The Victorian Curriculum requires a balance of formal and informal learning: Curriculum and pedagogical considerations in music education

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Abstract

Musical Futures is an informal approach to music education that was introduced into Australia as part of a pilot project in 2010. It is described as a "100% practical approach" (Musical Futures Australia, 2016a) that, "can be easily be tailored work in conjunction with any existing or future Australian music curricula" (Musical Futures, 2016b). Given the recent introduction of the Victorian Curriculum, it is timely to consider if this completely informal approach and the curriculum align through a comparative analysis. The role of a curriculum framework is to provide clearly defined learning outcomes that can be assessed to measure achievement learning levels or standards across a learning continuum. In 2017 the Victorian Curriculum F-10 replaced the AusVELS framework, the new curriculum "incorporates the Australian Curriculum and reflects Victorian standards and priorities" (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), 2016a). Using a constructivist framework that draws on Elliott's praxial philosophy of music education and development of musicianship (1995, 2005) a comparative curriculum analysis will determine to what extent an informal learning approach can meet curriculum requirements. The resource and policy documents *Musical Futures: An Approach to Teaching and Learning* (D'Amore, 2009) and the *Victorian Curriculum - Music Years 7-10* (VCAA, 2016b) are used for analysis, and are the basis for outlining the associated curriculum and pedagogical considerations necessary for educators and curriculum authorities.

Keywords: Victorian Curriculum, Australian Curriculum, music education, authentic learning, informal and formal pedagogy, curriculum analysis, Musical. Futures

Introduction

Developed in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2003, Musical Futures is described as an approach to teaching and learning music in the classroom that is based on personalising and informalising student learning (D'Amore, 2009; Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2016) and how popular musicians learn (Green, 2002). The approach was initially designed for secondary students aged 11-14 years old, to combat the loss of interest in music education and address increasing challenges of youth disengagement and criminal behaviour in some parts of the UK (D'Amore, 2009; Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2016). It is important to establish at the outset that this is not an entirely new approach to education or music learning. The premise for engaging students in real life or authentic learning contexts and using content that is both interesting and relevant to students' has been advocated for and practiced in some cases for years (Crawford, 2009, 2014; Karlsen, 2011; Vulliamy, 1976a, 1976b). However, this has been achieved in experiential or practical and real life contexts where there is a balance of informal and formal learning approaches used. Even within student-centred learning environments, contemporary constructivist frameworks dictate the requirement to extend learning by providing appropriate sequencing and scaffolding of

learning opportunities for students to construct new knowledge and develop skills within socially mediated contexts (Anderson, Greeno, Reder, & Simon, 2000; Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Steffe & Gale, 1995; Tishman, Jay & Perkins, 1993). Understanding students' zone of proximal development is critical in this process and is not supported by a completely informal student-centred approach (Anderson et al., 2000; Crawford, 2014).

Musical Futures was introduced into Australia as part of a pilot project in 2010 and is a "100% practical approach" (Musical Futures Australia, 2016a) to learning music using "popular forms of music" (Musical Futures Australia, 2013, p. 14). Musical Futures Australia states that, "Musical Futures can be easily be tailored work in conjunction with any existing or future Australian music curricula" (2016b). Given the recent introduction of the Victorian Curriculum, it is timely to consider if this completely informal approach and the curriculum align through a comparative analysis. The role of a curriculum framework is to provide clearly defined learning outcomes that can be assessed to measure achievement learning levels or standards across a learning continuum. In 2017 the Victorian Curriculum F-10 will replace the AusVELS framework, the new curriculum "incorporates the Australian Curriculum and reflects Victorian standards and priorities" (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), 2016a). The music curriculum within this framework proposes the scope and sequential development of music skills and knowledge, so that musicianship is explored creatively and critically within a broad context of musical styles and periods. The work of a music education specialist is highly complex, as an appropriate balance of pedagogies is required to foster student interest and engagement, while fulfilling curriculum requirements and extend students' learning capacity beyond the limitations and simplicity of popular music. Herein lies the necessity for a balance of formal and informal learning.

This research investigates the extent to which Musical Futures can meet the requirements prescribed by the Victorian Curriculum across the secondary years of schooling (years 7-10) and determine if this could develop pathways into the senior secondary Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Music studies. This is particularly pertinent as Musical Futures Australia states that this approach, "Increases the number of students wanting to continue their music learning" (Musical Futures Australia, 2016a). So it will be valuable to identify in what ways this will support VCE Music studies. This policy and curriculum analysis will provide initial understanding into the extent to which this approach that advocates for engaging and motivating students using popular music and a completely informal pedagogy could also meet student learning and developmental outcomes required by the curriculum. This will provide an evidence base to inform music educators and curriculum authorities about the potential alignment of the Musical Futures approach with the Victorian Curriculum and implications for VCE Music studies.

Previous case study research

Initial case study research undertaken by Green (2002) hypothesised that the informal learning practices of musicians could enhance motivation and improve a range of musical skills in school students. Questioning the current way popular music was being taught, Green (2002) asserted that the formal approach used in the classroom did not reflect the informal way popular musicians engaged with music in real life. While this study added much to the understanding of the way popular musicians learn, it had some significant limitations. The musicians in the case study were pre-professional musicians with high levels of motivation, likely to be quite different from the average school student and in turn challenging to be used as a basis for general pedagogical principles for the classroom (Heuser, 2005). The study was based in a single demographic (London), used a small sample size of

14 participants and included a gender imbalance with all but two members being male, an important consideration given some of the sociological perspectives surrounding popular culture discourse (Abramo, 2016; Donze, 2016). This limited sample has led to questions about whether the participants were sufficiently representative (Pitts, 2004). The selection of musicians who played Anglo-American rock music further calls into question the relevance of the findings, given that popular music covers a wide range of genres. Focusing on only one popular music style may have narrowed the possibilities available and limited broader applications (Allsup, 2004). Despite the limitations in the underlying research, in 2003 Green partnered with the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to put her hypothesis into practice in school classrooms, which saw some positive outcomes. Ofstead concurred following an evaluation in 2006 that although the project at the time was limited in sample size that it "identified some effective alternative approaches to music teaching" (p. 2). It was recommended that, "the teaching aims and methods used in the project could present a significant challenge to many teachers and it is important that considerable care is given to the way these ideas are shared more widely" (Ofsted, 2006, p. 2). Later reports conclude similar findings (Ofsted, 2009, 2011).

In 2008, a report was produced by researchers from the Institute of Education (IOE), University of London, who investigated, "the take up and impact of *Musical Futures* in secondary schools across England" (Hallam et al., 2008, p. 3). The analysis concentrated on the perceived impact of engagement with Musical Futures from the perspective of teachers and students. The surveys conducted were in two parts, the first collected quantitative data using a Likert scale of 1-5 to collect responses to specific statements, and the second part included responses to open questions. While the teacher (N=105, 66%) and student (N=1079, 36%) responses to the survey are representative of a reasonable sample size, it should be noted that the teacher participants involved

only those who expressed interest in Musical Futures and who were already using the approach in their schools. This could indicate a possible bias towards the reported positive outcomes collected. The survey results reported that teachers felt more confident about facilitating student learning, teaching instrumental skills and had enhanced their enjoyment of teaching. Teachers perceived that their students "had responded well to it, that previously disinterested pupils became engaged and that it had helped them to facilitate integration of pupils' informal music learning with classroom music" (Hallam et al., 2008, p. 33).

The data indicated that 36 of the 105 teachers thought it integrated well with the UK National Curriculum, but in addition to positive comments there were also comments such as "I struggle to use Musical Futures to assess National Curriculum levels," and "limited in terms of world music/cultural experiences/composition" (Hallam, et at., 2008, p. 33). If the summary alone was relied upon without reference to the data collected it may lead to an over confident belief in the ability of the Musical Futures approach to meet curriculum requirements. In fact, the data indicates that a greater percentage of teachers had problems integrating Musical Futures with the curriculum than did not. The findings also indicated that 51% of teachers needed to make adaptations to the approach either due to space or equipment restrictions, to maintain student focus or to provide more varied or appropriate musical examples. This need for adaptation is not mentioned in the report summary nor is it commonly referred to in the wider literature, yet these factors are important for teachers intending to implement Musical Futures in their schools. Overall, "teachers indicated that the improvement in musical skills of their pupils had exceeded their expectations and that pupils had a better chance of fulfilling their musical potential" (Hallam et al. 2008, p. 43). While the data supports these findings, it is important to note that 'musical skills' are not defined nor is it known how these skills were measured. Care is needed

when considering what musical skills are being referred to and whether they are representative of the broad range of musical skills considered important to the student learning experience. While this survey provides valuable information from the teacher and student perspective on the impact and uptake of Musical Futures, more detail is required to understand the specific musical skills developed by using the informal approach and the extent to which these skills meet student outcomes required by the curriculum.

Following a pilot study of the implementation of Musical Futures in eight schools in Victoria, Australia, researchers from the University of Melbourne Graduate school of Education reported findings for Musical Futures Australia (Jeanneret et al., 2011) using similar questions and methodology to that of the UK study (Hallam et al., 2008). Two schools were selected for case studies and it should be noted that the data collected for the Australian report comes from a smaller sample (11 teachers, 4 from the same school, in comparison to 105). This study concluded that "the Musical Futures approach is a pedagogy that clearly and demonstrably engages and improves students in music and benefits other areas of learning in school" (Jeanneret et al. 2011, p. 2). While the limitations in sample size are concerning, these positive findings along with opportunities for teachers to undertake professional development in the Musical Futures approach are driving the uptake of the approach in Australian schools. A detailed examination of the Victorian Curriculum 7-10 will identify if this approach aligns and if there are any resulting implications for senior secondary VCE Music studies that educators may need to be aware of.

Study context and theoretical framework

The music taught in some school contexts has been criticised for not adapting to the innovations and developments of how music is engaged with outside of the classroom or using the appropriate pedagogies to support this (Crawford, 2005; Folkestad, 2006; Gower, 2012; Karlsen, 2010). The contrast between what students considered valid or valued knowledge and what was being practiced in some schools is acknowledged as a factor that has created disengagement and disinterest in secondary school music education, (Crawford, 2005, 2009, 2010; Green, 2008; Lewis, 1993; Westerlund, 2006), particularly in years 7 and 8 general music classes.

The discourse about valued knowledge and authentic learning contexts in schools has supported the argument for popular culture and informal pedagogy. Ideas about popular culture and youth (Vulliamy, 1976a, 1976b, 1977) and the consideration of how popular musicians learn (Green, 2002) were extended by Green (2008) who identified five defining characteristics relevant to informal music practice that can be summarised as: Learning starts with music that the learners choose; the main method of skill-acquisition involves copying recordings by ear (not learning through notation); informal learning relies on self-direction and learning with friends; knowledge is obtained in a haphazard way then moves to the detail at a later stage; and integrates listening, performing, improvising and composing with an emphasis on personal creativity. The application of these characteristics in the classroom led to a series of action research projects using the Musical Futures approach and a 'toolkit' of teacher resources were compiled containing lesson plans, case studies, video and audio material (Hargreaves 2004; Price, 2003). Despite some positive outcomes reported about this completely informal approach to music education in schools both in the UK (Hallam, Creech & McQueen, 2011) and Australia (Jeanneret, McLennan & Stevens-Ballenger, 2011), further independent empirical evidence is required to substantiate the contexts in which such an approach may be appropriate.

Given Musical Futures is identified as a completely practical approach to music education (Musical Futures Australia, 2013, 2016a), Elliott's praxial

philosophy of music education and development of musicianship (1995, 2005) provides an appropriate lens through which to view this study if considering connections to curriculum. The praxial philosophy offers an explanation of the nature and values of music as a practical, multidimensional concept and endeavour and its interconnection with life. The musicianship of all music students ('general' and elective music students) is developed through the critically reflective and co-dependent actions of: performing-and-listening, improvising-and-listening, composing-and-listening, arranging-and-listening and conducting-and-listening. It is important to make the distinction that although in this context, practical application and multidimensional learning is at the centre of the music curriculum, that this authentic learning and music making philosophy requires a balance of both informal and formal music approaches to extend students learning (Crawford, 2014; Elliott, 1995, 2005). Critical listening is used to facilitate all musical activity, learning to do this well is challenging and must be facilitated by appropriately scaffolded and sequenced learning opportunities if this is to be developed in an in-depth and meaningful way (Elliott, 1995). This philosophy recommends that to achieve the values of music, teachers must emphasise the interpretive nature of music as a performing and improvising art and that composing, arranging and conducting (all of which demand critical listening) should be taught frequently (and in direct relation) to a reasonable diversity of musics (genres, or musical practices) during the course of students' musical education (Elliott, 1995). This appears to be in contrast to the completely popular music culture advocated by Musical Futures in the Australian context (Musical Futures Australia, 2016).

Contemporary education has been influenced by the philosophy and thinking of constructivist framework and grounded in the research of Jean Piaget (1896-1980), Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), the Gestalt psychologists Frederic Bartlett (1886-1969) and Jerome Bruner (1915-2016) and the Progressive educational philosophy of John Dewey (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Steffe & Gale, 1995). Three key tenets of this philosophy can be summarised as: Students have differing ways of learning and ability levels; experiential learning is critical and teachers must provide real life, authentic learning experiences in order to engage students; and teachers must understand the level of experience of their students in order to extend knowledge and skill levels (Dewey, 1944).

Evidence of the influence of constructivist philosophy can be observed in Elliott's paraxial music philosophy (1995, 2005), which embraces the development of student musicianship through experiential and practical engagement. This perspective of musicianship is based on the successful ability of a person to manipulate sound using skills developed through musical knowledge, thoughts and action, enabling them to experience music on different physical, social and emotional levels. The emphasis that the paraxial philosophy places on learning in action, provides guidance in understanding the Musical Futures approach and a means to conceptualise student learning within it. Musicianship encompasses five forms of knowing: procedural, formal, informal, impressionistic and supervisory (Elliott, 2005). In Musical Futures, music is expressed through action, therefore creating music is essentially a procedural process. However, the four other types of knowledge identified by Elliott have a role to play in supporting the development of student musicianship holistically. Without this multidimensional interaction of all five knowledge forms, students may not develop musicianship or gain experiences of a "wide range of cognitive-affected challenges involved in listening to or making music" (Elliott 2005, p.9). Musicianship forms the basis of music education curricula and this praxial framework provides a means to consider the Musical Futures approach.

Research investigating the extent to which Musical Futures may align with the Victorian Curriculum and support learning that offers pathways to senior secondary VCE Music studies

until now have not been undertaken. This is critical in further understanding the issues and challenges that a completely informal popular based approach to music education might present in this context.

Research methodology

The aim of this study was to investigate whether a teaching approach developed in the UK could meet the requirements of the new Victorian Curriculum and an Australian based curriculum. The Musical Futures approach is being implemented in Australian schools without informed knowledge and understanding about the extent to which this may align with curriculum frameworks or considerations about implications for senior secondary music studies. This is a timely study given the new Victorian Curriculum was implemented in 2017 and the Andrew's Labor government has invested $2 million dedicated to resourcing music education in schools, part of which will be administered through Musical Futures (2016). With government pronouncements such as, "The Education State is backed by a range of ambitious but achievable targets, including increasing the number on Victorian students reaching the highest levels of achievement in the arts over the next 10 years" ensuring curriculum alignment, quality music education and pathways to senior secondary VCE Music studies is an imperative. Further, this research complements previous classroom based case studies (Hallam et al., 2011; Jeanneret et al., 2011) discussed in the next section. This study was guided by the research question: To what extent does Musical Futures align with the Victorian Curriculum 7-10 and support learning to provide pathways to the senior secondary VCE Music studies? Using a paraxial and constructivist lens, the question sought to determine which aspects of the Musical Futures pedagogy could align with the year 7-10 achievement standards or levels and to identify if there are any issues and challenges with this approach in meeting curriculum requirements.

The research study required data to be obtained from the source of inquiry, therefore the documents describing student activities and learning content from Musical Futures as well as the official Victorian curriculum framework outlining expected learning outcomes and achievement levels were required. The two data sources used were: *Musical Futures: An Approach to Teaching and Learning* (D'Amore, 2009) and the *Victorian Curriculum - Music Years 7-10* (VCAA, 2016b). Although the Musical Futures approach has been extended to include the primary years of schooling (Musical Futures Australia, 2016a) the focus outlined in the document reviewed, targets students in the age range of 11-14 years (D'Amore, 2009). This corresponds to the 7-9 years of schooling in the Victorian Curriculum. As this is divided into two sections, years 7-8 and 9-10, the content descriptors and achievement levels in both these ranges will be explored. Qualitative document analysis was used as the research design as it could provide an in-depth interpretation and understanding of the two key documents providing the information needed to address the research question.

Qualitative research involves the researcher being a key instrument in the research process and document analysis requires a level of interpretation by the researcher (Bowen, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Context about the researcher's experience is imperative in this type of study in considering how the documents are perceived, studied and analysed (Creswell, 2013). The researcher has been engaged in the practice of music education for a number of years as a secondary music classroom, instrumental and ensemble teacher and more recently as a teacher educator. Although the researcher has moved into the tertiary context, she maintains work and links with schools through the supervision of pre-service teachers' professional experience, research and service to the community. The researcher has also been involved directly in developing an extensive range of student learning experiences and implementing them to effectively teach the elements and concepts of music found in

the curriculum. These learning activities involved students in performing, composing, improvising, listening and developing the notational skills (both graphic and traditional western) required for recording musical sounds. The knowledge gained from a history of practical encounters with student activities in a number of educational contexts has equipped the researcher to read document descriptions and curriculum with experience and understanding of how to develop musicianship, and to make informed decisions regarding the selection and allocation of the data to be collected. Content analytical techniques were used to ensure the documents were examined in a reliable and rigorous way and that the procedures were clear and replicable (Creswell, 2013). The Musical Futures document was sampled and sections were selected and subdivided into separate activities focusing of one prominent skill area. Each task within the activity was then described and coded (Bowen, 2009; Creswell, 2013) by a short text phrase representative of the main musical skill experiences by the student. The Victorian curriculum 7-10 document was sampled for those sections describing the required student learning content and specific musical skills. Themes were devised from the analysis of the Victorian curriculum that would best capture the tasks recorded from the Musical Futures document providing a way to organise and interpret the data. Due to the expansive nature of the detailed analysis of the specific concepts and elements of musical skills, only a summary of the relevant themes have been provided in the findings section.

It should be recognised that the focus of this study was to provide the analysis on which implications might be drawn rather than testing the approach in practice. It will complement previous case study research conducted, which attempts to do this. Further, Green identified that "more work is needed to ascertain the extent to which the incorporation of informal learning practices in the curriculum prepares students for further study" (2008, p. 185). While the curriculum analysis

has been limited to the Victorian framework years 7-10, it is acknowledged that this incorporates the Australian curriculum (VCAA, 2016a) and can therefore be used to inform national initiatives.

Curriculum and comparative analysis

The Victorian Curriculum sets out what students are expected to learn and is designed as a continuum of learning. This is presented in a scope and sequence chart to support teachers to clearly identify learning progression and assist in planning teaching and learning programs to meet the diverse needs of students. The curriculum includes the specific strands in each learning area, with content descriptions, elaborations and achievement standards. It is advised that scope and sequence charts are read in conjunction with the introductory materials and the level/band descriptions in the curriculum. Supporting resource material is also provided to exemplify how some of the curriculum descriptors may be enacted.

In Victoria, the aims of the Music years 7-10 curriculum are to develop students': "Confidence to be creative, innovative, thoughtful, skilful and informed musicians; skills to listen, improvise, compose, interpret, perform, and respond with intent and purpose; aesthetic knowledge and respect for music and music practices across global communities, cultures and musical traditions; understanding of music as an aural art form, its relationship with other arts forms and contributions to cultures and societies" (VCAA, 2016b). Table 1 demonstrates how the Music curriculum is structured around four interdependent strands, each of which involves making and responding (VCAA, 2016b).

Students' progress along a curriculum continuum and for years 7-10 achievement standards are set to progress towards 8 and 10. The aims of the Musical Futures document (D'Amore, 2009) is summarised in Table 2 along with exemplars for implementation and whether this aligns with the Victorian curriculum (2016b).

Table 1: Four interdependent strands.

Explore and Express Ideas	Music Practices	Present and Perform	Respond and Interpret
Focuses on exploring sound and silence and ways of using voice, body percussion, instruments and technologies to develop and express ideas. Students use listening skills and imagination to develop ideas in response to stimuli such as music they have listened to, observations, feelings, experiences and research. They explore ways of using and manipulating and the elements of music and compositional devices.	Focuses on developing knowledge and understanding of skills, techniques and processes for listening, composing and performing music from diverse cultures, times and locations. Students listen with intent, sing, play instruments and use notation and technologies to interpret, improvise, compose and document music. They practise and refine listening, technical and expressive skills as individuals and in ensembles and refine their work in response to feedback.	Focuses on planning, rehearsing and refining performances to communicate ideas and intentions to an audience. Students use voice, instruments, technologies and performance and expressive skills and techniques to perform solo and ensemble music.	Focuses on reflecting, questioning, analysing and evaluating as listeners, composers and performers. Students use listening skills to discriminate, identify and describe qualities of sound and features of music. They interpret and analyse music from diverse cultures, times and locations and explore how contexts inform music and music making and how music connects with other arts forms and disciplines.

Table 2: Musical Futures aims, implementation and Victorian curriculum comparison.

Musical Futures aims	Implementation of aims	Victorian curriculum comparison
Engage all students in making music ensuring individual learning needs are met.	Learning is personalised to adjust to the learning needs of each student, but is practical and informal in approach.	Differentiated learning is expected, acknowledging that each student learns in different ways and will have varying skills and ability levels.
Make music learning relevant to young people.	Students should have opportunity to engage in the selection of music, choice of instruments, music production and management.	Some student choice, but student choice only part of the contexts required. Provide students with the opportunity to build their music knowledge understanding and skills in formal and informal musical settings.
Make use of aural/oral learning over technique and written instruction.	Aural and oral modes of learning favoured, record music rather than using traditional notation.	Aural and oral modes of learning are not a complete focus, aural and written forms required including traditional and alternative notations.
Teachers act as facilitators, they should "play rather than explain".	Teachers participate alongside students, but do not direct student learning. Completely informal approach. No sequential learning proposed.	Teachers are involved in directing students. Set clear standards in what students are expected to know and use informal and formal practice to scaffold and sequence learning opportunities.
Use an informal approach to teaching and learning in the classroom (D'Amore, 2009).	No direct learning outcomes, learning unfolds following the creative process.	Teachers help to establish student learning outcomes and are required to assess outcomes achieved. Providing structures and processes for continuity of study requires formal and informal approaches.

Table 2 outlines the aims and objectives of the learning and teaching approaches used. How these aims have been implemented provide insight into the philosophies guiding both Musical Futures and the Victorian Curriculum. This next section analyses general learning in music curriculum statements.

Learning in Music – General curriculum statements

Students are required to "listen to, compose and perform music in a wide range of styles from diverse cultures, times and locations" (VCAA, 2016b). This is contradictory to the rock and popular culture focus advocated by the Musical Futures approach (D'Amore, 2009; Hallam, Creech, & McQueen, 2015). The Listening underpins all music learning in the Victorian curriculum, which links to Elliott's paraxial philosophy of music education (1995). Students compose and perform music using the voice, body, instruments, found sound sources, and digital technologies. "As composers they create music in different styles and forms exploring personal interests and given ideas" (VCAA, 2016b). This curriculum statement denotes a personalised approach to learning that allows for individualisation and personalisation where students can pursue interests and teachers can cater for differentiated learning. However, the latter part of the statement "exploring personal interests and given ideas", implies content material must be provided to extend learning and will require both formal and informal approaches to be used in order to achieve this. "Students develop their ability to identify and describe, using terminology and symbols (notation), aspects of the music they listen to, compose and perform". The "100% practical approach" of Musical Futures Australia (2016) limits students' opportunities to develop music literacy skills such as musical symbols and notation in its various forms. "Learning through Music is a continuous and sequential process, enabling the acquisition, development and revisiting of skills and knowledge with increasing depth and complexity" (VCAA, 2016b), the

sequencing a scaffolds necessary to develop the layers in skill acquisition complexity required cannot be achieved using a completely informal, student directed approach. If students are provided with opportunities to engage with music from a broad range of styles, practices, traditions and contexts, they will learn to recognise their preferences and consider diverse perspectives of music. This will in turn inform the way in which they interpret music as performers and how they respond to the music they listen to. These expanded learning experiences will allow students' to develop a unique musical voice as composers and their own style as performers.

The "exploration and understanding of the elements of music, compositional devices, musical conventions, styles and forms expands with their continued active engagement with music", (VCAA, 2016b), will be achieved to a basic level if using a completely informal approach. Across the curriculum students are required "to listen to and perform music from a range of cultures, times, locations and traditions", which gradually increases in difficulty as they are introduced to more "complex forms of music as they make and respond to different musical styles and genres from a range of contexts" (VCAA, 2016b). Again the necessity for teacher scaffolding and sequencing of musical concepts will be required to achieve understanding of students' zone of proximal development. This is also critical to expanding students' learning experiences in a diverse range of musical styles and genres that students may not know exist or that they have interest in. This is not implied in the aim or approach advocated by Musical Futures (D'Amore, 2009; Hallam, et al., 2015; Musical Futures Australia, 2016).

Musical Futures and the Victorian curriculum align with regard to music being actively engaging and that is should begin with music experienced in students' lives and the community. The Victorian curriculum further prescribes that this should be used as a foundation to then draw "on the histories, traditions and conventions of music from other

places and times including Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, Asia and other world cultures. Students identify the purposes of music across cultures, times and locations" (VCAA, 2016b). The Musical Futures approach was designed for the UK context and as a result there was no evidence in the document available that would support this particular requirement of the Victorian curriculum, which is also an Australian cross curriculum priority.

When making and responding, students develop musical skills through activities that draw on the practices of listening, composing and performing, separately and in combination. While these board ideas are supported by the premise of the Musical Futures approach and embedded in the Victorian curriculum, the VCAA further details:

- Listening is the process through which students experience and learn music. This includes listening to, analysing and comparing a range of repertoire. Students develop listening skills and techniques for discriminating, identifying, interpreting and applying musical concepts.

- Composing is a broad term for creating original music. In education settings this involves improvising, organising musical ideas, creating accompaniment patterns, and arranging and writing original works, either individually or collaboratively.

- Performing involves playing instruments, singing or manipulating sound using technology, either as an individual or ensemble member. This includes learning and interpreting songs, instrumental pieces, accompaniments, and works composed by self and others. Audiences can include the teacher, peers, the wider school community and public audiences. (2016b)

These learning experiences are supported by activities including "learning and creating notation to record and communicate musical ideas; reading, writing and interpreting a range of terminology, notation and scores; making audio recordings of compositions and performances using technology; and developing skills and techniques to discuss their own music and the music of others" (VCAA, 2016b). This is what is required to develop musicianship holistically and support Elliott's, five forms of knowing: procedural, formal, informal, impressionistic and supervisory (2005). The Musical Futures approach is identified as primarily procedural and lacking the other essential forms of knowing and the development of music literacy. In secondary school, students are required to "consider the interests and concerns of composers, performers and audiences regarding philosophies and ideologies, critical theories, institutions and psychology" (VCAA, 2016b). Development of this type of learning relies on learning sequences and scaffolds so that students can establish informed interpretations and engage in critical and analytical dialogue. Providing these learning opportunities will prepare students for pathways into the senior secondary VCE Music studies (VCAA, 2016c) that the Music Futures approach used in isolation does not appear to support. This next section identifies emerging themes from the analysis of data across the years 7-10 Victorian Music curriculum statements and Musical Futures document.

Formal and informal pedagogies

The personalised, informal teaching and learning approach adopted by *Musical Futures* is used as the exclusive model, whereas in the Victorian curriculum an informal approach is only eluded to as part of teaching and learning. The results show that the formal requirements set out in the Victorian curriculum to extend student learning in complex and in-depth ways are not fulfilled when using the Musical Futures approach exclusively.

Students participating in *Musical Futures* are involved informally in assessing for learning, where students comment on their work and that of others. In contrast, while teachers might engage students in peer and self-reflective assessment as part of the learning process, the Victorian

curriculum has a set of clear learning outcomes to assess the learning taking place. These achievement levels or standards are then used to provide feedback to parents/guardians and school management. This formalised assessment is not present in the results for the Musical Futures approach and this is understandable given it would be a contradiction to the aims of the informal and personalised learning advocated. It is also reiterated that this is an approach not a curriculum framework, highlighting the importance of this not to be used in isolation. Assessment and reporting of learning is a requirement of the Victorian curriculum.

The personalised approach used by Musical Futures involves students in selecting their own music and working with repertoire that interests them. This was also identified as partly aligned with the general curriculum statements. However, the curriculum specifies this approach to be used as a springboard to introduce diverse musical learning opportunities. If this personal, informal approach is used exclusively, the results indicated that it can lead to a narrow range of repertoire, musical literacy development and limited musical perspectives. This in turn also indicated that the musical literacy development occurs in a haphazard and random way. This is in contrast to the sequential development prescribed by the Victorian curriculum and necessary to develop the acquisition of skills required to a level that would be appropriate for success in senior secondary VCE Music studies.

The use of music technology is an important part of teaching and learning in contemporary education and is present in both Victorian Curriculum and Musical Futures document. Data from the Musical Futures demonstrates evidence of encouraging the use of technology that helps students to personalise their experience with creating and playing music. The informal learning takes place as the students of *Musical Futures* are able to experiment and develop their musical experiences without external structural impedance. By using the online web site NUMU they can experiment with music industry type tools such as recording, marketing and music sharing. However, tasks do not develop student skills in learning how to use a range of music software. Likewise the Victorian curriculum expects that students will engage with a range of innovative technologies for the music making process as well as extending learning in understanding and developing aural and theoretical concepts, as well for research and problem solving tasks. The informal approach of Musical Futures limits the introduction of musical context, such as the technologies which have impacted on music through the different periods and genres as well as the more complex manipulation of sound and use of compositional devices for example.

Context and content

Musical Futures demonstrates a clear aim to use aural and oral learning over technical and written modes (D'Amore, 2009). This particularly concerns developing understanding of the elements and concepts of music. Examples of tasks where students make decisions about using sound to produce music concern duration and pitch as well structure, dynamics, texture and tone. Students playing using aural and oral learning will only fulfills part of the Victorian curriculum requirements and in some cases if this is all that is offered, will severely limit students' development of formal aspects such as how to recognise and notate the elements of music. This is an important theoretical, analytical and critical component of understanding music and the creative process that may not be introduced to students if not facilitated by teachers. Incorporating a more holistic approach that draws on oral, aural, technical and written learning will extend students thinking, allow for differentiated learning and is necessary if preparing students to complete VCE Music studies (VCAA, 2016c).

With the exception of limited solo and vocal performance opportunities, learning experiences in the areas of performing, composing and listening are well represented in tasks from the Musical

Futures document. The aim of Musical Futures, to make music learning relevant to young people by using aural learning is evident in the results that show listening skills revolve around the copying of music by ear. This aural form of listening rarely involves the student listening to a broad range of music, a curriculum requirement, and there is no evidence of student listening that occurs when a musical score is followed either during a performance or the playing of a recording. Improvisation is an area that is dominant in Musical Futures and perhaps a little underrepresented in the curriculum, although opportunities in this creative domain has improved. While opportunities to create and compose music are present in Musical Futures, the completely informal and student-directed approach hinders their experience and development of any formal composing techniques, devices or styles prescribed in the curriculum.

The reliance of Musical Futures to use the popular genre is consummate with its goals to motivate and interest students. As a result musical context is not explored as only the valued knowledge of youth culture are fully embraced. While there are some limited examples of Musical Futures using other genres, the value is placed on the informal student-directed approach (D'Amore, 2009) and as such it is implied that students are not provided with any musical context to support background understanding and perspective. To support the Victorian curriculum a diverse range of genres and styles must be explored, including the cross curriculum priority to consider "Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, Asia and other world cultures" (VCAA, 2016b). This would need to be integrated into any Australian school program utilising Musical Futures.

Learning modes and communication

Communicating within music takes place in different ways and on different levels. Musicians communicate music aurally by listening, orally by explaining and discussing ideas, in written form by notating and in written words and responses, and visually through performing and/or conducting. Musical Futures is based on teaching and learning music that is similar to the way many popular musicians learn. Popular musicians often learn by copying from each other and by imitating other people's music, often referred to as 'playing by ear' (Green, 2002). This informal approach to aural development meets some of the Victorian curriculum requirements, but additional formal teaching and learning is necessary to complement this aural work to ensure curriculum standards are fulfilled. For example, these areas relate to basic music theory, such as recognition of rhythmic patterns (not just being able to play them), intervals that form a melody and chords being heard and how it functions.

The curriculum requires students to develop oral skills to communicate ideas about their music and that of others and the Musical Futures approach meets this requirement as students are encouraged to discuss ideas verbally as they develop their creative projects. They discuss how to organise their performances and compositions, and having performed them, make suggestions about what worked or did not work. While the curriculum encourages verbal responses, it aims to encourage the development of a musical vocabulary, something that may or not occur in completely student-directed discussions identified in the Musical Futures examples.

The Victorian curriculum requires that students be able to respond in writing to music they hear, and in doing so the aim is to develop musical vocabulary and literacy, there are no examples in the Musical Futures document that demonstrate this. The Musical Futures approach aims to use aural and oral communication instead of written responses which is highly problematic in preparing students for senior secondary VCE Music studies due to the theoretical and aural musicianship exams, for example (VCAA, 2016c). While there is evidence of students using notations such as graphic or guitar tablature, they are not asked

to traditionally notate musical sounds they hear such as rhythmic patterns, the pitch of a melody or a chord progression, even though they may be able to play these, also required for VCE Music studies (VCAA, 2016c). Skills in score reading and the ability to play the music notated by a composer, listen and follow a score or conduct will not be developed if traditional notation is not taught, limiting students learning experiences. It is reasonable to suggest that the Musical Futures approach does not emphasise traditional music notation as it is seen as a barrier of entry to students wanting to participate in playing music. While there is merit in this for general music learning, at what cost do teachers choose not to expand and extend students learning, meet curriculum requirements and open up potential pathways to VCE Music studies. A hypothetical comparison can be drawn from English and literacy studies: should traditional written forms and discourse types be abandoned in favour of only oral or alternative approaches of communication?

Many aspects of music are communicated visually. During rehearsals and performances it is common to direct and conduct to communicate for example, tempi, dynamics, phrasing, entries and exits. The Musical Futures approach provides the student with many tasks that allow experience to be gained in performance. Students are encouraged to perform for peers, an audience and video record for sharing online, which aligns with the requirements of the Victorian curriculum. Musical Futures would develop students' stagecraft in ways not above the requirements specified in the curriculum.

Summary

The findings present three key themes that emerged from the patterns in the data that highlight that while the Musical Futures approach has some admirable intentions and positive outcomes, it does not meet all the requirements of the Victorian curriculum (VCAA, 2016b) and Australian curriculum framework (ACARA, 2016).

Thus it should not be used in isolation. Further, the necessity to scaffold and sequence students' learning is highlighted when considering the diverse skills and knowledge that students should be provided opportunities to develop if wanting to pursue senior secondary VCE Music study pathways (VCAA, 2016c). This cannot be done if using a completely practical and informal approach based solely on student interest and popular culture. Finding a balance between informal and formal approaches to education and music education are critical if the goal is to develop the holistic learner (VCAA, 2016a).

Concluding comments

Previous research about the Musical Futures approach has focused on teacher and student perceptions about the impact of its introduction into the music classroom. While the outcomes of this research reported overall positive indicators on aspects of engagement, motivation and uptake, this UK based informal approach has not considered alignment with the new Victorian curriculum (VCAA, 2016a) and Australian curriculum framework (ACARA, 2016). This study addresses the research gap by investigating content relevant to the Australian music education system and by analysing Musical Futures in terms of the musical skills a student might develop. A comparative analysis has been conducted that interrogates the *Musical Futures: An Approach to Teaching and Learning* (D'Amore, 2009) document and the *Victorian Curriculum - Music Years 7-10* (VCAA, 2016b).

The role of a curriculum framework is to provide a clear set of student learning outcomes for teachers to use as they develop their teaching plans for the classroom. The curriculum is designed on educational principles and provides examples of best practice in specific learning areas, as well as cross curriculum priorities and general capabilities, to be explored in a sequential and developmental manner. Musical Futures, by contrast, is a self-described informal teaching and learning pedagogy

founded on the process used by popular musicians to make music that does not provide student learning outcomes based on music education philosophies or theories.

Current education and learning literature has identified informal learning and personalised learning as approaches that offer advantages to students of the digital age (Campbell, 1998; Green, 2002; Wiggins, 2009). Informal learning in education refers to the adoption of principles found in informal learning outside of the classroom and applying them within the classroom situation. Department of Education, Science & Training (DEST) referred to informal learning in music as "the contextualisation of classroom music learning within the framework of real-world music outside the classroom" (2005, p.19). Folkestad concludes that informal learning is non-sequential and unplanned, "the activity steers the way of working/playing/composing." (2006, p. 141). Once a teacher plans the lesson beforehand and leads the lesson providing scaffolds and sequencing of learning opportunities, formal learning takes place. Green (2002, 2008) reported on the informal processes for learning used by popular musicians and considered how these processes might be adapted to the classroom. Personalised learning places the needs, interests and learning styles of students at the centre of the learning process. The Musical Futures approach is based on a personalised and informal learning pedagogy (Price, 2005) and the informal principles devised by Green (2008).

The key message from *The National Review of School Music Education* (DEST, 2005) to the Australian Government was that while there are examples of excellent music education in schools "many Australian students miss out because of lack of equity and access; lack of quality of provision; and, the poor status of music in many schools" (p. 5). It was reported that music teachers faced challenges of motivation and behaviour posed by adolescents as well as the need to plan and manage learning (DEST, 2005). Issues of relevance and balance have been two aspects of teaching

often difficult to reconcile. In this context, relevance can relate to the needs of students, school, and community education for leisure, career pathways, while balance is required to meet the educational aims of a curriculum such as selecting a range of repertoire, musical styles and learning activities (Carroll, 1993). To dismiss the learning outcomes in favour of being 'relevant' can lead to a situation where music activities "serve to entertain rather than educate" (Chadwick, 2002, p. 51). It is in this context that another issue is highlighted, the status of music education in schools and its diminishing place in school programs as part of the curriculum.

Green (2008) explained that there could be limitations in the integration of Musical Futures with the curriculum, "if school pupils were to follow the project and nothing else they would be likely to miss out on what most people would agree are some essential aspects of the curriculum" (p. 181). Although, "perhaps the biggest challenge is to provide opportunities to develop flexible pedagogy that incorporates approaches for informal learning with other styles and approaches of music education" (Savage, 2009, para. 13). The balance of formal and informal pedagogies may allow for a more integrated approach to the curriculum. Using Musical Futures to explore one element of the overall music program schools offer would ensure that opportunities to develop students' musicianship (Elliott, 1995) in a holistic sense, still exist. This is critical in developing important skills and knowledge to adequately prepare those students wanting to pursue senior secondary VCE Music studies (VCAA, 2016c).

This research used comparative and curriculum analysis with a praxial and constructivist lens to understand the development of musical skills and content outcomes for students learning using the Musical Futures approach. Data has been collected from activities described in the Musical Futures document (D'Amore, 2009) and from the Victorian curriculum 7-10 (VCAA, 2016b) where the musical skills and content outcomes it requires students to develop are fully described. The findings indicate

that while the Musical Futures approach has some admirable intentions and will fulfil some aspects of the Victorian curriculum, if used in isolation it would limit students' learning opportunities and not completely fulfil the requirements prescribed in the curriculum. The aims of the Musical Futures informal approach are also commendable, particularly the primary intention to engage young people in music. However, the curriculum indicates the requirement of a balance of informal and formal pedagogies to develop appropriately diverse skills and knowledge with varying degrees of complexity. Further, this will ensure that music education is still considered an academically rigorous subject that will develop and extend students' musicianship.

As Musical Futures has been developed for schools in the UK, more research is needed to understand the extent to which it is transferable to Australian schools. This study has been undertaken as a document analysis and valuable knowledge would be gained if future research examined the extent to which Musical Futures could meet curriculum requirements when studied in practice, in the school classroom context. This would require applying theories of musicianship such as the Elliott philosophy (1995) proposed in this study. This research contributes to knowledge and understanding that will assist educators and curriculum authorities' in making informed decisions about music education and curriculum alignment. This will ensure that the reported positive experiences with Musical Futures can also develop the range of student musical skills and content outcomes valued by music educators and reflected in curriculum.

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