new curriculum caters for students without private instrumental tuition, those who have had private tuition still have an advantage. They stated that 45% of their students were getting private instrumental tuition outside school. Lane added that there are 'schools where some, with an established culture of music lessons compete with schools which are in disadvantaged areas and have no such culture' (Lane, 2005, 2, p. 73).

Historically, music literacy featured heavily in the secondary school syllabus since its foundation in 1921, which contributed to its 'elitist' reputation as a subject. With the establishment of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in 1987 and its corresponding NCCA Course Committee for Music, a debate on the subject brought criticisms and comments especially with regard to the area of composition. 'Contributors felt that students of Leaving Certificate age were not of the musical maturity to deal with the demands of this section, demands which one submission described as "similar to first year music in college" ' (Lane, 2005, 1, p. 67). With the publication of the new Leaving Certificate Syllabus in 1996, the composition section was made up of harmonic and melodic questions of varying difficulty, with students being able to choose between several options of each. Unlike previous syllabi, none of the questions contain four-part writing elements.

Lane's research revealed teachers' responses to the overhauled composition section, with criticisms towards the controversial area still existing. In Lane's study, ninety-four percent of teacher respondents believe that 'the melodic composition examination questions encourage a formula approach to answering', with students being able to achieve high marks in this section without fully understanding essential aspects of composition (Lane, 2005, 2, p. 41). Over half remarked that the current composition section of the curriculum does not encourage creativity, while others believed that the narrower range of requirements enabled students to get to a creative stage with more ease (Lane, 2005, 2, p. 70).

The new Leaving Certificate Syllabus also saw the introduction of a 'higher elective' option, where 'the student decides whether performing, composing, or listening will be worth 50% and engages in further study of the chosen area' (Lane, 2005, 1, p. 96). Lane's research revealed that almost all students take the higher elective in performing, with an equal majority of students seeking guidance from the teacher in deciding which higher elective to take (Lane, 2005, 2, pp. 23-24). According to Lane, 'the main reason for the continual rejection of the composing elective is the fact that the performing elective is so much easier and far safer in terms of getting marks' (Lane, 2005, 2, p. 41).

2.6 Genre

Students are exposed to a broad range of musical styles outside the school gates. Due to media and socio-cultural influences, their musical tastes are now much broader and different than in the past, and are constantly changing and evolving. In his book *A Basis for Music Education*, Swanwick (2002) considers music in society and the individual. He states that our musical experiences are 'undoubtedly influenced and to some extent shaped' by four variables, which are personality dispositions, specific musical ideas, available skills and technology, and social influences (Swanwick, 2002, p. 96).

According to Bresler (1998), 'the understanding of "school music" as a genre requires the understanding of the contexts that shape and define it'. She discusses the complexity of musical genres in the context of a school subject, in terms of the 'meso', 'micro' and 'macro' contexts.

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> Each of these three identified contexts is comprised of other, general and local contexts. The meso context, for example, draws on the tradition of music as a school subject; on the other arts subjects in the school and their relationship to music; on the particular school's organization and mission; on the specific community in which the school is located, and the nature and extent of community/school interactions. Within the micro and macro levels, too, multiple contexts interact with each other to impact school music in myriad ways. Thus, it is the mutual shaping of contexts that creates the genre of school music (Bresler, 1998).

McPhail (2013) investigated the ways in which teachers approach both classical and popular music in the classroom. According to him, the personal musical values of the teachers become adjusted by educational values: 'Teachers seek to affirm and validate students' interests and experience but also balance this with knowledge they think is epistemologically important' (McPhail, 2013). In this context, he states that the teacher should aim to develop musical skills and experience in ways that are socially meaningful to the students, while also exposing the students to conceptual and foundational music knowledge, both old and newly developing (McPhail, 2013).

Issues around genre and teaching approaches have been highlighted in literature. Swanwick (1999) acknowledges the addition of popular music into formal education. However, he criticizes how popular music has to be 'modified, abstracted and analyzed to fit into classrooms, timetables and the aims of music education'. He claims this is done to 'make itself respectable and to become appropriately institutionalized' (Swanwick, 1999, p. 38). His examples include the impact of noise levels being reduced, dancing being deemed impractical, and the socio-cultural context shunned.

Lane's (2005) study showed that the Leaving Certificate curriculum had an element of exclusivity in the past with a strong focus on Western classical music. With its revision in 1996 there has been an inclusion of other genres such as popular music, traditional Irish music and jazz. Despite this, Downey states that it can be challenging for second-level teachers to 'maintain a connection with students "own music" ' (Downey, 2009). She believes that the inclusion of popular music in the Leaving Certificate curriculum, such as the music of the bands Queen and The Beatles, is not relevant to music in students' lives. Similarly, Lucy Green (2008, pp. 12-13) stated that 'the inclusion of "classic" popular music is often, from students perspectives, as

far removed from their lives and identities as mainstream classical music or twentieth-century atonal music'.

As well as constituting a section of the listening and written section of the Leaving Certificate paper, students have the option of playing Irish traditional music for their performance examination. Downey (2009) highlights that Irish traditional music has soared in popularity in the 21st century due to the 'revival of interest both nationally and internationally'. For the Leaving Certificate examination, students must be able to 'understand, identify and describe from aural and visual perception the range and variety of Irish music heard today, Irish musical idioms and influences […] be able to perceive aurally and describe traditional and modern-day performing styles, and [understand] the contribution Irish music has made to folk music in other countries' (NCCA, 1996a. p. 11). Downey (2009) expresses concern about students, whose backgrounds are in classical music or other genres, achieving these requirements.

Moore (2011, p. 284) has found that the recent inclusion of various genres such as Irish traditional music has created challenges for teachers whose 'training is primarily that of the Western classical tradition'. Peter Dunbar-Hall (1996, p. 216) similarly has concerns about the lack of a teaching model for popular music. He believes that teachers who are trained in a western classical tradition lack 'the same instinctive teaching knowledge for popular music'. However, Downey (2009) states that 'such teachers have been very successful to date in teaching students to recognize the intricacies of Irish traditional music in a listening class'. She suggests integrating community-based traditional musicians with teachers and students in the school environment, as a possible solution for involving all class students in traditional Irish music performance. This is an area where informal learning practices such as 'peer learning' could be useful to the class teacher whose roots are in the Western classical traditions.

2.7 Informal learning practices
Literature suggests that there is a level of disagreement on the issues of genre and appropriate teaching methods for performance. Informal learning practices have been successfully employed in schools in other countries, such as Britain, as a way of overcoming these issues. Informal learning practices refer to unstructured learning

activities resulting from daily life situations, which are highly related to the personal learning motives of the learner. In the context of music learning, informal learning may take the form of learning by ear or copying other musicians, rather than through formal music tuition. Lucy Green has written extensively on the subject of informal learning practices in schools and its benefits (Green, 1988, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2011). In her investigations of how popular musicians learn, she suggests that 'young musicians who acquire their skills and knowledge more through informal learning practices than through formal education may be more likely to continue playing music, alone or with others, for enjoyment in later life' (Green, 2002b, p. 56). In her book *Music, Informal Learning and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy*, she discusses how the music classroom could look to the learning practices of popular musicians, in order to 'recognize, foster and reward a range of musical skills and knowledge that have not previously been emphasized in music education' (Green, 2008, p.1). She also considers how these practices can affect teachers' approaches. She states that the increasing awareness and shifts towards informal learning practices in schools has taken away the stigma of music being a 'minority subject' that mainly accommodated children who took private instrumental lessons, which focused on classical and folk music, as well as music literacy skills. She adds that 'this challenge has included closing the gap between "high" and "low" musical cultures, [...] and has involved recognizing and valuing pupils' "own" musical cultures by bringing them into the curriculum (Green, 2008, p. 3).

Green's (2006) research has also examined how, although popular music has been part of curriculum content in the UK for some time, it has only just started to influence teaching strategies. According to her, employing informal music learning practices in the classroom 'enhances the authenticity of the learning experience' allowing learners to 'get inside' the inherent meanings of music, freed for a moment from specific, and therefore limiting, delineations. She lists these delineations as being the nature of the music itself, the people who made the music, the people who listen to it, their social, political or religious values, beliefs and actions (Green, 2006, p. 115). Green's findings have been very influential on recent policy and practice in Britain and Ireland, and a variety of 'informally learned' genres are included in the Leaving Certificate performance section.

Cain (2001, p. 112) discusses the methods of rock and folk musicians, and contrasts their apparent authenticity with the supposed artificiality of classical musicians. He discusses how folk or rock or blues musicians are self-taught and/or may also have some form of formal music education. They teach themselves to play an instrument in their preferred style by listening to their mentors and imitating their techniques, working through problems themselves, and comparing their methods with fellow musicians. He questions how music education would be benefitted if it were to encourage what he considers to be a natural approach to music education (Cain, 2001, p. 112). This approach is the basis of the *Musical Futures* approach to school music education in Britain. It promotes informal teaching and learning approaches in formal contexts, 'in an attempt to provide engaging, sustainable and relevant music making activities for all young people' (Musical Futures, 2003).

Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, and Tarrant (2003) investigated whether this emphasis on praxial music methods in English schools has had any effect on its provision in the personal lives of students, and found 'unexpected' levels of informal music-making taking place outside schools (Lamont et al., 2003). They suggest that these findings 'may reflect the longer-term impact the National Curriculum emphasis [has] on practical music-making, in motivating pupils to continue making music outside the classroom'. Swanwick (1996) discusses the benefits of group interaction in the classroom. He points out that music learning is 'motivated by observing others and we strive to emulate our peers, often with a more direct effect than being instructed by those persons designated as 'teachers'' (Swanwick, 1996, p. 241-242). This method has been referred to in literature as 'peer learning'. According to Bailey (1996), this method involves 'listening and diagnosing, discussing and trying-out' (Bailey, 1996, p. 242). However, according to Bailey, peer learning should not replace more structured instrumental teaching.

In an Irish study, Ailbhe Kenny (2010) discusses the benefits of engaging musicians as partners in music education, where the teacher provides structure and the musician gives authenticity to the experience. She feels that in this way, the teacher and the musician are 'up-skilling' in real contexts through mutual learning processes' (Kenny, 2010).

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Recent studies in Sweden highlighted the benefits of musical learning in informal contexts. Since the 1990s, a 'decentralized education system' has been introduced where teachers have freedom to teach in a variety of ways based on 'centrally defined criteria'. This has led to much variation in music education between schools. Music education has gone from being 'School Music' to 'Music in School' (Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010). Its development has been evident in the influence of students' 'own' music in curriculum content, being mainly popular and rock music. As a result, teaching strategies have changed accordingly. However, they stress that teachers need to adopt a specific strategy to apply informal learning practices in their classroom. They believe that informal learning in schools is still part of formal education.

> For music educators it is an important challenge to reach out and include students in active musicianship within the frames of compulsory music education. Functions and uses of music should no longer mean simply a socialization into a dominant culture – either lofty or everyday – but should instead contain a dialogue, and an exchange organized, initiated and guided by the teacher. This dialogue between different experiences should be respectful, critical, playful, musical and educational; where musical creativity in different forms could contribute to the developments of individuals as well as the development of society. Music education could be an exciting encounter between the familiar and the unfamiliar, between the individual and the collective, and an opportunity for the local and the global to meet. Music education is both a personal as well as a collective matter (Georgii-Heming & Westvall, 2010)

However, research suggests that not all teachers welcome informal learning methods as an approach to instrumental teaching, particularly those with a strict classical background or training. Bailey (1996) presents the reasons for opposition to this method of learning from teachers:

> Resistance to instrumental group teaching most often comes from those who have come through music schools and conservatoires where the one-to-one ratio is jealousy preserved and no other alternative seems feasible. Yet we recognize that people can learn a great deal by sitting next to other players in a brass band, guitar class, a rock group, or as a member of a chorus (Bailey, 1996, p. 243).

Swanwick goes so far as to suggest that formal instruction 'may not be necessary' in schools, and highlights the contrast between music inside and outside school (Swanwick, 1999, p. 36).

> The accessibility of music from the ends of the earth and high levels of
> music-specific information technology compete with conventional school
> activities. One consequence is that students can have very little time for
> 'school music' and may probably see it as a quaint musical sub-culture
> (Swanwick, 1999, pp. 36-37).

The foregoing indicates that there is a space for informal practices in school music. It also possibly creates a demand for flexibility from teachers of working in different genres.

2.8 Extra-curricular Music

Extra-curricular music is an important aspect of music in secondary schools. It brings music outside the classroom and into the overall school environment, as well as being a valuable experience for students. Pitts' (2007) article *Anything goes: a case study of extra-curricular musical participation in an English secondary school* examines students' attitudes to and experiences of their participation in a school music production in England. She investigated the involvement of students and staff on and off stage. The case study identified the personal growth, confidence, friendship building, and sense of belonging and musical development amongst participants. It also identified the short-term disadvantages of diverting attention from other school activities, the impact on the wider school community, the potential for school musical production participation to be continued into adult life, and its effects on community spirit. The music teacher's role of using her own school performing experiences to inspire her teaching was shown to be not essential. Also, sharing production responsibilities had the benefit of offering valuable peer role models to students, a strategy that Pitts claims potentially could be further developed into similar activities of this kind (Pitts, 2007).

> Initial investigations suggest that voluntary, intense musical experiences in
> the school years have a powerful and lasting impact: audience members at a
> chamber music festival looked back on strong memories of school
> performances with a mixture of gratitude at the opportunities they had been
> given and regret that they had not pursued them further (Pitts, 2007).

A later investigation by Pitts (2008a) showed that extra-curricular school music is part of a larger context alongside family and broader cultural exposure to music, in shaping students' future musical engagement. It also suggested that extra-curricular music is crucial for the independent musical development that is responsible for

students engaging with music outside the school gates. Pitts mentions the significant role of the teacher in shaping musical experiences, and acknowledges combining skills of performers, composers and educators to reflect the wider musical world.

According to Lamont et al. (2003), teachers should help students who show an interest in music beyond the classroom and show them that their contributions are important. Similarly to Pitts (2008a), they believe that extra-curricular activities are connected to social and cultural experiences. They also state that it develops one's confidence to take part in musical activities in the personal or social context that they choose, suggesting that extra-curricular music provides the backdrop to musical participation and independence after school life (Lamont et al., 2003).

> The current challenge for school music is to maximize the experience of all pupils during the statutory period, and to help all those who show an additional interest in music beyond the classroom to develop that, recognising the value of their own contributions, developing their individual skills through valuable social, cultural, and primarily musical experiences and activities, and providing the confidence to partake in musical activities in whatever personal or social context they choose (Lamont et al., 2003. p. 240).

On the other end of the spectrum, Swanwick (1999) highlights the dangers of school music groups such as choirs or bands supporting a single social function. He refers to the school music sub-culture in North America where emphasis is not on what is done, but how it is done, stressing the quality of musical engagement. He illustrates this with examples of high school bands performing at ball games with routine repertoire, costumes, and dance. He states that despite this, a lot of these students do not continue music when they graduate, putting it down to very directive instruction, repetitiveness of rehearsals and performances, and performing for the same social function (Swanwick, 1999, pp. 38-39). He suggests that music education systems need to recognize that musical engagement happens when it becomes 'meaningful' and 'authentic' to its receptors. He recommends a music class with smaller groups rather than large, where there is student interaction, decision-making and individual choice (Swanwick, 1999, pp. 38-40).

2.9 Delivery and resourcing of music

There are many variables that can influence the effective delivery of school music education. Abril and Gault (2008) investigated school principals' attitudes to

secondary school music in the USA, and found that the majority had a high sense of the value of the subject. However, they found that it was the music teachers themselves that made the biggest impact on the subject. Teachers' actions with students were perceived to have a strong impact on how music was viewed, with students and parents also having a positive impact. However, they found scheduling and budgeting to be major obstacles in music being successfully implemented (Abril & Gault, 2008).

Another factor that can influence teachers' delivery of music is the provision of resources and facilities. In England, Lamont's (2003) research showed that music teachers at both primary and secondary level feel resources are a problem and that they require 'more support and guidance to deliver music activities at school more effectively' (Lamont et al., 2003). However, Swanwick (1999) believes that resources are not necessarily essential for teaching music *musically*:

> As with the other arts, music is perceived to suffer relegation to the corners of the curriculum and towards the end of the lists of spending options. Even so, we have to be sure that we do not lose sight of the fact that, even in the best circumstances, something less than musical transactions may often be taking place. For I have seen music taught unmusically in conditions where time and resources were more than sufficient and I have seen music taught musically in unpromising circumstances. This is, of course, not an argument for starving music education of resources but recognition that resources alone are not sufficient (Swanwick, 1999, p. 44).

2.10 Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the class

Technology pervades society today, and young people are now exposed to it from a young age. Hodges (2001) states that 'The Internet will assume an increasingly important role in supporting the professional development of teachers as well as transforming the educational opportunities of children' (Hodges, 2001, p. 179). In Britain, much government spending in recent years has been aimed at the promotion of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in schools, and the British Educational Communications and Technology agency (BECTa) is 'playing a leading role in establishing ICT support materials for music teachers' (Hodges, 2001, p. 179). He discusses the environment of ICT in the music class:

> Importantly, the computer room is used in conjunction with activities undertaken in usual music classrooms, and allows pupils to work on their arrangements with immediate aural feedback. The computer laboratory cannot replace a traditional music-making environment, but can extend the teaching and learning possibilities available to pupils (Hodges, 2001, p. 179).

He also draws attention to the possibility of resources and funding affecting ICT resources in schools: 'The financial constraints that affect resourcing remain a concern' (Hodges, 2001, p. 179).

ICT was added to the National Curriculum in England in 1992 with mixed reactions. One criticism by secondary school teachers of the inclusion of ICT was that it might damage the community spirit of music. Some of the more positive opinions expressed by teachers included that it added another dimension to the subject, as well as it being a new learning experience for the teacher (Rainbow & Cox, 2006, pp. 371-372). In Ireland, Music Technology was added as an option to the Higher Level Leaving Certificate curriculum in 1996 as part of the performance section. In their examination, students are required to enter a sixteen bar score of a piece with four separate parts into a music software programme. This must be done with an appropriate level of speed, fluency and accuracy, and is carried out in the presence of an examiner. Swanwick (1999) draws attention to the dangers of students using computers to exercise notational-driven compositions:

> To be able to say in music only what we can write in notation negates both musical expressiveness and the musical discourse of students. We should be looking for technological progress to release teachers and students from drudgery, not increase it (Swanwick, 1999, pp. 108)

He does not disagree with information technology (IT) being part of music education. In fact, he feels it should be exploited even more and praises technology for its usefulness to music education, listing examples such as that it gives instant accompaniment, new tonal effects, combinations of sound, assistance in composition and performance, and the 'extension of individualized learning' with 'student autonomy' (Swanwick, 1999, p. 107).

According to Stowell and Dixon (2014), technologies such as *YouTube* (www.youtube.com), mobile phones and MP3 players are bridging the gap between

formal and informal music learning in the classroom, with the inclusion of students' favoured music in class activities. In their research, they investigated the implications that this finding carries for planning the use of technology in the delivery of music education. In particular, they found the Internet website *You Tube* beneficial to music classes. *YouTube* is a video sharing website that allows users to watch an extensive catalogue of videos posted by others, and enables users to upload videos of their own. For example, they state that it offers a broad range of music videos and other related sources, it provides teachers and students with spontaneous access to music videos, as well as yielding the potential to create and upload videos for analysis and performance practice purposes. Their research revealed that the informal music practices of the students in their study centred on pop-music videos, which were authorized, as well as third-party versions including 'with lyrics' videos (Stowell & Dixon, 2014). They warned against the rigid use of technology, but instead recommended a flexible approach, with a style of exploration and negotiation (Stowell & Dixon, 2014).

2.11 Conclusions

It is evident that music as a second-level subject is not without debate or controversy, nor is it without challenges for the teacher. Cox (1999) investigated the difficulties in secondary school teachers' day-to-day working lives in England. Examples of stresses and frustrations included inadequate resources, coping with constant noise, maintaining and developing extra-curricular music, the personal investment outside the school, physical demands, and the lack of recognition. However, rewards included contact with young people, love of subject matter, the communal nature of making music together, the emotions of performing, preparation for concerts, and the impact on the school community. Cox concluded that 'For several of my informants their overall contribution to the life of a school became a personal symbol of their creativity, a means of defining themselves' (Cox, 1999). Although there are many challenges for the secondary school music teacher, Cox's research also illustrates the intrinsic values and rewards that exist within the profession.

Although secondary school music education in Ireland has gone through many positive revisions in past decades, literature has highlighted the issues that still exist or have emerged mainly due to socio-cultural influences. Acknowledging the diverse

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music backgrounds and genres amongst students, altering teaching approaches accordingly, and the addition of ICT to music education are relatively recent issues that create new challenges for the music teacher. Swanwick (1999, p. 38) pointed out that music education becomes problematic when it is institutionalised and formalised in schools, a point which seems more critical in an increasingly diverse society.

International literature points to several issues that are inter-related, and may be summarised as follows. Firstly, the functions of music are different in music education and outside school, as perceived by students. Consequences arise out of this, such as the status of music as a subject that is being compromised. Indeed, revisions have been made to the curricula in both Ireland and England in recent decades with aims of giving all children access to musical opportunities. This has been done mainly with the broadening of musical genres and practices. However, attempts to make music more accessible to all second-level students have created implications. For example, some literature questioned how relevant popular music on the curricula is to students 'own music'. Also, concerns were raised with regard to informal learning approaches, and the challenges that this presents to the teacher whose style is rooted in an older system of teaching.

Due to these curriculum changes, there is now a wider diversity of students taking music as a school subject, which creates further issues for school-based music education. Varying levels of music experience amongst second-level students means that teachers must alter their teaching strategies accordingly to accommodate the needs of all students. Informal learning and peer learning are now being used in some schools as a way to approach these challenges, for both teachers and students.

In many countries, the literature showed that issues exist around the need for a continuum between primary and second-level music education, with arguments for and against. In Ireland, second-level teachers have shown a concern for the quality of music education at primary-level and the implications this has on second-level (Lane, 2005, 2, p. 73-74). Issues were raised as to how adequate primary-teacher training is, the lack of communication between teachers at both levels, and issues of low confidence amongst primary-level teachers.

Furthermore, issues have been raised with regard to the place of extra-curricular music in the context of school music, due to its instructive and 'repetitive' nature'. Finally, the resourcing and support for music within schools has been considered, as well as the personal investment of music teachers.

This study aims to investigate these issues in a case study of the delivery of the post-primary music programme, in the particular context of five schools in a single region in Ireland. The issues that will be investigated can be summarised as follows:

1. Considering the variable provision of music at primary-level in Ireland, how does the transition from primary to secondary school affect first-year music classes? What approaches do music teachers take to incorporate the musical experiences of incoming first-year students?

2. What are teachers' feelings towards the current Junior and Leaving Certificate curricula, and are the issues outlined in Lane's (2005) research prevalent amongst the teachers in this study? Also, how do they approach the three strands of composing, performing and listening?

3. How do teachers approach performance, in terms of the varying levels of practical music experience amongst students, as well as the ever-expanding range of preferences for musical genres? Do they incorporate informal (Green, 2002b, pp. 60-76) and peer-learning methods (Green, 2002b, pp. 76-83) as outlined by Green, and if so, are they beneficial approaches to these performance issues?

4. Literature has highlighted the benefits of ICT in the delivery of music education. In what ways are teachers employing the use of technology in the classroom, and is it beneficial?

5. It has been argued that the music content of the examination syllabi is far removed from music that is most popular amongst students today. How do teachers adhere to the curriculum whilst acknowledging and incorporating students' 'own' music? Also, what approaches do teachers take towards the diverse genre preferences specific to the Junior and Leaving Certificate syllabi?

6. Since first-year (and transition-year) music classes are not examination orientated, to what extent do teachers explore performance, students 'own'

music, and types of music projects? To what extent are informal learning practices employed?

7. What impact do extra-curricular musical activities have on students in terms of their musical experiences, social development, and on the spirit of the school community as a whole? What challenges and demands on the teacher do these activities create?

8. How does the school profile affect the delivery of a music programme, with regard to the Principal's attitude to the subject, the provision of extra-curricular music, and the availability of resources and facilities?

Chapter 3
Methodology

3.1 Aims and purposes of research

This study aims to examine the delivery of school music education in a sample of Irish post-primary schools. It is a case study in delivery of a school program based in five research sites in Cork city and Cork county towns, seeking to investigate the relationship between various issues and challenges in the delivery of secondary school music education. It aims to find whether issues surrounding delivery identified in the international literature are also issues and challenges in an Irish context, and to what extent. Also, it seeks to investigate how teachers respond to the challenges, and how teaching circumstances and strategies may alter these challenges.

3.2 Introduction

Qualitative research methods are 'designed to provide an in-depth description of a specific program, practice, or setting' (Mertens, 1998, p. 229). They involve a natural approach to the information, interpreting them 'in terms of the meanings people bring to them'. This is a type of research that is appropriate for this study. Cohen et al. (2011) state that qualitative research 'involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 537). They also add that qualitative data analysis depends heavily on interpretation, and often multiple interpretations may be made. Phillips (2008) defines qualitative data as 'A form of holistic study in which participants are observed in natural settings for their reactions to various experiences. Data are collected typically in the narrative, and analysis often involves triangulation of data' (Phillips, 2008, p. 360). He adds that information offered from a qualitative inquiry can help music teachers to 'think more deeply about how they are using music and how people learn best' (Phillips, 2008, p. 12).

A qualitative research strategy within the context of a case study can be used to analyse data in 'single or multiple cases'. With multiple or multi-site case studies, Merriam (1988) describes how findings are presented as individual cases, and then analysed in a 'cross-case' manner leading to 'generalisations'. Data is gathered to

learn 'as much about the contextual variables as possible that might have a bearing on the case [...] In so doing, one increases the potential for generalising beyond the particular case' (Merriam, 1988, p. 154). Cohen et al. also describe the potential for multiple-case designs for comparative purposes (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 291).

Merriam describes the selection of a case study approach because of 'an interest in understanding the phenomenon in a holistic manner' (Merriam, 1988, p. 153). The gathering of data for this research was aimed at reflecting the interpretations of the participants' experiences of music education. A multiple-case approach alongside qualitative research strategies was employed in this study. Mertens describes the use of multiple cases in qualitative research as strengthening the validity of the results (Mertens, 1998, p. 256).

3.3 Research design
The structure of this research was designed as follows:

1. Literature was studied to identify the current issues in secondary school music education in Ireland, as well as other countries such as the UK, Sweden, and the USA.

2. This led to two minor studies undertaken to gather additional information within an Irish context (one a survey of undergraduates' prior experience of music at second-level and the other a survey of primary teachers' experience of music teaching).

3. The content of the literature and the findings of the two minor studies informed the framework for the main study (interviewing four secondary school music teachers working in five schools about their teaching experiences).

4. Analysis of the findings of the in-depth interviews with music teachers.

3.4 Preliminary survey 1 – undergraduate music students
To prompt questions for the main study, I devised a questionnaire for undergraduate students in Cork Institute of Technology/Cork School of Music which was based on literature findings (see Appendix A). This data was used to formulate questions for the main study. I chose these students because they had been through the Irish schooling system, were likely to have strong opinions about their music education,

and were accessible considering I was researching in the same college. I sent the questionnaire to just over one hundred first to fourth-year undergraduate students in December 2011, acquiring their email addresses from the college. Questions were based on literature findings, and the information gathered would prompt questions for the main study.

I needed a research method that would be simple, direct, and not time-consuming for students to answer. Therefore, I conducted this stage of the research with online questionnaires. The questions were structured as closed questions, to provide answers that could be charted easily and quickly made comparable. The questions had various response modes, mostly *multiple choice*, to gain as wide a perspective as possible on different areas of respondents' music education. Cohen et al. state that 'To try to gain some purchase on complexity, the researcher can move towards multiple choice questions, where the range of choices is designed to capture the likely range of responses given to statements' (Cohen et al., 2011, pp. 383-384). Another method of answering was *rank ordering*, which asks respondents to 'identify their priorities. This enables a relative degree of preference, priority, intensity, etc. to be charted' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 385).

The questionnaires were answered anonymously. They were sent to over one hundred students, with twenty students replying. Thirteen of the respondents were female, and seven male. Although the sample was small, the data was useful as a pilot study. The online questionnaire processed the data automatically, into bar and pie charts (see Appendix A).

3.5 Preliminary survey 2 – the primary school music issue
It was evident from the literature that primary teacher training was a major issue in formal music education. Lane's (2005) research showed that second-level teachers believed the variable quality of music education in primary schools had a negative impact on second-level music. McCarthy (1999a) discussed issues of teacher training and continuum. O'Callaghan (2003) highlighted the 'temporary' nature of music teaching at primary level. Also, Cox (Rainbow & Cox, 2006, p. 372) found a large percentage of primary level teachers to be unsatisfied with their teacher training in music. Conversations with friends and family members who are primary school

teachers also gave me some insight into these issues. They spoke in particular about the inconsistent quality of teacher training of music, as well as the lack of confidence amongst teachers who had no formal music education. Several felt that music was the most problematic subject to teach in primary school. Therefore, I conducted a second preliminary survey to elaborate on these issues. These findings were to substantiate issues in the literature and were not cross-examined as part of the multiple-case study. Therefore, the survey, with few questions, was sent to a small number of primary school teachers.

I sent out twenty-five surveys, of which seventeen were completed and returned. Some were sent by email, and others were delivered personally in May 2012. Fourteen of the respondents were female and three were male. Seven teach in the same school in Cork City, six in the same school in a suburban Cork county school, three in different schools in Dublin city, and one in a rural school in a southeast Irish county. The respondents were each teaching between three and fifteen years.

The surveys I sent out were short and concise, and sent to a small *sample* of primary school teachers. 'Researchers must take sampling decisions early in the overall planning of a piece of research. Factors such as expense, time and accessibility frequently prevent researchers from gaining information from the whole population. Therefore they often need to be able to obtain data from a smaller group or subset of the total population in such a way that the knowledge gained is representative of the total population (however defined) under study' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 143).

Since this was preliminary research for the main study, the small sample was intended to represent the characteristics of the larger population of primary level teachers. Phillips describes this sample process as a 'representative sample' (Phillips, 2008, p. 156). Although the sample was small, the distinctiveness of the respondents' areas provided a representation of the wider population. '[...] a corollary of the sympathy between qualitative research and non-probability sampling is that there are no clear rules on the size of the sample in qualitative research; size is informed by "fitness for purpose" '(Cohen et al., 2011, p. 161).

Phillips describes surveys as telling us 'how things are but not "why" or what caused them to be' (Phillips, 2008, p. 155). The survey questions were short and open ended, giving the respondents freedom to leave opinions and comments. Therefore, the intention was that the questionnaires would provide rich descriptions, and therefore, rich data. The questions aimed to investigate whether the sample of primary teachers felt that they were confident teaching music to their students, and if they didn't, what the reasons were. Was it because they had no personal music experience, and/or had teacher training not prepared them well enough? I also wanted to find out if they taught a basic instrument such as tin-whistle or recorder to their students, if they were involved in extra-curricular music activities within their school, and whether or not the extent of their own musical training (or indeed lack of) impacted their ability to deliver on both of these. Finally, I briefly asked about which aspects of school-music students enjoyed the most, and which they enjoyed the least (see Appendix B).

3.6 Main Study

The focus of the main study was to investigate issues that were raised in the literature and in the two minor studies. To do this, I conducted semi-structured individual interviews with four second-level teachers. These were carried out during the months of May and June 2012, which was towards the end of the school year. On the whole, I hoped it would illustrate the challenges that apparently exist within formal music education, and the challenges that are experienced by this group of teachers.

3.6.1 Data collection

Cohen et al. (2011) describe the use of interviews in research as marking 'a move away from seeing human subjects as simply manipulable and data as somehow external to individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans, often through conversations' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 409). They continue, that interviews enable participants to 'discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view'. They also describe the flexibility of interviews for collecting data, how they can provide space for spontaneity, and the level of control the interviewer can have over how in-depth he/she wants the responses to be (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 409).

My research method comprised semi-structured interviews with the teachers. I had a list of topics I wanted to raise, but I was prepared to go "off-track" at times to allow the teachers to raise any points of which I was not aware. This would also give the teachers some freedom to express any personal feelings they had with regard to their job. I interviewed each teacher participant separately at informal locations and atmospheres. It was intended that the combination of the semi-structured interview format and the informal, comfortable setting would enable a personal conversation between the respondent and myself to understand the full scale of the issues. Also, it was important that a sense of trust would be built to allow personal expression.

Mertens (1998) describes this type of unstructured interview as allowing the respondent to answer questions freely during the interview while expressing his or her own feelings. She also states that the goal is to build a rapport that enables a human-to-human relationship with the respondents, allowing the interviewer to understand their perspectives (Mertens, 1998, p. 387)

3.6.2 Interview questions and locations

The interview questions were designed in accordance with the literature findings and the two minor studies. When describing the various purposes of interviews, Cohen et al. say that interviews may be used to 'test hypotheses or to suggest new ones; or as an explanatory device to help identify variables and relationships (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 411). However, the intention was also that the questions could delve further into issues. Therefore, although I had a list of questions to ask the participants, I was aware that my questions could be adapted during the interview, as I found out more about the teacher and the particular school context.

In accordance with qualitative research methods, I interviewed each participant separately in a variety of informal locations. These included homes, school staff rooms, and a coffee shop. Phillips (2008) highlights the benefits of a natural setting for qualitative research: 'In this way the researcher can interact with the individual or place and be highly involved in the actual experiences of the participant' (Phillips, 2008, p. 83).

3.6.3 Selection of participants

I chose four participants only for my main study, so the data would be focused and detailed, and to keep the information in context with the size of the body of research. Cohen et al. (2011) state that 'qualitative data often focus on smaller numbers of people [...] yet the data tend to be rich and detailed' (Cohen, 2011, p. 538).

I selected the participants through the connections of college staff and they were chosen mainly based on the diversity of schools in which they taught. However, the diversity in their schools in aspects such as gender, location and type reflected issues and challenges in second-level education in this particular region of Ireland. Phillips (2008) states that 'When participants cannot be randomly assigned to groups, the groups may be unequal in their respective abilities. This also makes it difficult to generalize to a population' (Phillips, 2008, p. 162). Therefore in this sense, it was valid to infer that the participants and their respective schools were sufficiently distinctive in their profiles to represent the wider population of the Munster region.

Three of the participants were female, and one was male. This balance of gender represented the ratio of female to male teachers in Irish education. Currently in Irish schools, at both primary and second level, there is an imbalance between male and female teachers, with the latter being more numerous. In 2007, it was reported that since 2003 the gender ratios of female to male teachers in all second-level schools in Ireland was approximately sixty to forty (Teachers Union of Ireland News, 2007).

It should be noted that one of the teachers, named Helena for the purposes of this study, teaches in two schools, with contrasting school profiles. She teaches in school B after school hours, and in school C during school hours [See Table 1].

School	Teacher	Location	Student Gender	Size	Type
A	John	Cork County	Male	600	Religious
B	Helena	Cork County	Male	300	Religious
C	Helena	Cork County	Mixed	200	Vocational
D	Julie	Cork City	Mixed	300	Vocational
E	Anne	Cork City	Mixed	600	Community

Table 1: Details of schools in survey

3.6.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in the research included using a valid research design, selecting an appropriate sample, obtaining fully informed consent, and guarding the privacy and confidentiality of the research participants (Mertens, 1998, p. 34). Cohen et al. (2011) also draw attention to the ethical obligations of the researcher to respect the principles of non-maleficence, loyalties and beneficence, confidentiality, as well as *primum non nocere* [do no harm to participants] (Cohen et al. 2011, p. 542). The study participants fully considered and adhered to these principles. The Head of Department in the institution where I researched obtained the contact details of each participant, along with their permission to be contacted. Each willingly agreed to participate. The interviews were recorded using an audio-recorder, with the permission and agreement of each participant. All participants' names have been changed, as have the identities of the schools.

3.7 Data analysis considerations

Each of the four interviews was transcribed verbatim. Cohen et al. (2011) consider the transcription of interview data for analysis, and note that it 'can provide important detail and an accurate verbatim record of the interview' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 537).

After conducting and transcribing each of the interviews, it became apparent that there were common themes and causes of explanation. Therefore, the responses in the interviews were collated and organised according to specific categories to be analysed, in accordance with *coding*. Cohen et al. (2011) describe coding as enabling 'the researcher to identify similar information. More than this, it enables the

researcher to search and retrieve the data in terms of those items that bear the same code. Codes can be regarded as an indexing or categorizing system, akin to the index of a book, which gives all the references to that index entry in the book, and the data can be stored under the same code, with an indexed entry for that code' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 559). They add that codes can be defined to be specific or more general.

Also, coding was most suitable to the analysis of interview data, considering that the bodies of text from the transcriptions were large in size. Cohen et al. (2011) describe the helpfulness of coding for qualitative data, in terms of employing the analytical system 'partially as a way of reducing what is typically data overload from qualitative data' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 428).

According to coding, I created categories based on recurring themes that appeared in the interviews. These themes were:

- Music as a school subject
- Primary school issues
- First-year issues
- Examination and curriculum issues
- Performance
- Extra-curricular music
- Challenges for the teacher

Once these themes were identified and reviewed, they had to be compared and analysed with qualitative multiple-case study techniques. Narrative approaches to data analysis were considered most suitable for this stage of the research, considering that the data gathering was interview based. According to Phillips (2008), 'the most common approach to presenting the [qualitative] data analysis is to use a narrative form' (Phillips, 2008, p. 88). Cohen et al. (2011) describe this approach as giving an 'added dimension of realism, authenticity, humanity, personality, emotions, views and values in a situation' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 553). Quotations from the participants were often included to highlight a particular issue, with interpretive commentary.

'Quotations are often chosen for their ability to crystallize or exemplify an issue or example really well' (Cohen et al., 2011. p. 553).

Chapter 4

Analysis

This analysis of research findings aims to show how the four teacher participants deliver a secondary school music curriculum in an era of diverse musical tastes amongst students, who also have varying types and levels of experience in music practice and knowledge. Accommodating this diversity, whilst adhering to the curriculum, presented a number of issues for the teachers, which are identified as themes. The backdrop to the themes is that whilst the participating teachers comply with the curriculum, they simultaneously strive to make music meaningful to the individual student. This is done mainly through informal and peer learning methods for instrumental instruction, with contemporary material employed in listening, composition and performing activities, and by bringing music outside the classroom in the form of extra-curricular activities.

The study focuses on five schools – each with similarities and differences in terms of their profiles and environments. Many challenges for music as a classroom subject and for the teachers were identified along the way. The challenges that were identified can be summarised as follows:

- The uptake of music as a secondary school subject is low, and is vulnerable compared to other subjects;
- A variety of ability ranges, musical backgrounds, music literacy levels and genres are presented in every classroom, and this has to be dealt with by the teachers - therefore showing that diversity will always be a feature of the music classroom, and teachers need to deal with the diversity;
- Praxial music was evident in the schools, having meaning for the student, whereby music-making in the classroom was prioritised;
- Teachers must encompass a range of teaching strategies from traditional musicianship to informal learning;
- The Junior and Leaving certificate curricula lack continuity in a number of technical areas;
- Extra-curricular music demands time and versatility of the teachers.

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As this is a case study in delivery of music education in secondary schools in an Irish region, it is useful to examine the findings under headings on the basis of progression through school, as the principal stages of progression form a natural structure for teachers to share their ideas. A picture of the delivery of the program as seen through teachers' perspective in each of the schools is presented. Some themes such as the status of music as a subject, and performance, occur throughout the analysis. General notions of a school's distinctive profile and the position of music within it (4.1 below) preface the findings, which are grouped in four sections (4.2 - 4.4) as follows:

4.1 Introduction – The research sites: Schools

    4.1.1 School profile / environment

4.2 Music as a secondary-school subject

    4.2.1 Music as a minority subject

    4.2.2 Timetabling of first-year classes

4.3 Students' backgrounds / prior musical learning

    4.3.1 Primary school issues

    4.3.2 Approaches to student diversity

    4.3.3 First-year activities

4.4 The curriculum and examinations

    4.4.1 Junior and Leaving Certificate - the three strands

    4.4.2. Performance

    4.4.3 Genre

    4.4.4 ICT and musicianship in the curriculum

4.5 Outside the curriculum

    4.5.1 Extra-curricular music

    4.5.2 Transition year

    4.5.3 Challenges for teachers

    4.5.4 Facilities and Resources

Each section is briefly prefaced by the findings of preliminary study 1, and at times this is incorporated within the discussion of the main study. Following this, cases of the five schools in the main study are presented individually, and then cross-examined leading to generalisations of the above issues.

4.1 Introduction – The research sites: Schools
4.1.1 School profile / environment

Each secondary school has its own individual profile. Characteristics of a school include gender of students; whether particular subjects such as sport and/or music is a feature; if the school is academically high achieving; and the area in which the school is situated. Qualities such as these, together, make a school unique. Music has a specific status within a school, both as a school subject and as a cultural activity. Although it is a minority subject (see 4.2.1), the extent of extra-curricular activities and the profile of music can create a sense of value for the school. It can also make a school more attractive - for example, if it offers instrumental lessons, a school musical, and/or a school band of some sort. However, the profile of a school and the variables within it can affect music as a subject with either positive or negative consequences.

In School A, sports plays a major role. This is likely due to the fact that it is an all-male school in a country location. Also, its music teacher, John, points out that the Principal is extremely supportive of sport in the school. John claims that school funding is allocated mostly towards sporting activities, and none towards music. This is evident in the lack of music facilities and resources in the school, which can,
in turn, affect the cultural aspect of music. For example, very few extra-curricular music activities occur. This will be discussed in more detail at a later stage. The focus on sport also creates minor difficulties for music as a subject, for example, when students regularly have to leave in the middle of classes for matches or extra training, which can be frustrating for the teacher. John points out that students cannot leave other classes to do extra practice for performance examinations - therefore we can assume that music is given less priority than sport in this school.

School B where Helena teaches has a similar profile. It has male students only, sport is a major feature, and it is situated in a country area. However, she does not face the

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same difficulties as John in terms of sports affecting student attendance and commitment. Music classes are after school hours, the majority of the students take instrumental lessons outside school, they are interested and committed, and Helena perceives parental encouragement and support to be good. Music was introduced in September 2010 due to a demand from parents. It is worth mentioning that the majority of students in school B are from privileged backgrounds. No extra-curricular activities take place.

Helena also teaches in school C. However, its profile is in contrast to schools A and B. It is a mixed-gender community school, and the majority of students are from under-privileged backgrounds. Students have very little music experience. Music as a subject was also only introduced in September 2010, although Helena does not specify why. The Principal is supportive of music and is keen to raise its profile as a new subject. For example, when Helena started teaching there in 2010 he agreed to her request to produce a school musical.

School D has a very similar school profile to school C. It is also a mixed-gender community school, students are mostly from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and have almost no formal music education upon entering first year. It receives government funding due to its status as a disadvantaged school. The Principal is very supportive of music as a subject and is aware of the benefits it can offer students from less-affluent backgrounds. Its locality is the only apparent difference, being situated in the north outskirts of Cork city.

School E has a more varied profile, in terms of its locality, income and size. Like school D, it is located in the north outskirts of Cork city and is mixed-gender. However, students attend from a mixture of relatively far-reaching areas around north Cork city and county, which is referred to as a 'catchment area'. Like school D, the Principal is supportive of music, and music stands on equal ground with other subjects such as sport.

4.2 Music as a secondary school subject

4.2.1 Music as a minority subject

The literature suggested that before the revision of the current Leaving Certificate curriculum in 1996, music was in sharp decline in Irish schools (Lane, 2005, 1, p. 47). Although curriculum developments to make the subject more diverse have been positively received by teachers, and have attracted more students, this study showed that music is still a vulnerable subject in the schools in this study. While the teacher participants felt that the timetabling of subjects created problems for music as a choice subject, they also expressed a concern for music being in 'competition' with other more 'useful' subjects. These factors affected class sizes, and required the teachers to form teaching strategies to make music a more 'popular' subject.

A major concern for music teachers in secondary schools is to maintain class sizes, since schools require a certain number of students for each class. Music is not a mandatory subject for state examinations; rather, it is a subject that is chosen by students. Therefore, a certain level of interest in music needs to exist if student uptake is to occur. This can be affected by many factors such as the profile of music in a school, continuum from primary to second-level, parental encouragement, timetabling, as well as strategies employed by the teacher. Each of these issues will be addressed in this section.

In preliminary survey 1, the undergraduate students reported having 'healthy' class sizes in their secondary school music classes (see Appendix A). This correlates with the class sizes of the schools in the main study, where all of the interviewed teachers, except John, stated that their music classes were well proportioned. Downey's (2009) research showed that the revised current curriculum has led to a rise in the number of second-level students studying music. However, it was also evident in this study that although music has become more popular as a subject, there are variables that can affect class sizes, and teachers must continually make efforts to maintain student uptake.

John (school A) stated that if a small number of students choose music as a Leaving Certificate option, the school cannot afford to offer it as a subject for that year-group. He is of the opinion that the decision can be influenced by the Principal: 'It boils

down to the Principal. If the Principal can swing it with the numbers and the resources he has available, then he will'. Abril and Gault's (2008) research supported this idea that a Principal can have an impact on music in secondary school. Music faces problems as a choice subject in John's school. At the time of the interview in May 2012, there were not enough students to run a fifth-year music class. The Principal was trying to work around the problem by introducing a mandatory transition year music module with the aim of increasing interest in the subject. John adds that sometimes class sizes have little to do with student choices; the size of a given class is often strongly affected by other variables in the school:

> I have no LC class this year. I had last year, I will have next year and the year after. It's up and down. It's nothing to do with the kid's choices. Say if twenty third-years keep it on, even if nearly all twenty want to keep it on you might not be able to put on a class for them. It's shocking but that's just the state of the place.

It was evident that government spending cutbacks on education in recent years have also affected class sizes for music, in terms of teachers' allocated working hours being reduced. In John's school, these cutbacks particularly affected students continuing music after Junior Certificate. At the time of the interview, it was a possibility that his transition year music module would not continue because of this. Also, in school C, Helena's teaching hours were decreased by four hours.

Helena (schools B and C) regards music as a minority subject. She feels that unless the school has a high student density, music will always be 'fighting for numbers', and that music suffers in this respect more than other subjects. She also considers parental influence to have an impact. Other subjects are deemed more 'useful' by parents, whereas music can be more 'peripheral'. She believes another general influence on class size is students choosing a subject based on the teacher rather than the subject: 'Teachers have to work hard and can't afford to sit back.' It will become more evident throughout the chapter the efforts that teachers make to maintain class sizes, and promote the profile of music in their schools. This permeates their activities throughout the years of secondary school, and becomes an issue again particularly at fourth/transition year (see 4.5.2).

4.2.2 Timetabling of first-year classes

Schools have varying timetabling policies for first-year music. In some schools students choose their subjects before they enter first year. In others, students take all subjects in first year and choose their subjects at the end of the year, or take subjects as short-term modules in first year. Different systems can create different challenges for the music teacher, and can affect the retention of students.

In John's school (school A), the policy is that all first-year students must take music as an eight-week module. Anne's first-year students have one music class a week throughout the year. Both mentioned that this limits them in what they can teach due to time constraints. Julie's students also have just one forty-minute class per week. However since Julie's students are entering with prior music experience and knowledge, she feels one class is sufficient. Also, it is guaranteed that these students will study music for their Junior Certificate at least. In School C, first-year students have three forty-minute classes per week. This is ideal since these students have little music experience.

The status of music versus other subjects can also be an issue. Helena feels that music is a minority subject, and if a school is not careful with timetabling, fewer students will choose music. Last year in school C, music was 'up against' metalwork, but she felt that it worked out well for music as a choice subject. However, this year, students will have to choose either business or music, and Helena thinks that fewer students will choose music in this case. John (school A) explained that sometimes choosing music as an examination subject can have less to do with students' first-year music experience, and more to do with their values.

> It's basically a values thing… it might be nothing to do with aptitude or the course. It's just they might see it more valuable to do business than music, despite the fact that they might be better at music…

It is evident that how music is offered as a choice subject in first year, alongside other subjects, can affect student retention. If forced to choose, a student may select other more 'useful' subjects over music. Also, timetabling policies dictate how much time a teacher has with a first-year class throughout the year, which may have negative consequences for classes with students who have less music experience.

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All teachers were agreed on the idea that music occupies a precarious position within the school timetable, and is under a constant threat of diminishing numbers. The variables are generally outside the control of the teacher, since they relate to student choices, parental values of subjects, a Principal's attitudes towards music as a subject, timetabling, and directives on classroom numbers.

4.3 Students' backgrounds / prior musical learning

The experience in first year in secondary school is a critical factor in a student's decision to study music as a subject and retain it to the Junior Certificate examination. It is among the many challenges that the teachers in this study face at this stage of secondary school, particularly with regard to 'prior musical learning'. This section traces this issue.

4.3.1 Primary school issues

Primary schools in Ireland are the foundation of our education system, and the quality of education received there can influence students' secondary school achievements. Literature has suggested that issues exist at primary level music such as teacher training and confidence amongst teachers to deliver the subject. Both the main study and two minor studies indicated that primary school music teaching is mainly experiential, and there is an inconsistency in the development of literacy skills and instrumental ability. This in turn creates challenges for the secondary school teacher in first year. Lane (2005) researched second-level music teachers' feelings about attitudes to primary school music education, and asked the question: 'Is a satisfactory curriculum for secondary school music possible without a coherent and thorough primary school education?' The majority disagreed (Lane, 2005, 1, p. 18).

Preliminary survey 1 reflected the variety of ways in which primary school music is effective (see Appendix A). 70% were taught an instrument by an internal or external teacher. Almost 50% reported having had melodic instruments available to them, and 35% had percussive instruments available. Availability of extra-curricular activities, namely choirs, school productions and schools bands ranged between 30% and 50%. However, only 10% were taught musicianship or literacy skills. When asked if their primary school music experience positively shaped their attitude towards music, 50% disagreed.

However, the interviews with the teachers in the main study provide a more complex view of this topic. I questioned the teachers' perceptions with regard to the quality of music in primary schools. Their comments varied: John (school A) found that most students gain very little music literacy skills or knowledge at school, but mainly musical experiences such as choral singing: 'most of them, they'd have no idea of sol-fa, they'd have done nothing academic at all, it would be just purely experiential'. This was highlighted in preliminary survey 2, of primary teachers, with the majority stating that they relied heavily on song singing as the main source of music education (see Appendix B). Many of the primary teachers felt that it is the activity which students enjoy the most. While John does not argue with the advantages of music being experiential in primary school, he believes that students need to have a certain level of explanation as to 'how music works', even at a young age.

Julie found that there was very little music practice occurring in school D's 'feeder' primary school. Students in her school mainly come from the same primary school, rather than from a range of schools around the area. In an effort to improve the standard of music there, she has been doing voluntary work for the last six years in the primary school. Twice a week, she teaches basic musicianship, as well as some choral singing. She feels that she has started to see the benefits, as a higher proportion of students choose music as a subject in first year. McCarthy (1999a) drew attention to the 'pivotal' role of the teacher in achieving continuity, and the importance of communication between teachers at each level (McCarthy, 1999a). Julie's effort to maintain a connection with the feeder primary school is an example of the 'pivotal' role suggested by McCarthy, and its success is evident in the increased number of students choosing music in Julie's first-year classes. However, this effort entails unpaid work by the teacher, which she is willing to do to develop the level of music experience amongst students in her secondary school.

Helena's first-year students (schools B and C) come from a wide range of primary schools, and their music skills and experiences vary. One local primary school in particular has a Principal who is very interested in brass instruments. With school funding, he purchased a range of brass instruments for the school. These instruments are loaned to the students, with external instrumental teachers hired privately to give lessons. He also runs a student concert every year. Some students in school B

continue lessons there after entering secondary school. Helena pointed out that most students who play an instrument continue to school B rather than school C. Students who go to school C are not interested in keeping their lessons up, and Helena feels it is because these students are more difficult in terms of behaviour, with many from difficult backgrounds, and so instruments may not be loaned out to them as readily. Also, other students in school C would not play classical instruments, and Helena suggests that this is because students are less accepting of them:

> They have to have experience of things before, and you can't change a culture overnight. You have to just take your time. And no, it probably wouldn't be 'cool' to be playing trumpet in [school C]...

This is clearly an example of school culture dictating practice. Students' lack of interest in classical instruments dictates what instruments a teacher uses with the students, as well as the genre of music he/she works within. This, and the efforts that the teachers make to accommodate the instruments that students favour, will be discussed below.

Anne also teaches in a school where students come from a wide range of locations (school E). Like Helena, she finds the level of music experience amongst first-year students depends on which primary school they attended. For example, one feeder primary school provides instrumental lessons in piano, guitar, and violin. The same primary school also has a choir. A second feeder primary school has a traditional school band including tin whistles, harmonicas, guitars and snare drums. However, the teacher who directed the band retired several years ago, and Anne has observed that, although they still have the school band, music activity in the school has declined since, with not as many instruments being taught. This is an example of the uneven provision of music education that exists in primary schools as highlighted by O'Callaghan (2003). Anne also mentioned that due to the 'temporary' nature of music lessons in primary schools, students often forget what they have been taught by the time they enter first year: 'A lot of them were only taught this in fourth or fifth-class, so by the time they get to you, a lot of them would have forgotten it'. O'Callaghan (2003) drew attention to the dangers of having a small number of staff in primary schools involved in teaching music, warning that students may see it as a discipline that not everyone can do.

In terms of literacy skills, Anne found that not only was there a varied standard of reading skills amongst first-year students, but also there were also varied reading systems. Students displayed knowledge of reading notation through tonic solfa, letter names, or numbers. This variation of reading methods mainly applied for the tin whistle and recorder. Often, students who could read from the stave learned through private tuition rather than in primary school. However, she acknowledged that it could be difficult for teachers to teach an entire class to read from the stave, and that music literacy appears not to be a priority with primary school educators.

First-year students in School C also display a low level of literacy skills, apart from a handful of students who learn piano privately. Again, this points to a need by the teacher to start from scratch with the rudiments of music. Some would have played the tin-whistle in primary school, but they would have also have learned to play either by letters or numbers. However, in school B, many students learned to read music in primary school (after school hours brass instrumental lessons) or through private piano lessons. Helena stresses that their skills were learned outside the primary school classroom. Only one student in Helena's current first-year class in School B cannot read music. This is in stark contrast to School C, and we cannot help questioning the effects of varying household income levels on private instrumental tuition.

Julie's students (school D) did not learn to read music in primary school, which she feels influences her teaching methods. They had no formal training, and very few were able to play an instrument. She also mentioned that there 'would be very little room for practising at home'. However, she perceives a lot of 'raw talent' amongst the students, referring to innate musical talent that is undeveloped but has potential. She aims to develop this talent amongst students. Helena and Anne (schools C and E) also spoke about their students displaying 'raw talent'.

Anne had thoughts about the Irish music education system in primary schools. When asked about what changes she would like to see, she mentioned the system in England, where all students receive musicianship training and instrumental lessons in primary school. Few students in Ireland enter secondary school with such experience.

It is apparent that music education in the primary schools mentioned above focuses on the experiential area of learning. The teachers were very concerned that very little attention is given to cognitive skills such as music literacy, which are essential for the secondary school music examinations. They see music literacy as very important for the area of composition on the exam syllabus. They are dealing with the uneven provision of music learning in primary school, and are playing 'catch-up' and levelling out the different ability levels in first year (see 4.3.2). Students' instrumental abilities are also varied as to. It was shown that the level of interest the primary school Principal has in music could have a considerable effect on the offering of instrumental lessons. The advantages of contact between schools at both levels was highlighted in school D by Julie, who teaches literacy skills in her 'feeder' primary school, bringing up the standard of music for her future first-year students.

4.3.2 Approaches to student diversity

McCarthy (1999a) highlighted the issue of continuity between primary and post-primary music education. Without a solid music foundation at primary-level, a flow of continuity to secondary school is difficult. We have already established the varied levels of music experience gained before first year. How do teachers assess the musical knowledge of students when they enter secondary school? Teachers can take different approaches with new students, as outlined in Mills' (1996) research. However, all of the teachers in this study used the 'start from scratch' approach. This is possibly due to the varying levels of previous experience in music, the lack of proper music education in primary school, as well as the contradictory teaching content. Marshall and Hargreaves (2008) mentioned the benefits of this approach, which they claim challenges students to adapt to their new environment.

> Yes I start from scratch… most of them would have done nothing academic at all, it would be just purely experiential (John, school A).

> They have good experience, so I wouldn't knock it by any means… but you do have to start again (Helena, school C).

> It's like the start of a brand new subject when they come here (Julie, school D).

> Yes, I find the best way when they come in to me is to get them straight into the notation (Anne, school E).

Anne was the only teacher who mentioned making some connection with whatever method of music notation the students had learned in primary school – for example, reading from the stave, or reading by numbers or letters on the tin-whistle. 'I find the best way when they come in to me is to get them straight into the notation, and try to make a connection between the two.' Since her school takes in students from a wide area around north Cork city and county, there is a broad range of abilities. She must however start from scratch for those who have little or no music knowledge. She adds that students who receive private music tuition can find first-year work easy: 'I could have two or three that would be going to the Cork School of Music, and they'd be sitting in front of you saying "Oh my God, this is too easy!" But you have to, you have to pitch it to them all.'

Anne's school takes a direct approach to mixed abilities, which is a contentious issue within schooling. It is interesting to hear her views on the operation of streaming within a music class. There are five music classes in first year, each having one forty-minute period per week. Students are streamed from the time they enter first year based on their assessment tests, and they are further streamed in the following January. Previously, students were not streamed, and all classes had mixed abilities. However, based on this, the staff felt that they could get more out of the students if they were streamed. Their opinion is that this will drive the top class forward while bringing the bottom classes up. As Anne explains, this can help the issue of mixed musical abilities.

> In one way, it's easier because they're streamed – you're dealing with the same level. But you are teaching the same course to all of them. With the weaker class, rather than by rote, you'd teach them 'Every Green Bus Drives Fast', and then you'd make up different exercises. Whereas the top stream, they say 'ok, these are my notes; ok, we know them'. They pick it up much faster, so you'd have to make it a little bit more fun.

However, she feels that the students in the top stream do not necessarily have more musical ability, and those in the weaker streams are not always musically weaker. She added that when classes are streamed again after their Christmas tests, and the class members change, the dynamics within the class could shift. Sometimes students become more reserved which affects what she can do with the class. For example, one recent first-year class was confident at the start about performing, so she could do more with them such as singing in parts and ostinatos. However, after the class was

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streamed in January, the students became more subdued and were not as eager to perform. Other teachers also noticed this change of atmosphere in their classes. This suggests that regrouping is not always satisfactory, perhaps indicating the social nature of music.

Julie (school D) said almost all students in her first-year class would have no 'training'. Therefore, her students are almost all on a similar level of previous experience, and it is 'like starting a new subject with them'. However, she feels that the 'raw talent' amongst the students gives her plenty of scope with which to work. In school C, Helena's students also have little musical knowledge. However, where some students are academically stronger than others, she pairs them with the weaker students for group activities. In school B, all of her students receive private music tuition outside school, so there is no issue with varying levels of previous experience.

4.3.3 First-year activities

The interviews with the teachers in this study gave an indication of the variety of approaches taken with first-year students. Teachers do not have to follow a specific curriculum in first year; however, what do teachers prioritise, given the diverse backgrounds of incoming students? Whilst being attentive to the development of literacy and instrumental skills, teachers give a broad introduction to music, with performance and listening as high priorities.

Since John's students (school A) take music as an obligatory eight-week module, he is very efficient with his class time. He teaches all students the tin-whistle, and works with it throughout the eight-week time frame. Since students have learned to read notation using various methods in primary school, he starts off with two lines (for example, B and G), and gradually builds up to the five-line stave whilst discussing features of the lines and spaces. He also aims to give students a taste of what the examination would be like should they continue music for their Junior Certificate, and gives an introduction to performing, listening and composing. At the end of the module he gives the class a written test in the style of a Junior Certificate question based on what they have learned, as well as a practical test. John says 'I want to give them a genuine case of what it would be like in the Junior Cert.'

As mentioned, Anne (school E) immediately makes a connection with the method of reading students have learned in primary school. She then moves to the stave, adding rhythm exercises and listening skills. Because of varying abilities, some students pick up their skills quicker than others. Anne also teaches the recorder, starting off with Irish airs that would be familiar to them. Since Anne only has first-year students for one class a week, she faces difficulties teaching the instrument with so little time. Therefore she must minimize class-time teaching the instrument.

Although she is limited with time, Anne covers many genres of music in first year. She divides the year into five or six segments, and focuses on a different genre of music in each: jazz music in October when the annual Cork Jazz Festival takes place, Christmas music in December, film music around the release of a major film such as the *Harry Potter* series, choral singing during the period of the annual Cork International Choral Festival, as well as Irish music leading up to St Patrick's Day. She aims to present music within genres that students are already familiar with to make a connection with their personal preferences for a certain genre/genres of music. As they are listening, she sometimes has the class practicing musicianship skills simultaneously, for example with some basic sight clapping or dictation. Here, she is extracting elements from the activity to simultaneously develop musicianship skills.

Julie (school D) also spends time on various genres with her first-year students. Her priority is to teach the class about 'what's going on in the music world'. She exposes them to different styles of music, and aims to instil a sense of value in them for all styles, no matter what their musical preferences are. She explains why she gives importance to teaching the class about styles in first year:

> Definitely a big thing would be for me that they know what's going on out
> in the real world, because if they don't know what's currently happening at
> the moment I can't bring them back then to years ago when their set works
> were composed. So they have to have a good understanding...[of] current
> music and going through the different styles of current music.

Julie feels that students in her school favour practical activities the most. Therefore she starts immediately with performance in first year. However, the majority of students have no instrumental or musical experience. So how does she bring them up to performance examination standard? Instruments such as the guitar, bass guitar,

drums and piano are available to the students, as well as recording equipment. She feels these instruments suit her student's backgrounds more than classical instruments. She also believes it is important to allow each child to express their 'own' style of music. Therefore, she tries to make a connection with the genre of music her students are most interested in.

> We would just take a song that would currently be in the charts that week, and I would give them a simplified version of it. They would learn how to sing and play it. And then I'd be very conscious that the following week I would change them around, so people would learn a couple of instruments. It's always easier to start with something that they know.

All students learn basic skills to play the guitar, bass guitar and drums, with some choosing to learn the piano also. Julie taught herself how to play the basics on these instruments in order to teach the students. This demanded instrumental versatility from her since she trained in the classical tradition, and this versatility is necessary in her teaching context, where classical instruments are not relevant to the students. She doesn't assume that the students will practise at home, as a classical instrumental teacher might, and has them play their instruments during class time. Students are also encouraged to spend their spare time practising in school, for example during lunch and break times; 'There wouldn't be room for practising at home. They learn the hard way that the only practice they get done for their practical is in school'. The majority of Julie's students would not be able to read music, so she teaches them to play by rote. This way, they can reach a very high level of performance for examinations without having to learn to read notation. She feels that this method of instrumental playing works best for students of their background. Peter Dunbar-Hall (1996, p. 216) raised concerns about teachers who are trained in the classical tradition lacking an instinctive knowledge for popular music. However, both Anne and Julie displayed versatility in teaching students about popular music; Julie has also taught students to play contemporary instruments.

Helena (school C) shows the same regard for students 'own' music. She teaches in a school with a similar profile to Julie, and also spends a significant amount of time in first year on performance-based activities. A selection of guitars, drums and keyboards are available to the students. Although she does not teach the students to play these instruments herself, she has students, who can already play an

instrument(s), to teach others. She also encourages students to teach themselves with the aid of *YouTube* instrumental instructional videos. This is an example of informal learning taking place in the classroom as advocated by Cain (2001, p. 112), Green (2002b, p. 56), Kenny (2010), and Swanwick (1996, p. 241-242). It is particularly 'peer instruction' and 'personalised instruction' informal learning methods that occur in Helena's classroom. She has similar feelings to Julie in that contemporary instruments are more suitable to the students' backgrounds than classical instruments. Therefore, she does not teach tin-whistle or recorder in first year. She prepares the students for class concerts every two months. She also makes a connection with music students' 'own' music by allowing them to choose songs. Some students perform on their own and others in groups. She feels that performance is the activity they enjoy the most, and it is here that 'raw talent' is clearly displayed.

In her interview, Helena discussed 'Composers in the Classroom'. This is a scheme operated by the Contemporary Music Centre of Ireland, which encourages schools 'to arrange composer workshops or talks as the best way to bring new music to life for the students' (The Contemporary Music Centre Ireland, 2005). A recent workshop held by the Post-Primary Teachers' Association of Ireland displayed pieces from the scheme for classroom-based activities, by various Irish composers. Louise McCarthy wrote a music piece called 'Rainbows' which Helena is currently working on with her first-year class in school C. Each student is playing a different part. Since most of these students do not read music or play classical instruments, she had to overcome some challenges. For example, instead of a student playing the flute part, she transferred it to the xylophone. Also, she overcame the challenge of a hands-together piano part by teaching two students one hand each. Since few students read music, Helena feels a lot of the work is down to her. She teaches some of it at lunchtime so it will be ready to perform for a class concert. This is another example of demands on the music teacher, in this instance, unpaid working hours.

In school C, Helena utilises one first-year class to teach performance-based activities, and another to teach theory and dictation. She also covers the basics such as note values, instruments of the orchestra, some history of music, various composers, as well as popular music. To develop students' listening skills and expose them to classical music, she creates her own projects such as 'Music and Advertising'.

Students must choose one popular and one classical song to advertise a product, and put them together in a slide show.

> If I bring in something on Mozart and play it for them, they'll switch off. Whereas, if you do it this way, that it's a technology-based thing, they don't even realize they're doing it (Helena, school C).

Student engagement and foundational skills were a priority for the teachers in first year, with most teachers focusing on listening and performance activities. Literacy skills were also emphasised by most of the teachers. Helena, Julie and Anne adopted strategies to cater for the diverse genres; Anne included popular music in listening modules, and Helena and Julie focused primarily on students' 'own' music for performance-based activities. Instruments they worked with were chosen according to their students' needs and backgrounds. These are clear examples of methods the teachers use to accommodate students' interests in music, thereby making the subject relevant and of value to them. This required the teachers to adapt to their teaching environment and display versatility in their teaching knowledge and methods, particularly in terms of popular music and contemporary instruments. It is interesting to see that informal learning practices are fully employed in schools C and D, whose students are from disadvantaged backgrounds, and also to a considerable extent in school E, whose students are from families of a mixture socio-economic backgrounds. However, informal learning practices are not used in schools A and B, where many students are receiving private instrumental lessons outside school. Although Helena teaches in schools B and C, which have students from contrasting backgrounds, her teaching approach for each school is different. This may reflect a need for the teacher to adapt her teaching approach according to the variables amongst students such as prior musical learning, and it is possible that the socio-economic backgrounds of students affects this.

4.4 The curriculum and examinations

This section focuses on curricular music where teachers follow curriculum guidelines for the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations. This presents further challenges and the teachers have issues about the syllabus. Unlike in first year, they do not have flexibility to explore other areas of music such as non-curricular music. How do the teachers maintain student interest, whilst bringing students of varying musical literacy

levels to a standard required for examinations? This section explores the teachers'
views of teaching the Junior and Leaving Certificate years, in terms of the three
strands (performance, composition and listening), ICT, and musicianship skills.

4.4.1 Junior and Leaving Certificate - The three strands

Both the Junior and Leaving Certificate curricula involve three strands: performance,
composition and listening. The national curriculum describes the three strands as 'a
series of interrelated musical activities within each of the three core areas of musical
experience' (NCCA, 1996b). The term 'interrelated' suggests that the strands have
links. According to John (school A), teacher training encourages the view that the
strands are taught simultaneously. Almost all of the teachers in this study teach each
of the three strands in unison. Preliminary survey 1 students showed that attention
given to different sections of the curriculum was healthy, with teachers mostly giving
equal attention to each section (see Appendix A). This suggests that teachers are
coping with the balance of composition, listening and performance sections of the
curriculum.

The interviews further explored the three strands and to what extent the teachers are
delivering them simultaneously. John aims to have each strand working together. For
example, he sometimes has his students perform their compositional exercises on their
instruments. He feels that it is then easier to 'pull the strands apart' at a later stage,
after they have been practised together. However, he emphasizes that aspects of
listening and performance should come before the explanation of their respective
theories.

> If I wanted to teach tin whistle in a class, I'm not going to do it for forty
> minutes, I'm going to do it for ten minutes, and then we're going to
> examine what we played and we're going to get the theory out of it. We're
> supposed to be teaching listening, performing, composing all together at
> the same time in one class. So if we play something it's so important to
> straight away look at the rhythm and melody and how it works, and look
> at everything you can get out of it, so that they're actually learning their
> theory as well. They don't just play 'Dawning of the Day' on the tin
> whistle and then forget about it... So they're playing and listening and
> they're getting all of this together at the same time. The teacher has to get
> that balance right. It should come from the playing first, you should be
> listening or playing first, so you're actively chasing after something, and
> then put the theory on it, not the other way around... We have that phrase
> in music, 'note before symbol' – you have to hear it first and then write it
> down (John, school A).

Helena (schools B and C) also aims to practise the three strands simultaneously, rather than isolating one in particular. A practical example of this, used by Helena, involves singing a set song from the listening strand, and then taking four bars from the same song and writing down the following four bars. Anne (school E) describes how she integrates performance and compositional skills with listening activities.

> As we're going along listening I try to make sure that they're performing in different ways as well, even just bits of sight clapping, bits of dictation… (Anne, school E).

These examples show how teachers in this study are interlinking the three strands, rather than teaching them as singular isolated areas of musical activity devoid of context. Although there are no specific teacher guidelines in the curriculum to follow for this, these teachers have developed their own methods successfully.

When asked what changes they would like to see made to the Junior Certificate curriculum, each teacher in this study mentioned the listening strand. Although their students enjoy listening, all the teachers felt that it involved a lot of learning which was unnecessary. Currently, students have to learn fourteen songs (eight set songs and six choice songs). Only ten marks out of one hundred is allocated to this section and the participants would like to see it increased since there is so much learning involved. Another drawback in the listening strand is the difficulty of the specific language that is required to answer listening questions.

> If I ask kids which of the three strands is their favourite they'll say usually listening is their worst one… but the problem isn't the listening, the problem is answering the questions because the language is very specific (John, school A).
>
> Yes, they love the performing. The composing is grand as well… but it's the listening and all the learning… they find there's a lot of learning in the listening… (Helena, schools B and C).
>
> For the listening part, because they haven't had any previous training, it takes so much more work to get them to a good standard (Julie, school D).
>
> It's a huge amount of learning because they'd have eight choice songs to learn and six choice orchestral works to learn. It's a lot… (Anne, school E).

While listening is the strand that the teachers in this study feel is cumbersome for students, Helena felt that it could be made more enjoyable by linking it with other

types of activities. In a practical example, she describes a 'music and advertising' class project that she created, which was briefly mentioned earlier.

> I'd get them to do different projects – a little in music and advertising for example, just to grab their interest in listening. But, they have to do classical pieces. So it's more that they don't even realize that they're listening to it when they're looking for a piece to suit their advertising. So that's what I try to do, have them listening to music without realizing it basically, to open them up to classical music. So, they're allowed to do one pop song and one classical song to advertise a product and put together a slide show… And then I get them to do a project on a composer, again, a classical composer. Because they are using a computer and the internet they're quite happy doing it. Whereas, if I bring in something on Mozart and play it for them, they'll switch off. Whereas, if you do it this way that it's a technology based thing, they don't even realize they're doing it (Helena, schools B and C).

Although the listening section has drawbacks for the teachers and students in this study, Helena showed in the above class activity the benefit of interlinking the different strands, as a way of overcoming its perceived negative aspects. This is an example of a teacher employing teaching strategies to make aspects of the curriculum more attractive to students, in a context where it is felt to be necessary.

Each teacher respondent felt that performance is the Junior Certificate strand that students like the most. This corresponded to one of the questions in preliminary survey 1, where the majority of respondents stated it was the section of the curriculum that influenced them mostly (see Appendix A). Performance will be more fully explored in 4.4.2. Although there are aspects of the Junior Certificate curriculum that students dislike, all of the teachers in this study agreed that a teacher's enthusiasm could influence the students' attitudes. They pointed out that the Junior Certificate curriculum was due to be revised some years ago, going as far as a new curriculum being presented to the curriculum development department. This included a less cumbersome listening section. However, there have been no such revisions to date, possibly due to cutbacks in government expenditure on education.

It emerged in the interviews that there is a lack of continuity between the Junior and Leaving Certificate syllabi, and this was a concern for several of the teachers. Anne (school E) pointed out that, in places, there is a lack of progression between the Junior and Leaving Certificate curricula. For example, for a Junior Certificate composition question, students must work out their own chord chart. However, for the Leaving

Certificate the chord chart is given. Ideally this should be the other way around. Also, for the Leaving Certificate practical examination, there is an option of sight-clapping of an eight bar rhythm, but there is no such option for the Junior Certificate. Anne felt that a possible reason for this was that the current Leaving Certificate curriculum was revised after the Junior Certificate curriculum. Other changes to the Junior Certificate curriculum that teachers would like to see include making the dictation question less difficult.

The Leaving Certificate syllabus also involves three strands of musical activity; listening, performing and composition. Students have the option of specialising in one of the three areas that best suits their musical interests and talents. Each strand makes up 25% of the overall mark, with the higher elective making up the other 25%. However, preliminary survey 1 showed that very few students choose listening or composition as a higher elective (see Appendix A). Most of these students stated that they studied the performance higher elective, with many commenting that they were not aware there were listening and composition higher elective options. This suggests that class teachers encourage the performance option. A possible reason for this is that teachers avoid having to teach several higher electives due to time constraints. Coinciding with this, the sample of teachers in the main study found performance to be the best higher elective option for their students. Perhaps the unfavourable experience with listening in Junior Certificate curriculum influences their choices.

Part of the performance higher elective for the Leaving Certificate exam includes questions on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and musicianship. More issues regarding continuity in these questions emerged in the main study. A criticism with regard to the ICT question was that it is not part of the Junior Certificate curriculum (see 4.4.4). John made the following suggestion:

> '...we're also looking for them to introduce the music technology into Junior Certificate. Because in Leaving Certificate it's a completely simple option, it's very simple. It could be made more difficult in Leaving Certificate for it to be introduced into Junior Certificate first' (John, school A).

This points to another gap in continuity between the Junior and Leaving Certificate curriculum. Although the teachers in this study raised concerns about discontinuity,

all four teachers were largely satisfied with the current state of the curricula, and felt that they provided much flexibility to suit students' needs. Interlinking the strands within class activities was evidently a successful approach adopted by the teachers.

4.4.2 Performance

Preliminary survey 1 amongst undergraduate students showed that performance was the section of the second-level curriculum that influenced 45% of the respondents (see Appendix A). It makes up 25% of the overall examination marks, or 50% if it is studied as a higher elective. There was very little exploration of instruments or performance in class time however. This conflicts with the findings in the main study, since teachers in schools C, D and E went to great efforts to have students perform in class in preparation for concerts or examinations, which suggests that it varies considerably. It is interesting to see that this was not the case in schools A and B however, since many students were receiving private tuition and their external instrumental teacher did much of the preparation for their performance examinations. This could explain the findings in preliminary survey 1 where students reported few performance activities in class time. Since the respondents were undergraduate music students, it is likely that private tuition outside school may have been a factor in their schools.

In the main study, it is clear that performance is uppermost in exam preparation for the teachers, who believe it best serves their students' interests. With so much performance activity occurring, it is evident that teachers are aware of and use many approaches to best serve their students' diverse musical backgrounds and interests. For the Junior Certificate performance examination, students may play four pieces on one instrument, or combine four pieces on a solo instrument/second instrument/group. For the Leaving Certificate, students may play six pieces on one instrument, or a combination of eight pieces on two instruments. If students choose the ICT question, they perform four solo songs only. Many decide on performances that incorporate their own musical interests, such as singing songs with backing tracks. The teachers were in agreement that while some students perform less well at the written section of the examination, the same students are generally excellent performers and can do very well in the performance examination.

The teachers feel that the curriculum is flexible enough to allow students to choose their performance exam based on their own skills and interests, and that it caters well for students with no private or graded tuition. Both Helena's (school C) and Julie's (school D) students are reaching performance level for their exams through informal, group and peer learning methods. Having had little or no music experience prior to secondary school, both teachers feel that these methods enable their students to reach a performance examination standard without the formal instruction that is not available to their students. The students learn a variety of contemporary instruments including the guitar, bass guitar, drums and keyboard. With their teachers' guidance, many students teach themselves how to play, learn from another student who can play any of the instruments, or teach themselves with *YouTube* tutorials. The teachers allow the students to choose pieces to perform and encourage group playing. Helena adds that, to a certain extent, she likes to leave as much decision-making as possible to the students. Students from both Julie's and Helena's music classes have gone on to form bands that performed publicly in their locality, with many continuing to perform music after they have left school. Helena added that she values giving the students that experience: 'I think that if they don't do that at school it's harder to do it afterwards. That's the age to get them going'. This corroborates Green's (2002b, p. 56) thesis that students who learn to play through informal learning practices may be more likely to continue playing music in later life.

Singing is a popular choice of performance for students who do not play or learn an instrument in secondary school. This is especially the case for female students. Anne, Helena and Julie mentioned girls' forming vocal groups for examinations as well as school concerts. With the help of their teachers they create harmonies for popular songs. These vocal groups either sing unaccompanied, or with backing tracks, or with instrumental accompaniment by another student. Anne stated that the need for accompaniment was an excellent stimulus for her students to group together for performance activities. Other teachers mentioned guitar players accompanying vocalists, or a drummer accompanying guitarists. The teachers accompanied students on piano if necessary, but they tried to leave it up to the students as much as possible.

Tin-whistle and recorder are also popular instrument choices for performance examinations in secondary school. This shows an element of continuity with

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instruments learned in primary school. Preliminary survey 1 showed that recorder and tin-whistle were the most commonly learned instruments in primary schools (see Appendix A). John's students usually play two group and two solo pieces on the tin-whistle for their Junior Certificate examination. He teaches his students the tin-whistle during class time. If someone has another instrument that they are learning outside school they are encouraged to perform with that also.

Practice time for impending performance examinations can be an issue for teachers. Anne aims to dedicate one class out of two double classes per week to performance practice. However, difficulties can arise getting all students to bring in their recorder for practice sessions, and for some only the realization of impending examinations encourages them to bring in their instruments. Therefore, she spends time practising for examinations before school or during lunchtime. Anne added that sometimes teachers of other subjects will allow students out of their class to practise if necessary. This is an emerging issue whereby music teachers are faced with the reality that practice will not always be carried out at home, and the teachers must make efforts to compensate for this in school time. Noise levels and the lack of practice space were also mentioned by some of the teachers as issues related to classroom performance.

> It's a balancing act... coming up to practical time, you are doing performance, performance, performance... they're all singing and playing. Somebody might knock at the door and there could be someone playing drums in one corner, and somebody else could be doing recorder outside the door, until someone in another room tells them to go away! (Anne, school E)

> There's usually about thirty people in the room anyway, and the noise is deafening. Every lunchtime, there's at least thirty... I've about five guitars, two pianos, a keyboard, a drum kit - all going at the same time. And then, you throw a few of the boys in. It's absolutely mental! (Helena, school C)

Although one might think that Anne in school E is at an advantage having students with high levels of music experience compared to the other teachers, she makes an interesting point about students not necessarily continuing to play in secondary school.

They'd come to an age where they've had enough of playing an instrument. I had one kid a couple of years ago and she played violin, and I used to see her at the concerts. And she came into the secondary school and we never saw the violin. She wouldn't bring it to school. She went and played it for her Junior and Leaving Certificate and nobody was allowed to see the violin. My impression was that when she broke free from the primary school [where] she was this little adorable one out in the front playing the violin... she had made a new start (Anne, school E).

Not all of Anne's students who learned instruments in primary school had had to pay for the instruments, and instrumental lessons in some schools were government funded. However, Anne feels that if lessons are free, students put less value on them. Some of her students take up part-time jobs to buy an instrument and pay for lessons. She feels that these students put more value on their playing.

4.4.3 Genre

When the current Leaving Certificate curriculum was revised in 1996, 'popular' music was added to the listening strand with the aim of making the subject more appealing to students. However, it has been debated in literature just how successful its addition has been, and how the popular works are not necessarily as appealing to young people as the curriculum designers had intended. In particular the actual works included (*Beatles: 'When I'm sixty-four'* and *Queen: 'Bohemian Rhapsody'*) are, according to Downey (2009) and Green (2008), nowhere close to the musical preferences of students taking the course. Green stated that curricular music such as *'Bohemian Rhapsody'* by Queen and songs by the Beatles are 'often, from students' perspectives, as far removed from their lives and identities as mainstream classical music or twentieth-century atonal music' (Green, 2008, pp. 12-13). Preliminary survey 1 showed that the majority of respondents would like to see the listening section involve more genres of music, suggesting that the 'popular' music on the curriculum is not varied enough for the contemporary musical preferences of students (see Appendix A).

Despite this, it was evident in the main study that several of the teachers are finding ways to include music that is meaningful to the students in the curriculum. We saw in 4.4.3 that they give students the choice to perform their 'own' music for this strand of the curriculum. In terms of other sections of the curriculum, teachers are finding ways to include music that is relatable to the students. For example, Anne chooses jazz as

the general class study for the Junior Certificate, but gives students the option of doing their general study on a genre, band or singer that they like. For this question, they have to name two pieces of music and three features, which can be prepared in advance of the examination. Although the question is straightforward, Anne feels allowing the students to choose their 'own' music gives them a channel of self-expression.

> We'd start off picking out two pieces, who performed them or who composed them...and then start with just simple things like...instruments... what would be the instruments, say, in heavy metal... and you're looking at syncopation... So I think it's straightforward enough but I think they have a better sense of achievement, that they're able to express themselves a bit (Anne, school E).

Irish traditional music has become more vibrant in Irish culture in past decades, amongst all age-groups. But to what extent is it employed by the sample of teachers in this study? It appeared that they did not use it to the same extent as they did popular or classical music for performance activities. This corresponds to preliminary survey 1, which showed that genre had the least influence on the students surveyed (see Appendix A). Nonetheless, all of the respondents in the same survey felt that they were effectively prepared for this section of the examination (see Appendix A).

Helena (school C) talked about some of her students' having experience in this genre, with some being involved in 'Scór na Páistí' where they competitively sing ballads, perform on traditional instruments, or perform Irish dance. Helena believes that there is a tendency amongst the students to keep this interest outside of school. She also feels that her lack of experience in the genre can be an issue for her. However, an external teacher comes to her school once a week to teach traditional instruments such as the bodhrán and button accordion, which she feels is supportive to her teaching. This is a clear example of community musicians bringing their skills to second-level schools. Although not all students in her classes have experience in Irish traditional music, Helena feels that students naturally know the sound or timbre of its typical instruments and do not have any difficulty recognizing them in listening exercises.

Julie (school D) has come across very few students who wanted to perform Irish traditional music for their performance examinations. She feels it is a section that needs a lot of work with students, and she often has to put in extra time with the

students for this section. She finds that students with experience in Irish dancing find it less difficult. However, very few males have experience in Irish dancing, and sometimes she asks female students who perform Irish dance or have done so in the past to demonstrate the different dances such as reels, jigs and polkas. Julie feels that students learn about these styles of Irish music with more ease when they see them being performed.

4.4.4 ICT and musicianship in the curriculum

If students choose performance as their higher elective, they must prepare an ICT (Information and Communications Technology) and musicianship exercise as part of this strand. For the ICT question, students input a given piece to music software on a computer; this can be practised throughout fifth and sixth years. It is required that a four-part score between sixteen and thirty bars in length is performed in the presence of examiners, with speed, fluency and accuracy being taken into consideration. Several of the teachers in this study choose this option for their students. John notes that in teacher training, he was encouraged to approach the computer like a musical instrument.

> Just like the saxophone, where you're expected to have your embouchure right and your fingers right, you are making the computer play music. So it's an instrument and you can use it as a second instrument [...] you've got to learn your notes and your rhythms, you've got to learn the clicking in, or playing in the notes on the computer [...] and the same way as your saxophone, you've got to decide on dynamics or expression (John, school A).

Anne also chooses the ICT question for her students. She uses a music software package called *Musescore*, and also sees the question as a positive addition to the curriculum: 'It's very practical. You can prepare and they're not going in wondering if they are going to get an easy or a difficult question'. Helena gives her students the option of the ICT question rather than choosing it for them. In fifth year, she gives students 'the experience of it'. However, she thinks that some students find it 'boring and repetitive' since they are 'practising the same thing over and over'. Swanwick (1999, p. 108) disagreed with ICT being used in music classes to practise exercises that focus on notation. She finds a way to overcome the issue of boredom is to have different activities centered on ICT – for example, by entering melodies and themes of their set pieces into the music software. This also helps the students become more

familiar with the listening material. In sixth year, she gives students the choice of continuing ICT for their final examination. Although not all students favour this section of the performance strand, she thinks that 'once speed and fluency is there it's good for marks'. All of the teachers in the study had the facility of computers and music software for their Leaving Certificate classes: therefore Hodges (2001, p. 179) statement that the funding of resources for ICT equipment could be an issue for schools did not apply.

For the musicianship exercise, students have the option of doing sight-clapping or a rhythm memory exercise as 10% of their performance examination marks. Anne finds that sight-clapping is more practical for students than rhythm memory, because it gives students more control. Overall, the introduction of the ICT and musicianship options appear to have been a positive step for the Leaving Certificate curriculum, giving students flexibility in the performance examination. It also possibly gives students who do not have a lot of instrumental experience an opportunity to achieve higher marks.

4.5 Outside the curriculum

Elliott stated that 'Fundamentally, music is something that people do' (Elliott, 1995, p. 39). In this study, this statement was relevant, given the numerous instances of practical music-making occurring in the schools observed. Although these examples occurred in the classroom, the interviews revealed that there are many practical-music activities taking place outside the classroom also. This final section of the analysis examines teachers' views on the benefits and drawbacks of extra-curricular music.

4.5.1 Extra-curricular music

Extra-curricular music can be at the heart of the music-making in schools and can also be an attractive feature of a school in terms of its general profile. It can take the form of a school band, a choir, a school production such as a musical, or performances of any kind. Small (1998) stated that 'The act of musicking established in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies' (Small, 1998, p. 13). When music is brought outside the classroom, it has the potential to develop working relationships within the school community between students, staff, and even members of the wider community. It

also has the potential to involve students who do not study music as a school subject or who do not play an instrument. Music becomes a social activity where the skill of music itself possibly becomes secondary to the various outcomes created within the act.

A school musical is a perfect example of an extra-curricular activity that involves inter-related human activity. However, it is a big undertaking for a school in terms of time, cost and co-operation. Helena was the only teacher in this study whose school hosts a musical. She began teaching in school C in September 2010, and only months into her job she approached the Principal to ask permission to stage a school musical. He agreed, mainly because he was keen to raise the profile of music as a new subject in the school. However, although Helena faced a challenge since the majority of students there do not have musical experience, according to her they display a high degree of talent and potential, and it was with this observation in mind that she did not dismiss the potential of the musical. A further challenge was to convince students to take part, especially for the lead roles. Rather than holding auditions, Helena explained that she had to ask students to accept roles, due to shyness rather than lack of intent. She added that male students were especially reluctant to take part. She handpicked students, not always based on their singing abilities. She also offered roles to teachers and even parents.

> People were saying 'are you holding auditions?'… and I was saying 'what are you talking about, I don't even have kids to do the parts, never mind doing auditions for the parts!' I literally was going 'this is the kid who's doing it and if he sings out of tune that's it!' (Helena, school C)

The musical that Helena decided on was based on the popular 1960s film *Grease*. If students did not want to be on-stage but still wanted to be part of the production, she gave them backstage jobs such as hair and make-up. Helena's attitude was that it was the participation that was important rather than the singing and acting abilities. Pitts' (2007) investigations into student and teacher attitudes to, and experiences of, a school music production emphasised the benefits of sharing production responsibilities. Helena also sees the benefits of the enjoyment people get from the experience, as well as building up the profile of music in the school. Since the school gave no funding towards the production, Helena relied heavily on the help of students and teachers within the school, as well as the community. The woodwork teacher,

with the help of some students, made some props including a car, and the art teacher made the backdrop. The money to make these came out of the annual budgets for these subjects. To overcome the challenge of providing costumes, Helena asked students to supply or make their own.

A local woman who runs dance and singing classes in a nearby locality took over the choreography. She already knew a lot of the students because she also held classes in local primary schools, which the students had attended. Helena asked undergraduate students in Cork School of Music to form the band, which included piano, guitar, and bass guitar, and also asked the son of the principal of a nearby primary school, who played drums. She also asked a local guitar player who performs at weekends in the locality; coming up to the show, however, the pressure of the task unfortunately proved too much for him. It was however a conscious gesture of Helena to ask a member of the community to take part in the school production. A number of parents got involved too, with sewing and the organization of a raffle.

Helena discussed the positive effects that the production of *Grease* had on the students. During the musical, Helena saw them take a sense of ownership in their roles and take initiative by giving an input into decision-making. She explains this and gives a humorous example.

> It's funny how after a while the kids will start to take a sense of ownership... they'll say 'oh, what if we did this or that in this scene.' Whereas at the beginning there wouldn't be any of that, they'd just do what they were told... One of the teachers was the 'teen angel', and they (the students) decided to dress up as angels around her... and the second night, some of the boys decided they wanted to get involved too... so, the leather jackets were on and they put on the little angel things, except she (the 'teen angel' teacher) didn't know they were going to come out, we didn't tell her at all... and next thing they arrived out looking like God knows what, with makeup and everything – it was very funny! I could see her looking at me in the middle of the play, going 'I'll kill you!' When the kids want to do it, I don't mind (Helena, school C).

Helena also mentioned that the experience brought students together, there was less of a sense of division between age groups, as fostered a sense of learning within the community. Such was its success that students are enthusiastic about the next musical and are already asking for roles. This is in stark contrast to when the teacher had to plead with them to take on roles for *Grease*. She feels that the experience of being

part of a musical can have a positive impact on a student in many ways. She would like to stage a musical every year, but due to disruption on schooling the Principal will only commit to its production once every two years. This is because the school is small, which means the majority of staff and students must get involved. Pitts (2007) acknowledged the short-term disadvantages of diverting attention from other school activities.

Another extra-curricular activity that can raise the profile of school music is the availability of instrumental lessons by independent teachers, after school. However, government cutbacks in recent times have meant major knock-on effects for these lessons, including at Anne's school (school E). The County VEC supplied instrumental lessons, starting in 2004, but they were discontinued in 2009 following the downturn of the Irish economy. While they existed, Anne felt that instrumental lessons made a big difference to the musical life of the school, as well as being an attractive feature for potential students. Some students formed bands, and she also noticed that students were more inclined to choose music as an examination subject when they already played an instrument: 'There was a bit of a buzz... people going around with instruments on their backs. And they then kept on music for their Junior and Leaving Certificate' (Anne, school E).

When asked if she had considered requesting the hiring of private instrumental teachers to increase the level of music within the school, Anne stated that she had not. She feels that currently, not as many families can provide for instrumental lessons. However, as a music teacher she strives to keep music alive in the school in other ways. She runs a choir that is made up mostly of second-year female students. They perform at school masses, a carol service at Christmas time, and end-of-year concerts. They practise at lunchtime one day a week, but if the choir has an impending performance, Anne practises with the core second-year students during their class-time. She spoke about the teachers' aspirations of a school choir versus the reality:

> You have this idea that you're going to have this wonderful school choir, and y'know, I suppose you have aspirations. But that might not always happen... and no matter what they stand up and sing, you just have to say 'well done that was great, you were fabulous'. It's a confidence-building thing and it might take a couple of years... and like everything else the standard rises and falls (Anne, school E).

Anne also organizes an end-of-year concert in which any student or group of students can participate. This concert has shown that there is diverse talent within the school. Performances have included rappers, rock bands, and female vocal groups. Groups are usually self-formed and often self-taught. An existing group of female singers took the initiative to create their own harmonies and arrangements of popular songs.

John organizes a Christmas talent show each year, where students can perform individually or in groups. Due to the nature of the talent show, there is no continuity between each act or 'stitching together' of scenes. John feels this is less laborious than hosting a musical, and is practical since his school does not have a stage or hall. He states that he can 'focus purely on each performance'.

Although extra-curricular music activities provide numerous benefits for a school, the teacher respondents did mention its drawbacks. John highlighted the consequences of too much time spent on extra-curricular activities. His Friday evening music 'grinds class' is taught privately. Many of the class come from the neighbouring all-girls school, and he claims that this is because the students' music teacher spends a lot of time on activities outside the classroom, and not enough time on the curriculum.

4.5.2 Transition Year
Transition year/fourth year, is offered as a non-mandatory year in some schools throughout Ireland. Since there are no state examinations involved at the end of the year, teachers have similar flexibility to first year, and this opportunity was used in different ways by the teachers in the sample; this reflects their own values and gives scope for innovative approaches to teaching.

Teachers such as Anne like to diversify their activities in fourth year. However, the pressure of the Leaving Certificate is ever-present. Therefore, she takes the 'start from scratch' approach, since many students in transition year would not have studied music for the Junior Certificate. She feels that she needs to do this in order for students to be prepared for the Leaving Certificate examination, if they choose to continue. She added that fourth-year students who did not study music for the Junior Certificate are sometimes more observant and less presumptuous. Therefore, they are not necessarily at a disadvantage for tests.

Anne uses this opportunity partly to prepare students for the Leaving Certificate curriculum. She divides the year into several 'modules' and focuses on a different topic for each. For example, for one of these modules she focuses on Irish traditional music.

> In fourth-year you're trying to get the basics into them. Because Irish music is a question on the Leaving Certificate paper, the more Irish music that you're playing for them in class the better, because then they can say 'oh sure we know who *The Chieftans* are' or 'we know who *Planxty* are'. While you do have a little bit of leeway, you're always thinking of the following year (Anne, school E).

Another module in Anne's transition year is based around 'Songs of Cork', which is a second-level music scheme introduced by the Lord Mayor in recent years. It aims to teach students about songs written about Cork county, and the history within those songs. Students learn the songs and perform them for the Lord Mayor when he visits the school. Anne's school links the scheme with other transition-year subjects including history, geography and art. Sometimes the teachers take the students on a 'walking tour' to areas around the city mentioned in these songs. They would learn the geography of the mentioned areas while also learning about their history. For example, *The Banks of My Own Lovely Lee* has a lyric that refers to an area in Cork city called 'The Mardyke' which is: 'down the Mardyke through each elm tree.' The 'Cork Week' module is now presented to the Lord Mayor every year during 'Seachtaine na Gaeilge'.

Another transition-year module that links other subjects with music in Anne's school is 'Cork Week', which is an important annual event in schools in Cork city and county. During this time, the English class read books by Cork authors such as Frank O' Connor, the art class make posters of historical sites in Cork city, and history students learn about historical sites such as 'The Tower of Shandon'. Recently, her fourth-year class had a 'mini concert' where students performed Cork songs. As part of teaching transition-year students about local traditional music, Anne has been inviting the folk musician Jimmy Crowley to the school for a number of years. He plays songs about Cork, speaks about the background of each song, and allows the students to ask questions. Downey (2009) advocated the integration of community-based traditional musicians with teachers and students in the school environment, as a

way of teaching students about Irish traditional music performance, and supporting the teacher whose roots are in the Western classical traditions.

Anne also takes the opportunity to pursue class-based performance in transition year. She mentions that the amount of performance she pursues depends on the level of interest in performance amongst the students. There is a guitar group in the school, and some years Anne asks students who attend the group to bring in their instruments for one class each week. During the class she organizes the guitar players into groups to play songs together, as well as spending time in groups teaching other students who do not play. This is an example of 'peer instruction' (Green, 2002b, pp. 76-83) and 'group learning' in the music classroom that Green (2008, pp. 119-127) advocates.

It is evident that transition year has opportunities to explore music-making and learning in imaginative ways. Staff in Anne's school teamed up to link subjects together, making music more relatable to other subjects. The ability of music within a school to act as a social networking tool is evident.

4.5.3 Challenges for teachers

We have seen that music in school exists both inside and outside the classroom. Both involve extra working hours and effort for the music teacher. When asked what aspect of the job they found most challenging, the majority of the teachers in this study mentioned time issues. Extra-curricular activities, concerts, choirs, and extra rehearsals for performance examinations demanded that the teacher give up hours of free time.

Anne (school E) gives up much of her free time to extra-curricular music activities in her school, but she is of the opinion that the amount of extra hours put in depends on how effectively the teacher manages his or her time. John also mentioned the commitment of extra hours preparing students for impending performance examinations and extra-curricular activities. Helena believes that putting in hours outside class-time is an essential part of the job for a music teacher, and that it is necessary if music is to be successful in a school. She also feels that although it is expected of music teachers, there are numerous rewards for commitment:

I suppose, teaching music in it's own way is extremely rewarding... and more so than other subjects, because it puts you on a different level with kids... and it gives you an opportunity to relate on a different level. The other side to that is you have to put in way more hours than other teachers. There's no other teacher in the school that gives up every lunchtime to sit and let them do stuff. I think that to make it successful you have to do this kind of stuff... now, to be honest I get a great kick out of it, it's great fun. I've no issue doing it. But, I do think with music you have to do the extras all the time. And plus, you're expected to do the school mass at the beginning of the year... you're expected to do the school mass at the end of the year, the Leaving Cert Graduation.... And the other side to that is you can be involved with the community on a different level too, because you have a lot of parents there who would have an interest in things, and they'd flit in and flit out to you as well. In that sense, it's great in it's own way because it gives you an in-road into things that other teachers don't get either. But, it is demanding, it's demanding in the classroom. Again, it's your choice... you don't have to do anything extra... but then, you're not going to have a music department really... because the kids don't have interest (Helena, schools B and C).

Helena's reflections on music teaching reflects Elliott's statements that music 'at root, is a human activity' and that 'fundamentally, music is something that people do' (1995, p. 39). Although music is a subject that is possibly more demanding on the teacher than other subjects, its rewards to students and teachers alike are numerous and long-lasting.

4.5.4 Facilities and Resources

Facilities and resources can be of benefit to the music teacher inside and outside the classroom. Resources would involve instruments, recording equipment, computers and sound systems, which are necessary for the everyday running of music as a subject inside and outside the classroom for teaching, performing, and practising. Facilities might include a hall with a stage, a music room, a computer room, and a practice room. In 4.4.2 teachers spoke in particular about the lack of practice spaces as being an issue related to classroom performance, for example the high levels of noise, as well as several groups of students performing separate activities in the same room.

However, it is not always possible for schools to provide resources and facilities, and the teachers demonstrated a variety of attitudes with regard to this. It might not be financially possible, or the Principal may not agree to provide school funding towards the music department for various reasons. Government cutbacks due to the current economic climate can also affect the availability of resources. Although Swanwick (1999, p. 44) stated that resources are not essential to teaching music *musically*,

practice facilities can be of value for classroom performance activities. For example, according to Anne and Helena, noise levels and the lack of practice space were issues for classroom performance activities. This issue occurred in schools where students were practising in school rather than at home.

Preliminary survey 1 (see Appendix A) showed that figures for resources and facilities in the post-primary schools of the sample were moderate. This correlated to a certain extent with the main study, where it was found that resources are scarce in schools A and B, but plentiful in schools C, D and E - mainly due to government funding.

Anne's school (school E) has benefitted from government funding in the past, which allowed the purchasing of instruments and equipment. This included a drum-kit, four acoustic guitars, two electric guitars, a bass guitar, a couple of drumming practice pads, and two amplifiers. The school also bought a piano in recent years. Facilities include a main music room and a storage room alongside it. There are also two stages in the school – one in the common/assembly area, and another in a P.E. hall. Although the school does not receive government funding anymore, Anne feels that school spending towards music resources has not declined in recent years, and that the Principal is still supportive of music.

Julie's school (school D) also received a substantial government grant several years ago, and the money went towards the music department. Instruments and recording equipment were purchased, including two electric guitars, a bass guitar, drums, a wide range of percussion instruments, microphones, and a P.A. system. Julie feels these instruments are most suitable to her students' backgrounds - the school is situated in a disadvantaged area, and students do not receive instrumental lessons outside school. She needs to engage student attention with their 'own' music that is meaningful to them. If not, she feels they may lose interest in the subject. Therefore, these instruments are most suitable to the genre of music that she needs to work within, and they enable her to do that on a practical level. Swanwick (1999, pp. 38-40) advocates music education, which involves music that is 'meaningful' to its students. He also argues for student interaction, decision-making, and individual choice in music classes, which we will see below occurs in Julie's classes.

Another teacher who used funding strategically where it was available was Helena in school C. Helena takes a similar approach to Julie for student engagement and goes to lengths to integrate music that is meaningful to the students, into her classes as well as the examinations. Both schools have very similar profiles. She applied for a government grant when she began teaching there in recent years, and she also chose contemporary instruments such as electric and bass guitars, acoustic and semi-acoustic guitars, a drum kit, a keyboard, and also a piano. Like Julie, she feels these instruments are most suitable to the students' backgrounds, more so than classical instruments.

> You didn't grow up in a house where there's a piano, or there's someone playing classical flute... you've no experience of that. Your experience is listening to the radio... So, therefore, if you give them violins they just have no interest, y'know? And so, if you're trying to build up something, you have to go with what they're looking for. Now, that wouldn't be my background, but that's what these kids want (Helena, school C).

School C also has a music room detached from the main building, which allows Helena's students to create as much noise as they wish without disturbing other classes. This facility is very important considering the noise densities of the instruments they use. Resources in school B where Helena also teaches are in stark contrast to school C. In fact, she only has a keyboard there. However, she feels the lack of resources and facilities does not affect her teaching there, since students take private instrumental tuition and are highly self-motivated. Interestingly, some sharing of facilities and resources exist between the two schools she teaches in - sometimes students from school B will walk to school C during lunchtimes to practise or play the available instruments. Neither school has a hall, but as we saw in 4.5.1 Helena does not let this lack of facility prevent her from staging a musical.

Resources and facilities in John's school, which is an all-boys' school, are also lacking. He does not have a room designated for music teaching, but a general classroom that he uses most of the time. The school does not provide instruments of any kind and he did not mention anything about government grants. He uses a piano that he owns himself. Also, students who no longer needed them have charitably donated a small number of instruments to the school in the past. Despite teaching with minimum physical resources, John is positive about his situation. He put an interesting slant on his school not having facilities for music. He sees this apparent

drawback as being academically positive. He can 'stick to the curriculum', focus on examinations, and give weaker students extra help. As mentioned above, he drew attention to a nearby all-girls school that has a hall, and claims that their music teacher spends a lot of time on extra-curricular work such as plays and masses.

> So in a way I'm actually delighted we don't have a hall. I've a grind class on Friday evenings, and my grind class is pretty much made up of the girls next door... and the reason they're there is because they have a school hall and their teacher is out of the classroom an awful lot... So the curriculum gets shafted a lot. Music turns into a circus rather than an academic subject. It's great for them to have a practice space in it, but, if you're talking about the Junior and Leaving Certificate, it's no good for them whatsoever (John, school A).

Each teacher talked about the Internet and modern technology as being a very useful teaching tool. In particular, they spoke about the benefits of the Internet site *YouTube*. Stowell and Dixon (2014) found numerous benefits in technology for classroom music, particularly *YouTube*. Julie talked about its advantages to the music teacher and students for listening skills, and to show different versions of the same song:

> If they get used to watching videos when I'm showing them, videos of their own set songs and set works, they understand that there can be different versions of the same pieces and that helps. When they can understand their own style I feel they can learn better after that (Julie, school D.

Anne (school E) also talked about its visual benefits for teaching students about instruments of the orchestra:

> We don't have *YouTube* in school, but I can download say Tchaikovsky's 'Romeo and Juliet'... so now they're looking at an orchestra playing it rather than just listening to it... and I can say 'oh, that's a cello' or 'that's a cor anglais' and there's a picture of a cor anglais. Now they can see it.

John and Helena also mentioned using *YouTube* videos to back up what they teach on the curriculum, such as showing other examples of instruments, or a different version of a piece on the course. Anne has found in recent years, that a number of students coming into secondary school have been self-tutoring themselves to play various instruments on the Internet. Today, there are thousands of videos on *YouTube* and other sites, which teach the viewer how to play an instrument step-by-step, for a wide selection of songs, styles and ability levels. These are appealing to the novice, being cost free, music can be learned at one's own speed, and the instructions are generally

laid out clearly and cater for beginners. Green (2002) highlights the advantages of 'listening and copying' learning practices for the beginner popular musician. She considers this practice of 'learning by ear' to be a prime practice for popular musicians, occurring outside of formal situations (Green, 2002b, pp. 60-61). Both Anne and Helena (school C) witness their students using this technique. It is evident in this study that this practice only exists in the music classes that use instruments commonly used in the popular genre.

Another modern resource that Anne mentioned as being very useful to the music teacher is an interactive whiteboard (e.g. Epson data projector), which her classroom received two years ago. She explains how it is particularly useful to the music teacher:

> ...They've an interactive pen with them, and we use a software called 'Active Inspire'...it's like flipcharts. You can do a screenshot of say the exam papers, and then put them into the flipchart where you can write on them. So there's no more drawing out your lines and spaces! You have your backing chord questions, and you can just write it and save it then onto your memory key. So everything is much faster – you have all the exam papers downloaded, you're not looking for CDs, you're not looking for a page of this or that, or dealing with 'oh, we forgot our exam papers today'... It definitely has changed everything (Anne, school E).

However, Anne's is the only school with an interactive whiteboard in the music classroom. She also mentioned the Internet being a useful resource for worksheets. She uses it to find worksheets for first-years where, for example, they must colour certain notes.

Modern resources such as the Internet and an interactive whiteboard appear to be very useful to the music teacher, with *YouTube* having benefits for listening skills, and a whiteboard speeding up teaching in the classroom. The teachers in schools C, D and E who had varied resources, facilities and instruments available to them spoke about how helpful these were to their classes. They used funding to buy rock and popular instruments, as well as electronic equipment, which enabled students to perform 'own' music. This shows the lengths to which teachers are going, in order to provide a meaningful music experience for the students. Although schools A and B did have fewer resources, their teachers did not feel it hindered their teaching. For example, rock and popular instruments would not have been relevant to school B, since its students were taught within and enjoyed the classical genre. Also, although there was

no school hall in John's school (school A), his attitude was that too much time spent on performing could detract from examination focus. Therefore it would not be justified or as simple to say that music classes must have plentiful resources and facilities to be successfully taught.

As we can see, government funding has allowed schools in the less affluent areas to acquire instruments and other resources. The choices of contemporary instruments bought in three of the schools were in accordance with the interests of the students, as well as their backgrounds. This shows that these teachers, and perhaps the principals of these schools, are opting for rock and popular instruments and genres rather than classical, to accommodate the students' musical tastes and backgrounds.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

This study set out to explore second-level music education in Ireland, and has identified several key issues that show the variables that affect and influence the delivery of a second-level music programme. Indeed, McCarthy (McCarthy, 2010, p. 73) brought attention to the 'complicated and vulnerable nature' of school music. Firstly, the retention of students is a major concern for music teachers. In addition to engaging their students and developing their skills, teachers are constantly aware of the need to promote music in the schools and ensure that they attract students to their classes. A finding that highlighted this issue is that other subjects such as Business are considered to be more 'useful' than music, and teachers are constantly maintaining efforts to promote their subject. Examples of this include timetabling strategically, developing extra-curricular activities, as well as developing methods of embracing the diverse music genres popular amongst students, in both performing and listening activities. This creates dual demands of time and energy on the teacher, and they see secondary-school music teaching as a high-energy job that requires flexibility, dedication and determination.

Since teachers cannot afford to 'sit back' and must continuously make efforts to make their subject appealing to students, they put in many unpaid working hours. For example, additional rehearsal time is needed for impending performance exams, and extra-curricular activities such as concerts and shows. Julie pioneered a scheme where she volunteered to teach music in her feeder primary school, to increase the level of students' musical participation before entering secondary school. Also, promoting music and making it more accessible through the use of informal learning methods and genres demands great versatility from the teachers to teach instruments, styles and genres, distinct from their own musical backgrounds, and the teachers are willing to do this. This suggests the flexibility that teachers are embracing to maintain the promotion of their subject in competition with others, to attract and retain students, and to suit student needs. Importantly, teachers are at the same time striving to make music meaningful to their students, for example, they are acknowledging and incorporating students' preferred musical genres into class activities.

In teaching situations where it is necessary to promote music as a subject and make it both accessible and meaningful to all students, teachers must take approaches to accommodate the musical tastes and backgrounds of students. They are accommodating students' preferences for musical genres as much as possible, and giving them ownership of their music by, for example, allowing them to choose material for performance examinations or their special study. Teachers in two separate schools, where students came from more disadvantaged backgrounds in Cork County, used this approach widely. In the three other schools, where many students were receiving formal music training outside the school, teachers were not involved to such an extent in the performance preparation. This highlights the variable nature of music education where perhaps more privileged families can afford private music tuition and get credit for it. This suggests that in schools where the majority of students are not receiving private formal music training, i.e. in areas of low socio-economic demographic, teachers must incorporate students' musical interests not only to attract and retain students, but also to ensure meaningful engagement. A wider research study could elaborate this issue in more detail.

In terms of the curriculum and the three strands, performance, composition and listening, teachers are mostly satisfied with the curriculum and express an ability to shape the curriculum requirements to suit the needs of their students. They find interlinking the three strands to be a successful approach. However, curriculum issues highlighted in this study correlated with aspects of Lane's (2005) findings.

Composition was the area of the curriculum around which teachers' responses were less centred. Although they expressed no negative opinions on this aspect of the curriculum, they had little to say on composition. Yet an important point that did emerge was that they perceive composition as being dependent on literacy. Music literacy levels in first year varied greatly due to the experiential nature of music in primary schools, and therefore all of the teachers take a 'start from scratch' approach to bring all students to similar levels of literacy skills. While only two schools in this study had classes of mixed literacy levels, it is a concern in those cases that students with high levels of music literacy, perhaps gained in private music tuition, are prevented from developing their skills to a higher level in secondary school. It is significant that none of the teachers had students studying a higher elective in

composition. This suggests that the issue of mixed literacy levels is, in some cases, preventing students from furthering their literacy and composition skills in secondary school. Teachers are coping with its demands, but they cannot address the needs of students individually. There is potential for further research in the links between composition and music literacy.

Although the teachers can be very creative with listening activities in first and fourth year, they find this section of the Junior and Leaving Certificate curricula to be unrealistic for several reasons. Firstly, its large learning-content creates disproportionate demands on class time, and they feel too few marks are allocated towards it in comparison with other sections of the curriculum. Secondly, teachers feel that this strand is unappealing to students, and they engage students by linking it with other activities. This suggests that in situations where it is deemed necessary, teachers are creating their own strategies to shape the curriculum to the required needs. Thirdly, the teachers were aware that there appears to be a lack of continuity between the Junior and Leaving Certificate curricula in the listening strand.

Regarding performance, teachers spoke less about objective standards in terms of performance and a lot more about effective participation and engagement. It is perceived by teachers to be the most accessible element of the course, particularly in schools where students were not receiving formal training privately. In these cases, teachers employ informal learning techniques such as peer learning (Green, 2002b, pp. 76-83), group learning (Green, 2008, pp. 119-27), and learning by ear (Green, 2002b, pp. 60-76). Helena teaches in two schools with contrasting profiles - interestingly she does not use informal learning strategies in the school where students are receiving formal music training outside school. However, in the school where students receive no music training of this kind, she relies heavily on informal learning strategies. This is also an area of the curriculum which teachers shape to suit the students' needs when necessary, for example by adopting the students' preferred musical genres, as well as their preferred areas of performance. The vast majority of students are choosing performance as the higher elective and students are relying on their teachers to help make that decision. This suggests that teachers are choosing performance as their students' higher elective because it is a safer option in terms of getting marks, is accessible, and keeps students engaged, and it appears to be the most

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meaningful strand for them. Overall, there is evidently scope for development of the curriculum and support materials. The new Junior Certificate music curriculum that will be taken by first-year students in September 2016 may change this.

An issue that pertained to the curriculum was the lack of continuum between primary and second-level music education. The provision of music in primary schools varied, and this presented teachers with the challenge of having mixed levels of music experience amongst students in first year. In these instances, teachers typically used a 'start from scratch' approach. Streaming, which was used in one school, appeared to be a successful method of organising students' abilities. It is possible that more focus on music in primary school might boost uptake in secondary school; however, this is a broader topic that is unresolved.

Extra-curricular activities were valuable in engaging students in musical activities, as well as raising the profile of music within the school. First year and transition year were particularly effective periods in engaging with extra-curricular activities. Extra-curricular activities were stronger in schools where informal learning strategies were used. This suggests that informal learning is valuable to a student's music activities, where these are extended outside the classroom. A further study could research this area in more detail. Extra-curricular activities were not dependent on availability of music facilities or resources. In these instances, teachers displayed flexibility and resourcefulness in employing community musicians and performers, alternative rehearsal and performance areas, and combining music with other school subjects.

The relatively recent introduction of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) to the curriculum appeared to be accepted by the teachers without controversy. They find the use of ICT-based resources to be beneficial to the delivery of music as a subject. This was particularly the case for the listening strand, where ICT enabled easier access for students where necessary.

Although the use of ICT, peer and group learning, and informal learning are relatively recent developments in music education, their adoption appears to be successful in this sample of Irish schools. This suggests that teachers are coping with the demands of teaching music to students from a diverse society, and are devising their own

methods to carry out its successful delivery. Whilst being faithful to the curriculum, teachers can shape it according to the students' needs. Therefore, the curriculum *appears* to be flexible. However, issues and concerns exist for certain aspects of the course.

A sense of connectedness through music to several forms of social interaction was also evident amongst the schools in this study, suggesting that links are being made between the worlds of formal and informal music-making in schools, bridging the distinctions students and teachers make between 'school music' and 'music at home', thus making the experience more authentic. These boundaries of classroom music, extra-curricular music, performance, and community music all appeared to blend with one another, giving voice to optimism, such as expressed by Cox:

> What is hopeful about much of the present situation is that with the recent developments [...] the previously separate worlds of classroom music, extra-curricular music, instrumental teaching and music in the community appear to be establishing connecting pathways (Rainbow & Cox, 2006, p. 385).

This study also revealed the extent of informal learning of music as a practice that exists in secondary schools, and indeed demonstrated the benefits than can result from this. Further research could investigate and make suggestions for the development of these teaching methods in the curriculum. Also, the potential for further benefits could be researched, such as the possibility of it being a catalyst for social development.

Lane's (2005) research questioned whether the current Leaving Certificate curriculum gives equal and fair access to all students in a class setting. This study presents strong evidence to suggest that provision is being made for the accessibility of music to all students regardless of their musical experience. Schools where students were entering first year with no prior music experience were successfully reaching Leaving Certificate standard. In these instances, teachers were employing methods such as informal learning practices, as well as shaping the curriculum to suit their students' needs, regardless of their background in music. The extent to which this is being done in this sample of schools is indicative of major responses to challenges in the delivery of music in Irish post-primary schools, and is one of the most important findings.

In conclusion, although the broader primary school issue remains unresolved, evidence in this study supported Koopman's (1996) and Elliott's (1995, p. 39) arguments that the value of music is to be found in musical experiences. Students were most engaged with performance activities, particularly in situations where they were not receiving formal tuition outside school, and teachers made efforts to ensure that the performance material was meaningful to the students. Evidence in this study also showed that there is scope for teachers to shape the curriculum, to make performance and other class activities meaningful to the students. This supported Stakelum's (2008) findings that the teacher has the ability to transform the curriculum to suit his or her own educational setting.

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Appendix A: Preliminary survey 1

Undergraduate Questionnaire and Results

Preliminary Survey 1 – Undergraduate Questionnaire and Results

The following questionnaire was given to undergraduate students in Cork Institute of Technology/Cork School of Music. Questions were prompted by and based on literature findings. The aim was to gain some insight into issues in primary and secondary school music education in Ireland in relatively recent times, from the students' perspective. This was carried out prior to the main teacher interviews, and it was intended that the feedback from this preliminary study would prompt some questions for those later interviews.

1) Which of the following were available in your primary school? Please specify.
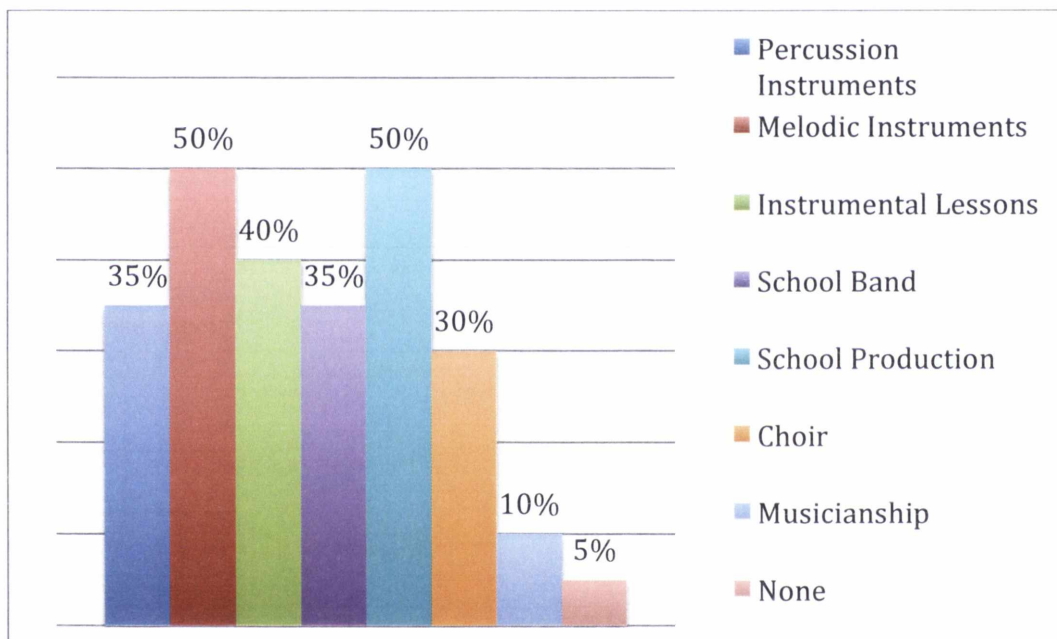
2.a.) Did you learn any instrument in primary school, and did an internal or external teacher teach it?

- Yes, by an external teacher
- Yes, by an internal teacher
- No
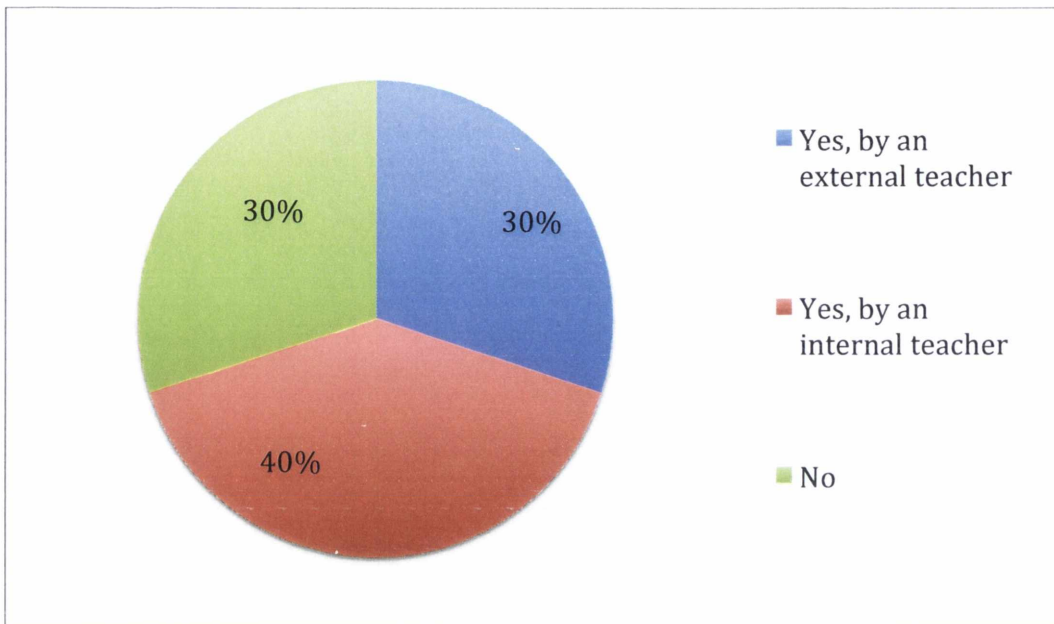
2.b.) Please specify the instrument

- Recorder
- Piano
- Tin Whistle
- Trombone
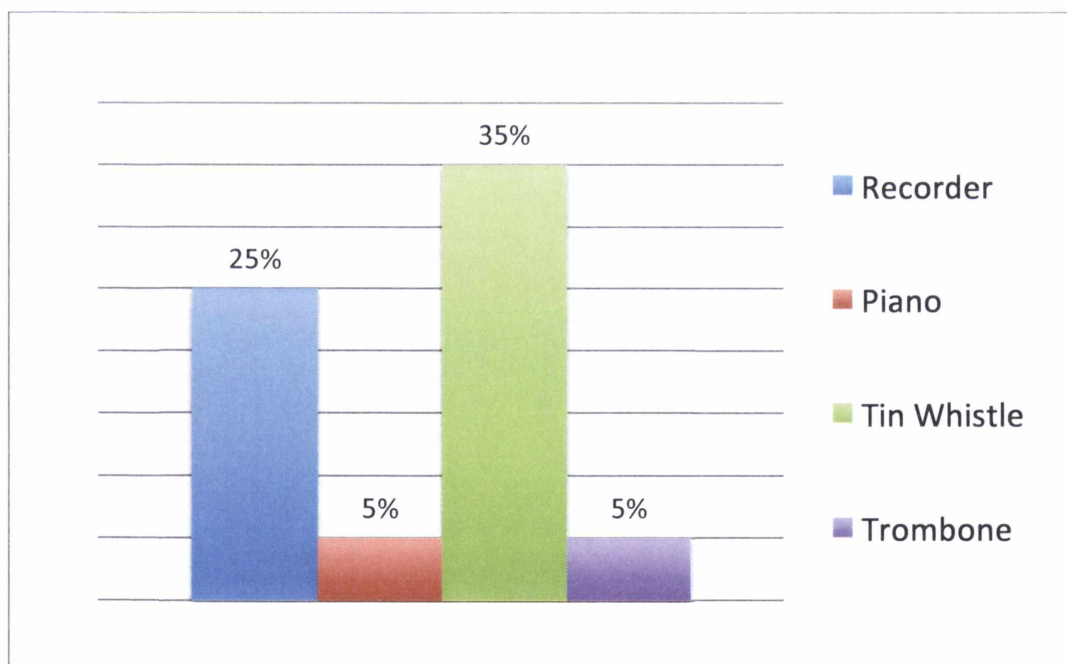
3) Were you at any stage taught music reading skills or musicianship skills in primary school?
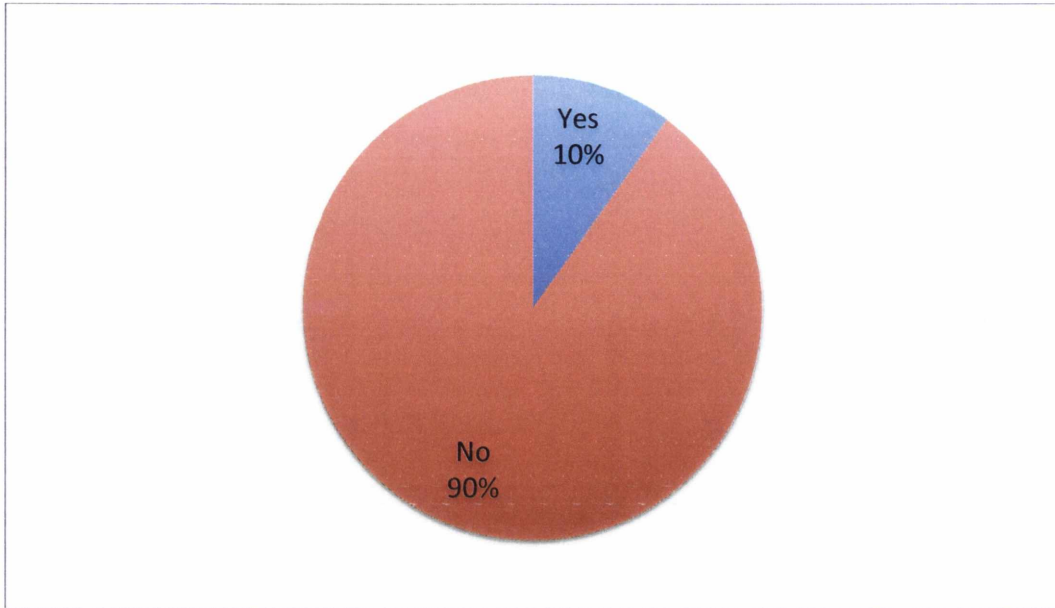
4) How would rate the following statement? 'My primary school experience positively shaped my attitude towards music.'
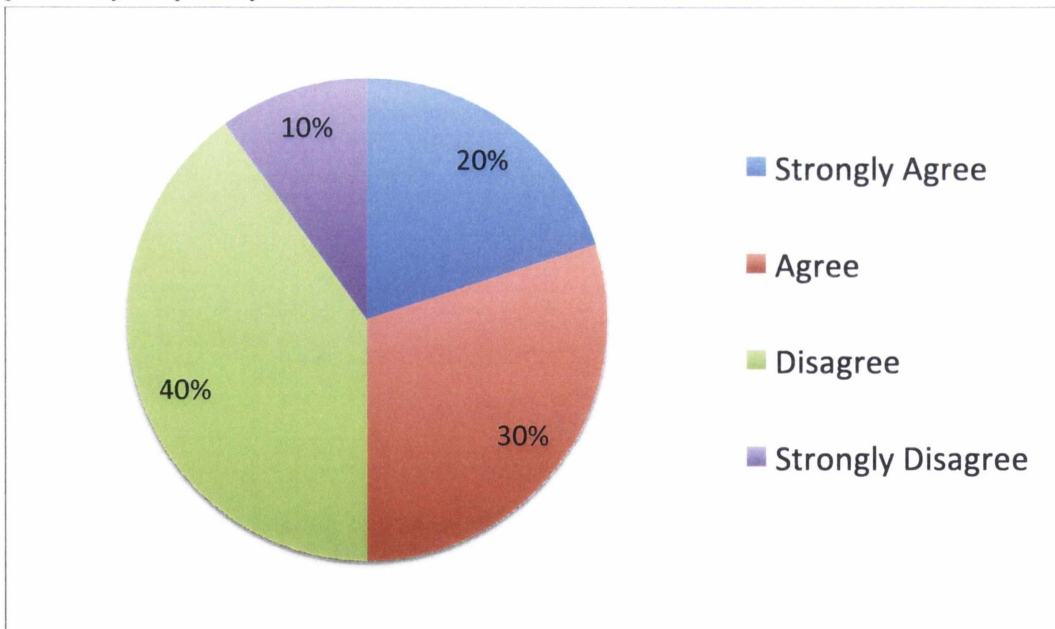
5) How many students were in your Junior Certificate class?
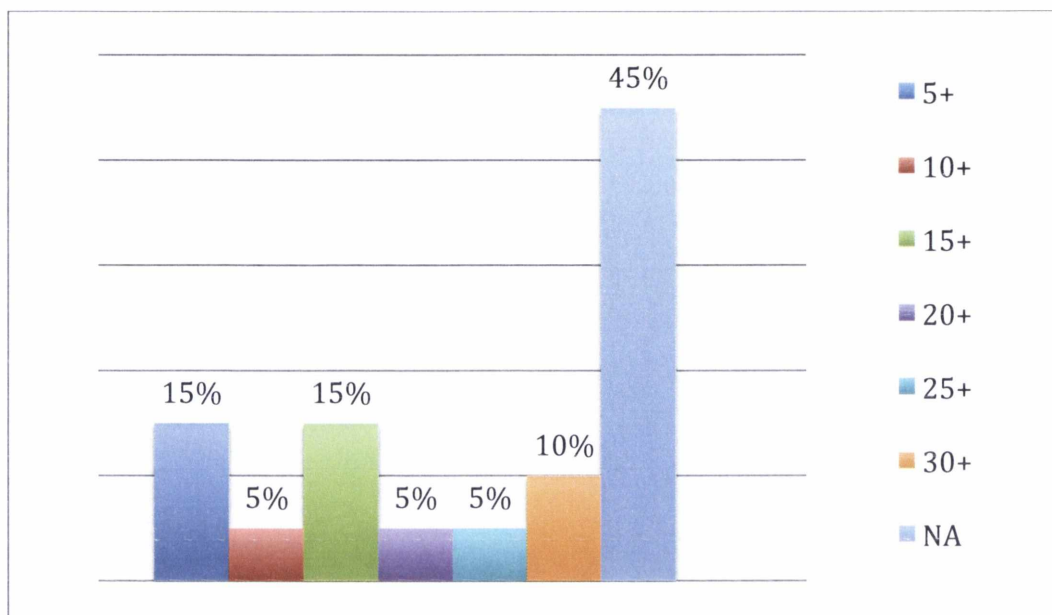
NA refers to students who studied the Junior Certificate music curriculum with a private teacher, in a private music school.

6) How many students were in your Leaving Certificate class?
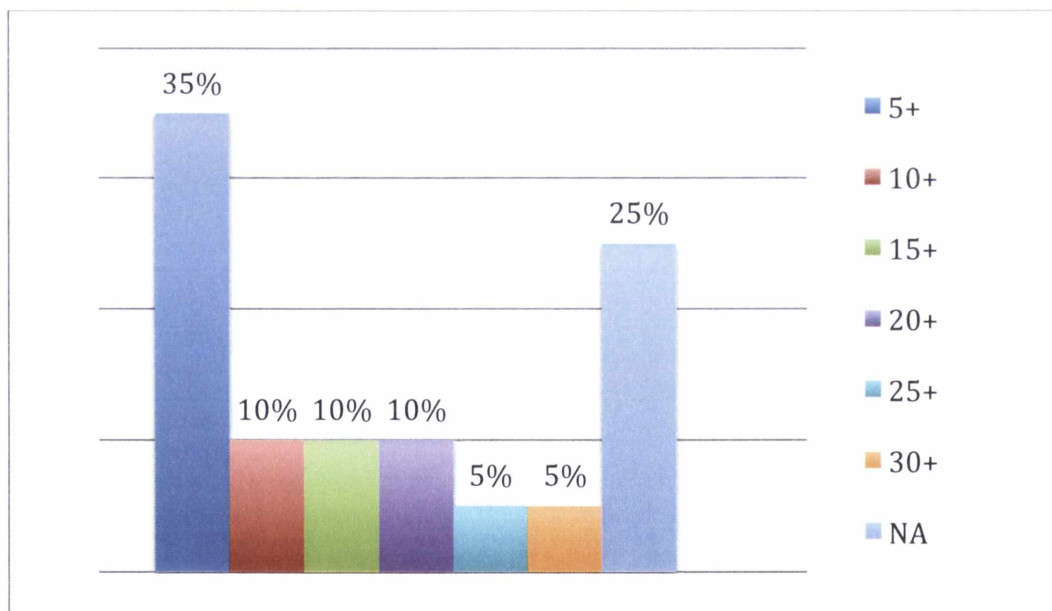
7) What was the ratio of male to female in your Leaving Certificate music class?
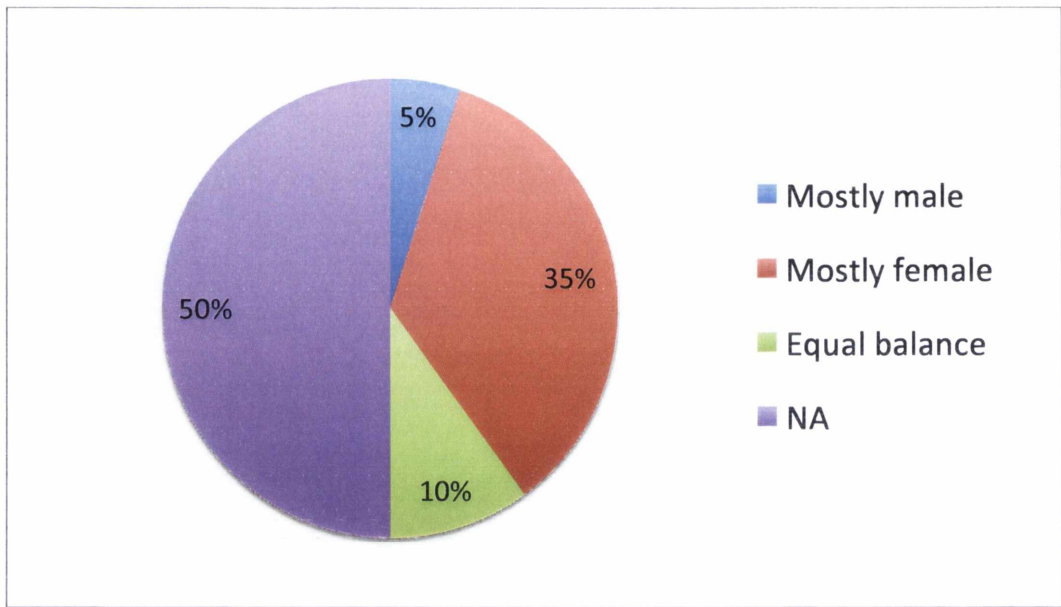
NA refers to pupils who went to an all male/female secondary school, who studied the Leaving Certificate curriculum privately.

8) Which of the following were available to you when you studied music in Secondary school? Please specify.
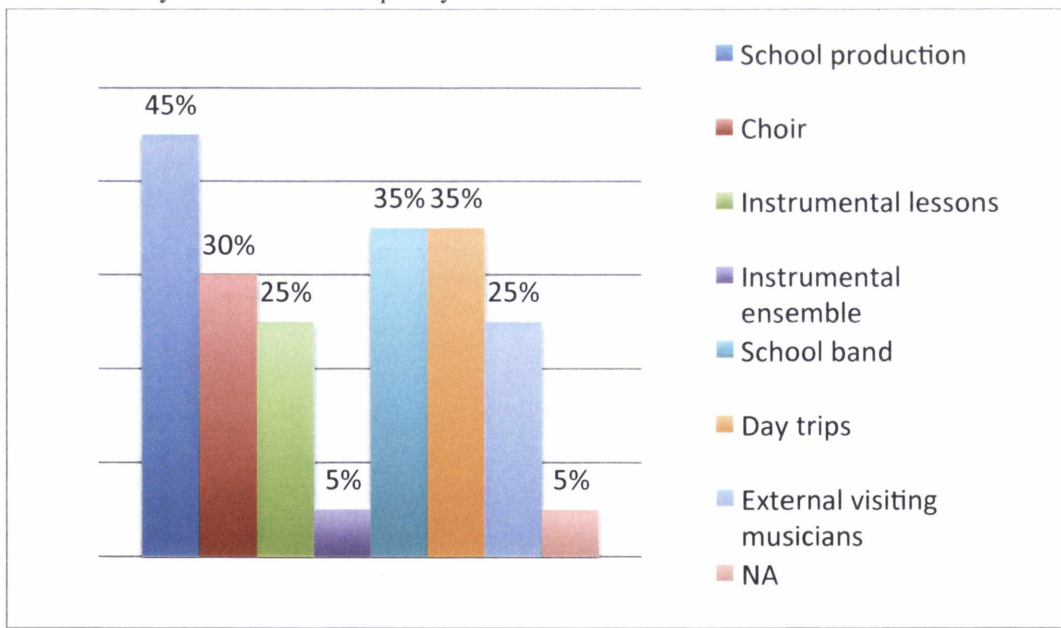
9) What music resources and facilities were available in your Secondary school?
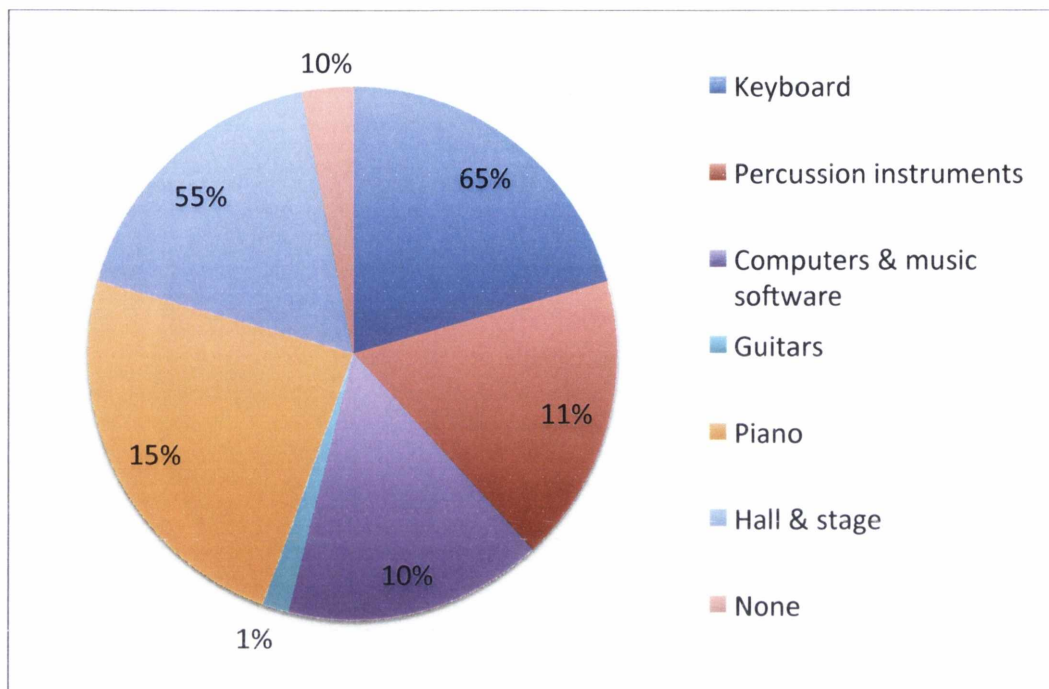

No students noted having had melodic instruments available to them in their Secondary school.

10) Which of the following sections of the curriculum was the most amount of time given to by your teacher?
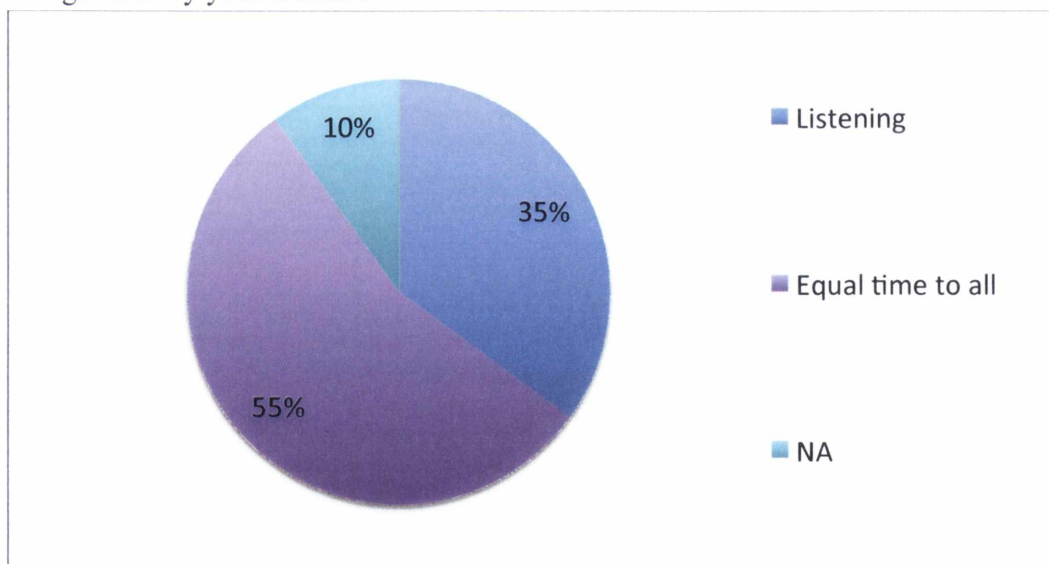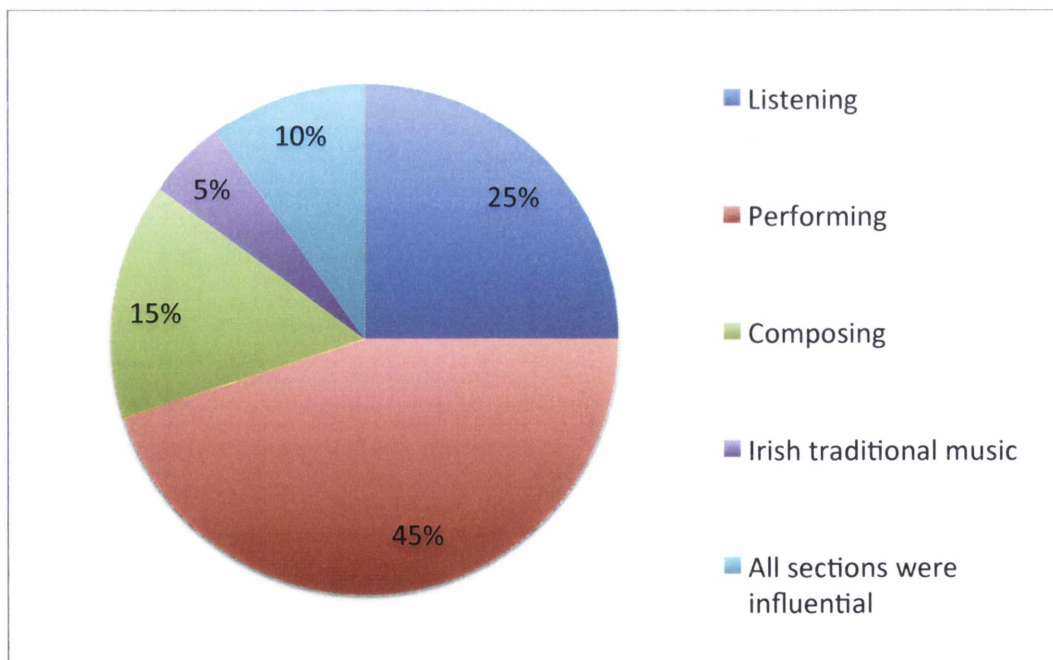

No students referred to the composition or performance section of the curriculum for this question.

11) Which of the following areas was the least amount of time given to by your
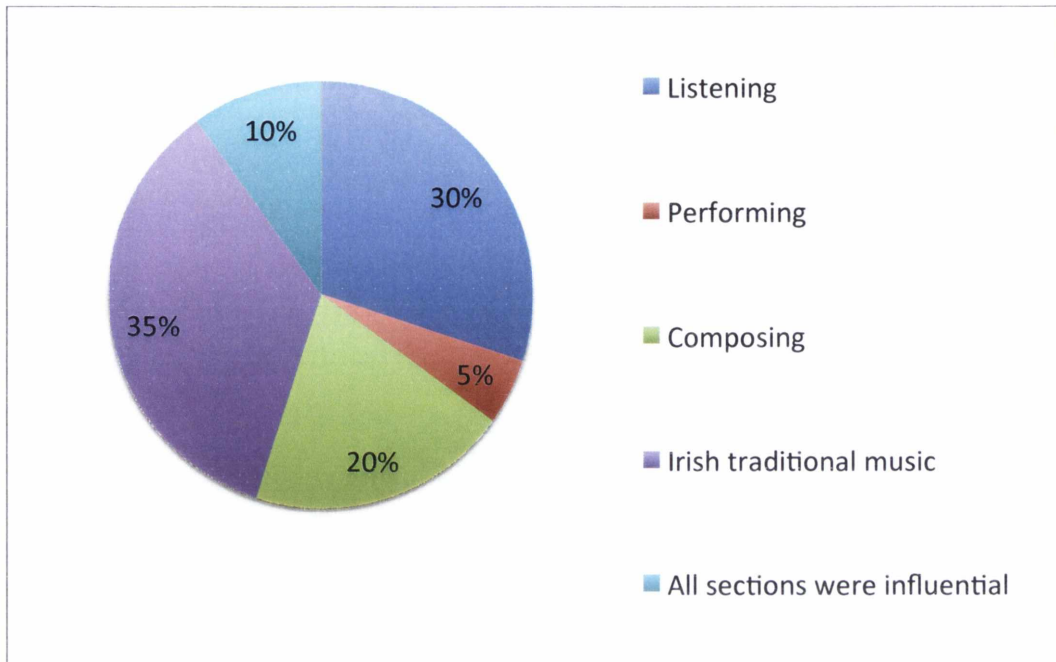teacher?

Listening
Performing
Composing
Equal time
NA

5%
20%
50%
25%
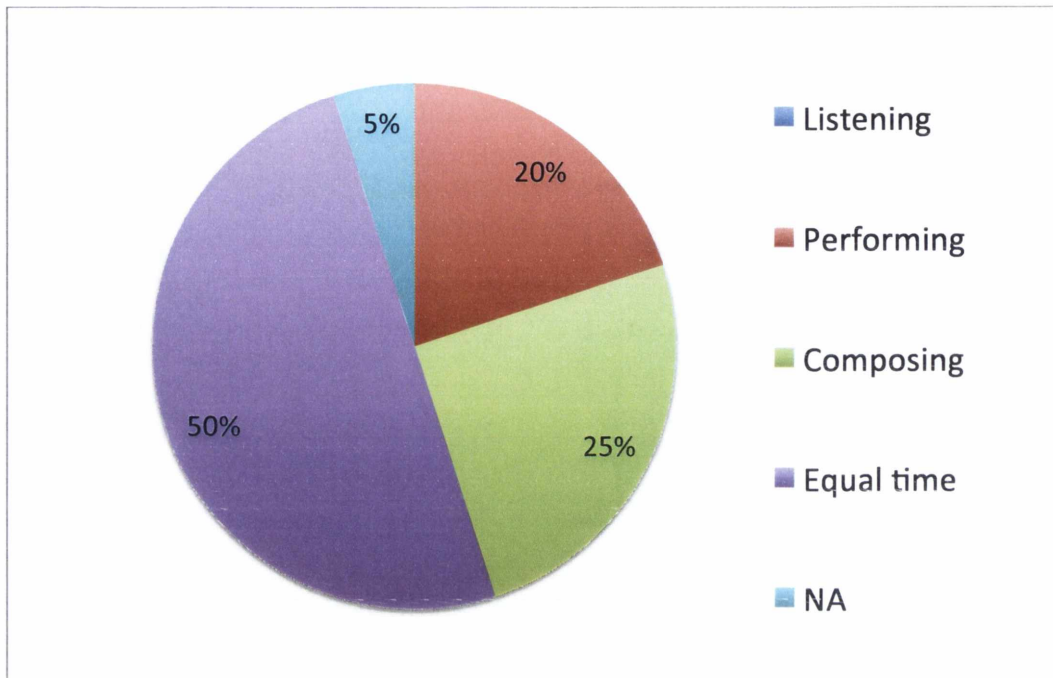
No students referred to the listening section of the curriculum for this question.

12) Which section of the curriculum influenced you the least?

Listening
Performing
Composing
Irish traditional music
All sections were influential

10%
5%
25%
15%
45%

13) Which section of the curriculum influenced you the most?

- Listening
- Performing
- Composing
- Irish traditional music
- All sections were influential

Listening 30%
Performing 5%
Composing 20%
Irish traditional music 35%
All sections were influential 10%

14) Which change would you make to the curriculum?

- Listening involving more genres
- More class music-making
- More Irish traditional music
- More composition & literacy
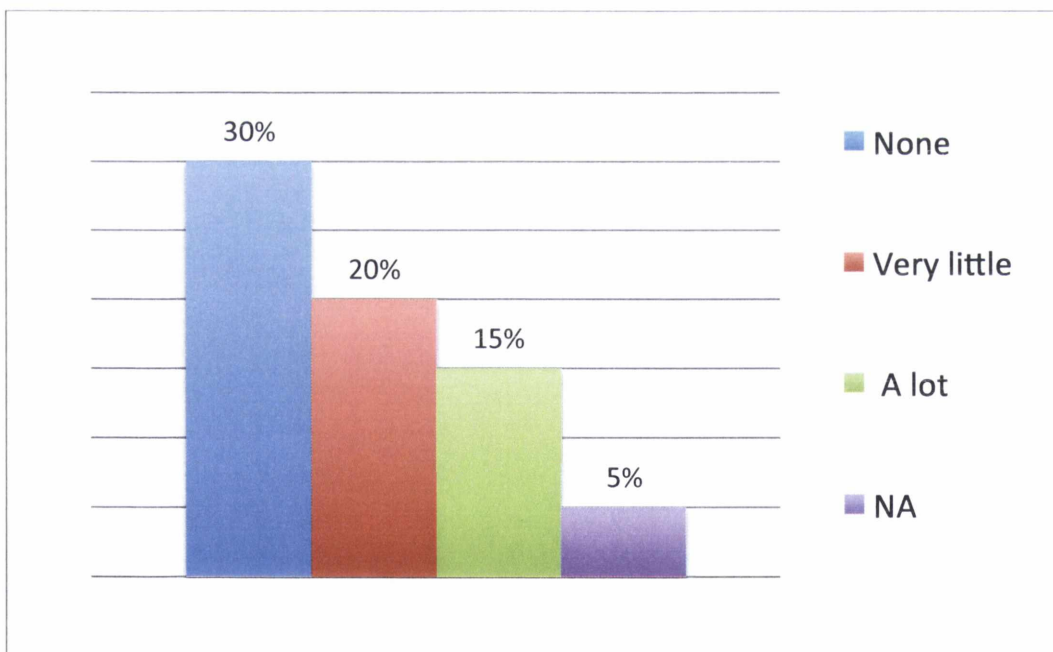- More performance

45% 10% 25% 25% 15%
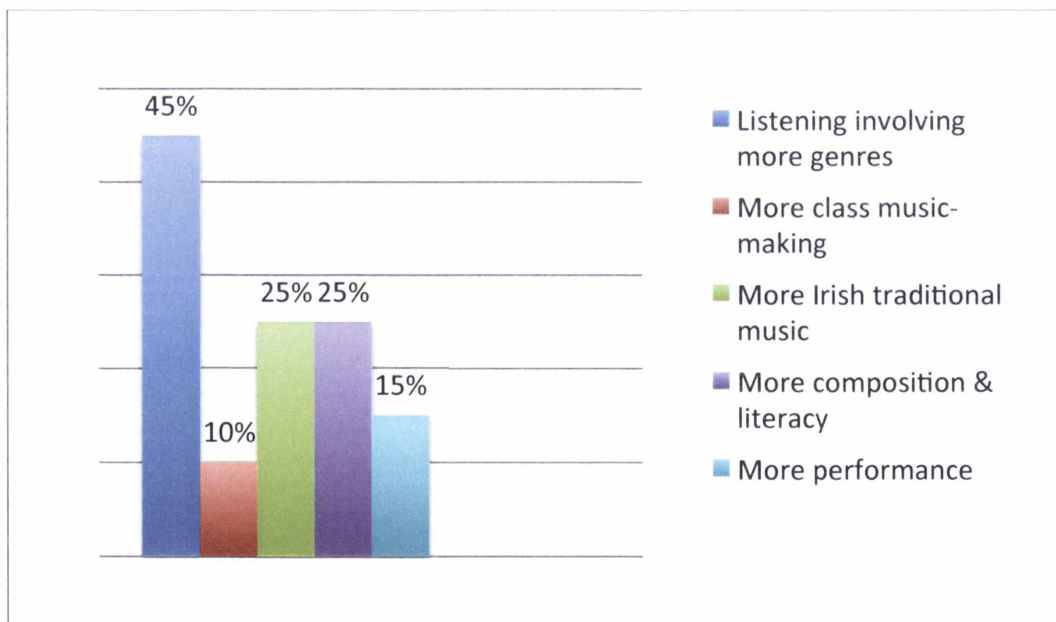
15) To what extent do you feel your teacher prepared you for the Irish traditional
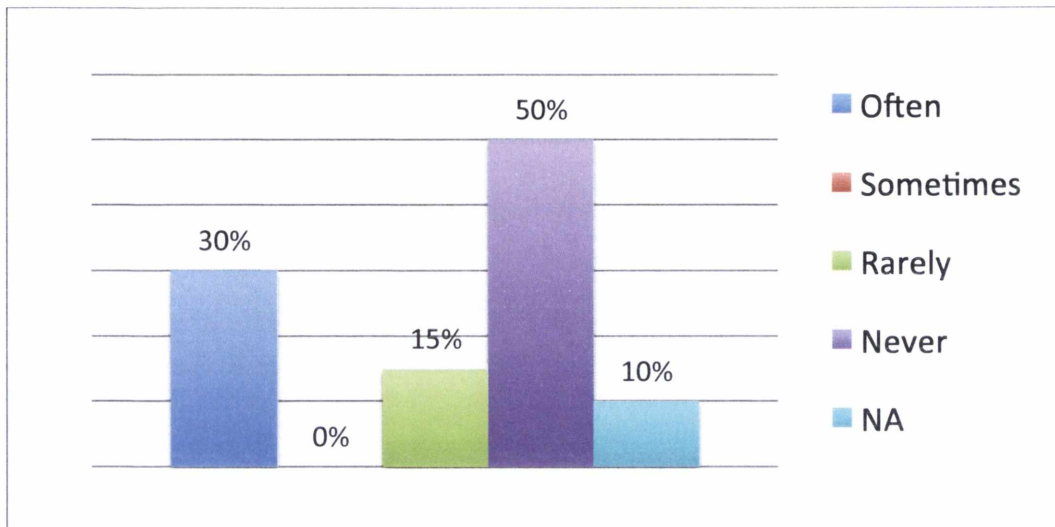   music areas of the curriculum?
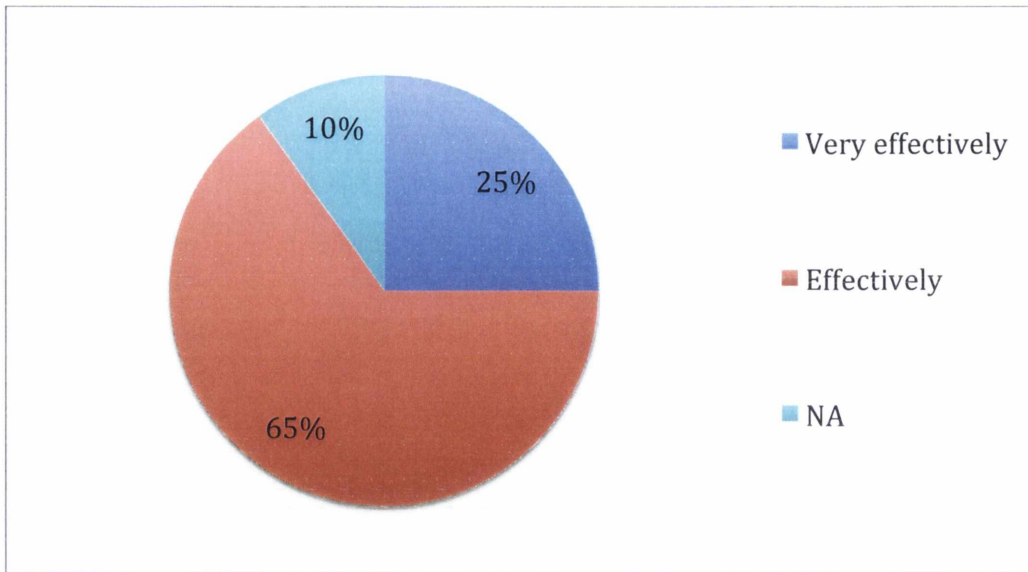
No respondents chose the 'poorly' or 'very poorly' options for this question.
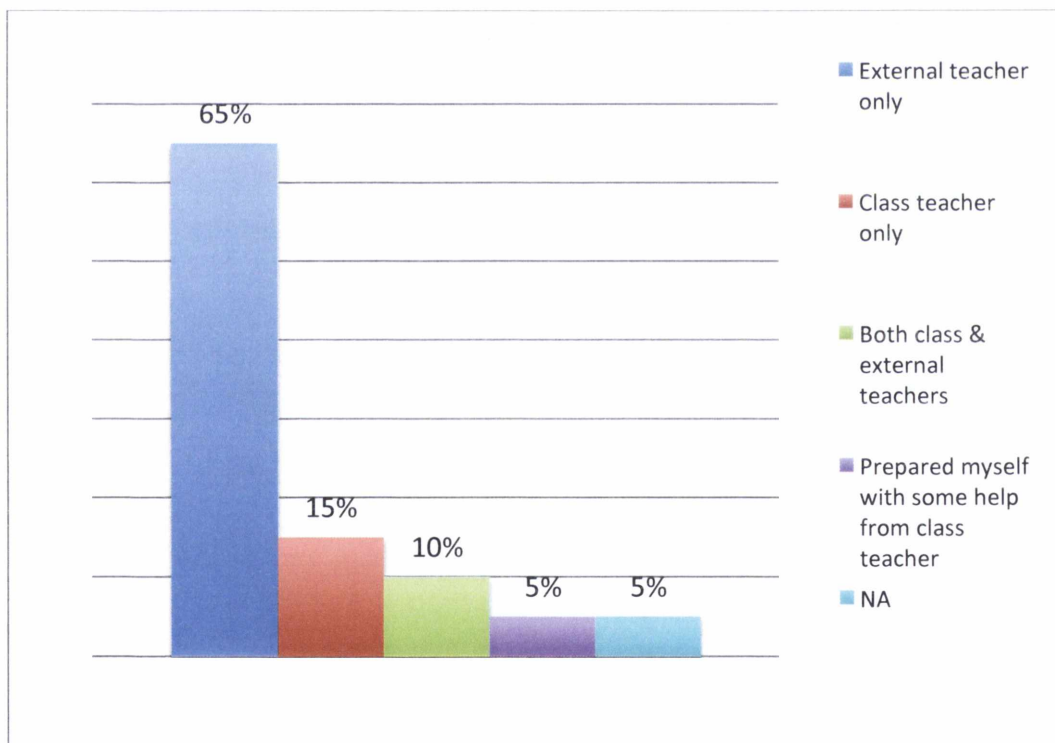
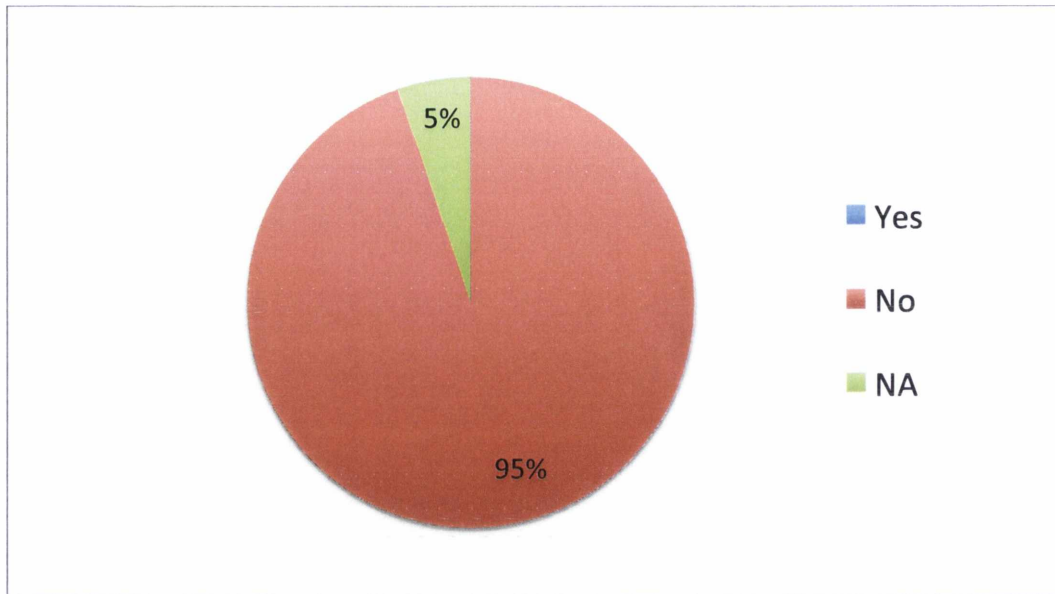16) To what extent did you explore instruments in class?

17) To what extent did you play your own individual instrument in class?

■	Often
■	Sometimes
■	Rarely
■	Never
■	NA

Values: 30% (Often), 0% (Sometimes), 15% (Rarely), 50% (Never), 10% (NA)

18) Who prepared you mostly for the performance examination?

|	
■	External teacher only
■	Class teacher only
■	Both class & external teachers
■	Prepared myself with some help from class teacher
■	NA

Values: 65%, 15%, 10%, 5%, 5%

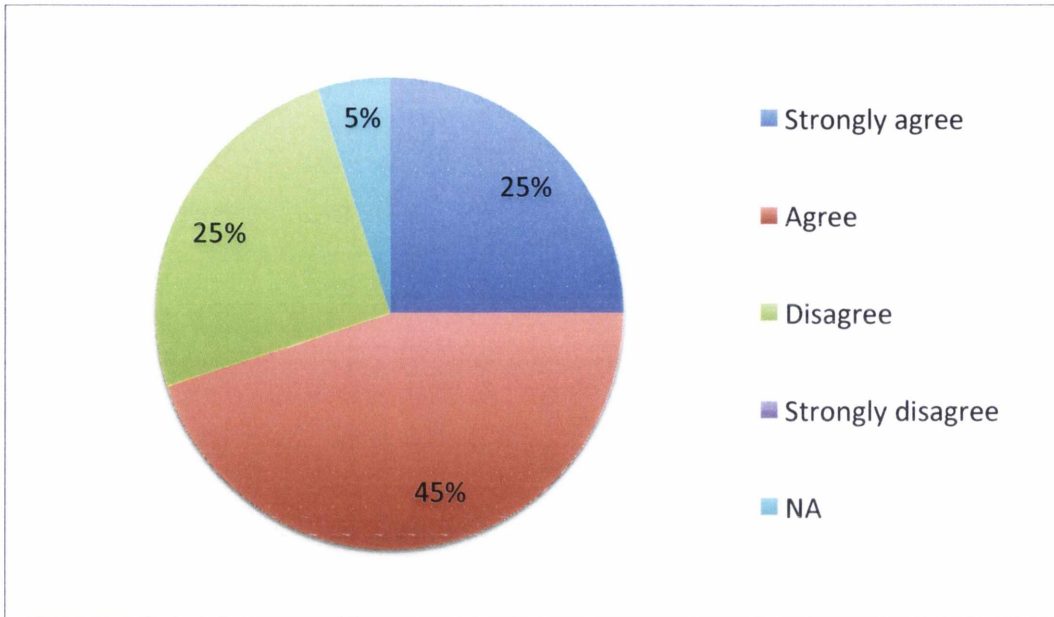19) Did you choose the higher elective composition question?

NA refers to pupils who attended secondary school in Northern Ireland, where the higher elective options were not applicable.

20) Did you choose the higher elective listening question?
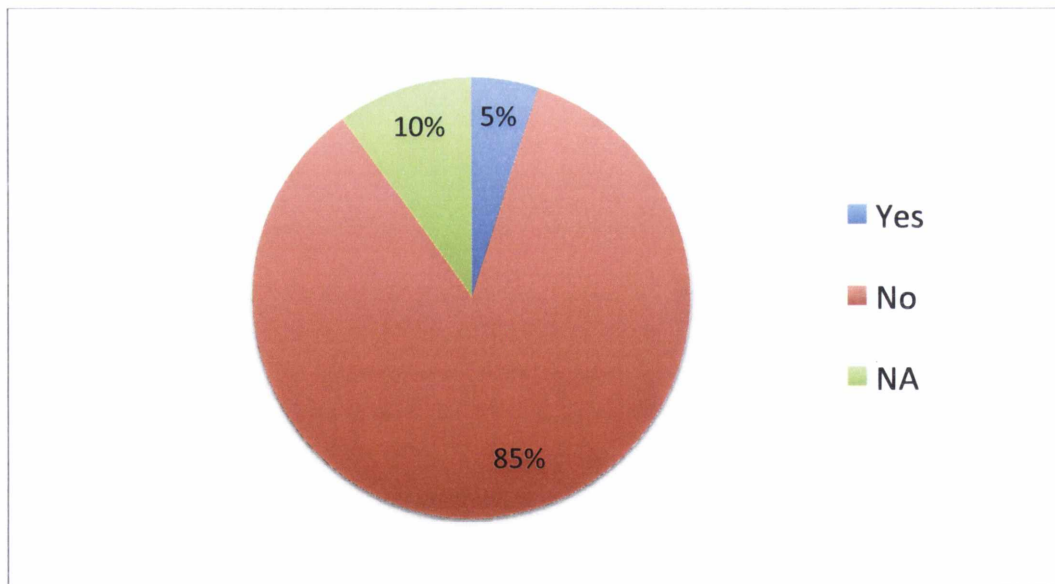
NA refers to pupils who attended secondary school in Northern Ireland, where the higher elective options were not applicable.

21) Were your expectations of secondary school music met?

Legend:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- NA

Pie chart values: 25% (Strongly agree), 45% (Agree), 25% (Disagree), 5% (NA)

Appendix B: Preliminary Survey 2

Primary Teacher Survey and Results

Preliminary Survey 2 – Primary teacher survey

I devised this survey for a small number of primary school teachers, with the aim of gaining some insight into several key primary school music education issues. These issues included teacher confidence, their own experiences with music, as well as the quantity of music teaching they provide to their students. It was intended, in a similar fashion to Preliminary Survey 1, that the feedback would inform questions for the main secondary school teacher interviews.

Q.1. Besides your teaching education, have you ever received formal music education of any kind (for example instrumental lessons)? If so, please specify briefly.

Q.2. How well do you feel teacher training prepared you to teach music in your job?

Q.3. Do you feel confident teaching music to your students?

Q.4. Do you teach recorder or tin-whistle to your class?

Q.5. Are you involved in teaching any kind of extra-curricular music in your school? (For example, guitar groups /choirs)

Q.6. Generally, how often do you cover music with your class each week?

Q.7. What aspect of music do you feel your students enjoy the most and the least? (For example, listening/ performing / composing /other)

If you have any comments you would like to leave below with regard to your overall feelings towards teaching music in primary school, it would be appreciated. Many thanks for taking the time to complete this survey.

Preliminary Survey 2 - The results

Introduction

Twenty-five surveys were sent to primary school teachers of which seventeen replied. Many I knew personally or were contacted through other people I knew. Fourteen of the respondents were female, while three were male. Thirteen taught in schools in Cork county and city, three in Dublin city, and one in a rural county in the southeast of Ireland. The teachers each had between three and fifteen years of primary teaching experience.

Music experience

Out of seventeen primary school teachers who completed the surveys, eleven had some degree of formal and/or informal music training prior to teacher training. This included lessons and examinations to various levels in piano, voice, guitar, violin, piano accordion, tin-whistle, and recorder. Two had received music theory lessons. Five respondents had received no music training of any kind prior to teacher training. Teachers who did not have musical experience apart from teacher training expressed an enjoyment for teaching music, but found it problematic to teach. Many of these teachers relied heavily on song-singing to teach music rather than music literacy. Many teachers who had received private music training taught the tin-whistle or recorder.

Teacher training

Teachers' opinions on how adequately teacher training prepared them to teach music in their jobs were varied. Eight respondents felt that it prepared them sufficiently. Three of these mentioned that although they were sufficiently prepared, the training was, however, basic. Eight respondents stated that teacher training was insufficient for teaching music in primary schools. Responses to the question: 'How well do you feel teacher training prepared you to teach music in your job?' included:

> Not very well. I think teachers should be taught about crotchets, minims etc.

> Not very well. They covered strands like composing and performance but very little listening and responding.

> I don't think that teacher training prepared me to teach music in my job at all, and if I hadn't had prior knowledge of notes, beats, rhythm etc. I wouldn't feel confident about teaching it.

> Not hugely. Very basic and presumed everybody had music background.

One teacher mentioned the usefulness of 'music programmes' to the primary teacher. Music programmes are classroom schemes provided by non-government bodies, which provide music resources and manuals for the teacher. They can be purchased privately or with funding from the school or teacher. Bernie Murray-Ryan, who developed the *Music Made Easy* scheme, describes its purpose and function, while outlining its helpfulness to the teacher without formal music knowledge:

> These schemes are laid out in such a teacher-friendly way that you really can teach music quite successfully to your students while having only a basic knowledge of the subject yourself. It uses a direct approach and the children learn musical terms from an early age (Music Made Easy, 2004).

The main study highlighted the experiential nature of primary school music. This corresponded with a comment made by one respondent, who highlighted that there was an emphasis on song singing in teacher training, while there was less training in music literacy. Very few teachers were involved in extra-curricular music in their school.

Appendix C: Main study

Teacher Interview Questions

Main study – teacher interview questions

These interviews with secondary school music teachers were to provide the main body of research for this dissertation. Questions were prompted by literature findings, and by the two preliminary surveys. The aim was to gain insight into the issues and challenges that music teachers face in Irish secondary schools today. The following questions provided me with a structure for the interviews, however they were semi-structured and the conversation went to other topics at times. The teachers were not given the following questions on paper, since the interview was conducted in a conversational manner.

Continuum

- How do you perceive continuity between primary and first-year experience of secondary music?
- Have you any thoughts on the primary curriculum compared to the secondary?
- What are your priorities in the direction of teaching in first year?
- How much musical experience amongst first-year students is gained from primary school?
- Is there any contact with primary feeder schools and teachers?
- Each student has different musical capabilities in first year in terms of their primary school experiences / private tuition / personal interests and developments / no musical experience / genre - how do you cater for each student's individuality?

Curricular focus

- Do you feel the first-year curriculum serves you and the students well?
- In first year, to what extent are you obliged to stick the curriculum?
- How much do you depart from the curriculum?
- How much music making is done in the classroom?
- Is there instrumental tuition within the school?

Extra curricular music

- Could you tell me about the overall musical life in your secondary school, for example; musicals, orchestras, bands, and choirs?

- To what extent does music play a part in school occasions?
- Does this add to the overall reputation and ethos of the school?
- If so, how many of the participants are students with music experience?
- Do you put in hours outside of paid time?
- Is drama (i.e. plays) a feature in your school? Does the music teacher/department collaborate?

Statistics

- First year; Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate; gender? Class numbers? Resources? Timetabling?
- Why aren't students continuing to Junior and/or Leaving Certificate music?

Genre

- Traditional music is a prominent section in the Junior and Leaving Certificate; how well equipped do you feel to teach about traditional music with or without experience?
- To what extent do you use other non-classical genres?

Students' attitudes

- What are your thoughts on students' attitudes and their interests in music?
- How are these in line with the curriculum?
- How do you cater for the different interests?
- Do you feel the curriculum caters for those with no private or graded tuition?
- Have cutbacks had any effect on music classes in your school?

Teacher feelings and approaches towards the curriculum

- Does the curriculum serve you well?
- To what extent can you or feel the need to move outside it?
- Do you have any teacher support or training?
- Do you attend courses for secondary school music teachers?