# Musical Value, Ideology and Unequal Opportunity: Backgrounds, Assumptions and Experiences of Students and Lecturers in Irish Higher Education

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# Abstract

This thesis forms a critical inquiry into historical and contemporary ideologies of musical value within Irish higher music education and it documents significant implications for issues of access and opportunity at all levels of music education. In particular, it explores cultural, structural and agential conditions that affect student and lecturer experiences in higher music education. Drawing from Bourdieu, the study considers the ways in which musical habitus, cultural capital and social class impact on students' access to formal musical knowledge and skills and their experiences and opportunities in higher music education. Through an application of Bernstein's theory of classification and framing to *musical* knowledge, the study highlights the extent to which ideological assumptions of musical value shape curricula, the 'hidden curriculum', and pedagogy.

Employing complementary research methods, data gathering tools include documentary analysis in addition to surveys and interviews with students and lecturers across eleven out of thirteen Irish higher education institutions offering music at undergraduate level. Findings reveal that unequal access to musical knowledge and skills relates to broader structural inequalities such as social class background, statutory music education provision, and state music curricula. The implicit advantage enjoyed by some students with private music theory tuition in meeting the demands of the higher education curriculum, contrasts with unequal access to requisite musical knowledge and skills for those who have relied on the state for music education. In addition, data highlight the role that higher education structures and political agendas play in bringing ideologies of musical value and knowledge into sharp focus.

Drawing from theories of social realism by Moore and Young, the thesis argues that epistemic access to musical knowledge and skills is vital for access, opportunity, and success within and beyond higher education. Through the construction of a conceptual model, the relationship between cultural capital within the field of higher education reveals structure/agency as pivotal in student and lecturer experiences. To conclude, the thesis proposes a reconsideration of epistemological and pedagogical approaches at all levels of music education. For it is in reappraising the ways in which musical opportunities ought to be equally accessible, as well as appropriately challenging, that musical disadvantage can be addressed.

## Signed Declaration and Word Count

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Word count (exclusive of appendices and bibliography): 78,739 words

Signed

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Gwen Moore

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## List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ABRSM | Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music |
| BA | Bachelor of Arts |
| B.Ed | Bachelor of Education |
| B.Mus | Bachelor of Music |
| B.Mus.Ed | Bachelor of Music Education |
| CCÉ | Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann |
| CHMHE | Council of Heads of Music in Higher Education |
| CIT | Cork Institute of Technology |
| DES | Department of Education and Science/Skills |
| DIT | Dublin Institute of Technology |
| DkIT | Dundalk Institute of Technology |
| HEA | Higher Education Authority |
| LCA | Leaving Certificate Applied |
| LCE | Leaving Certificate Established |
| LCVP | Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme |
| NUIM | National University of Ireland, Maynooth |
| MEND | Music Education National Debate |
| MIC | Mary Immaculate College |
| NUIM | National University of Ireland, Maynooth |
| RIAM | Royal Irish Academy of Music |
| SMI | Society for Musicology in Ireland |
| SPD | St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra |
| TCD | Trinity College Dublin |
| UCD | University College Dublin |
| UL | University of Limerick |
| WIT | Waterford Institute of Technology |

# CHAPTER ONE
# HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION: THE BROAD AGENDA

> About four years ago, a student came to see me about his choice of instrument in anticipation of his practical examinations...At length he asked me about the range of instruments that might be acceptable to the Department of Music. "It says piano, organ, or any orchestral instrument in here", he said, thumbing through the syllabus. "Is that it? Do I really have to play an orchestral instrument?" "Well, let me put it this way," I replied, "You can play whatever instrument you choose, *provided you don't have to plug it in"*. I had declared my prejudices before he had had a chance to declare his. And in case you missed them, I had anticipated, fairly predictably, that he might want to offer the electric guitar for my edification and that of my colleagues. (White 1998, p.1)

## Background and Rationale

### *Musical Value and Ideology in Higher Music Education*

What counts as music and knowledge in higher music education? Implicit in the extract above was a mismatch between the student's musical background and expectations on one hand, and ideological assumptions of what counts as musical knowledge and value within the music department, on the other. Amplification of an instrument clearly associated with popular music was not permitted. We can surmise then, that opportunity for this particular student was limited in this context. And it is precisely the context of higher education which is crucial to understanding why the professor 'deprived that young man of his gently weeping guitar' (White, 1998, p.1). Dominant ideologies of musical value as expressed in the music department 'syllabus' and White's self-confessed prejudices, are further justified as a 'deliberate counterstatement to the massive impact of commercial music' (White, 1998, p.1) and the need for a humanistic and professional conception of a university music education.

Achieving an academic award in music represents to many the epitome of sanctioned musical knowledge and skills. Yet achieving an undergraduate music qualification demands prior knowledge and skills that are usually dependent on prior access to formal music education. For Bourdieu (1977a, p.494), 'the education system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give'. Although Bourdieu was referring to the ways in which the education system rewards the possession of linguistic and cultural competence (or capital)

acquired in the home, this assertion resonates with musical enculturation and access to formal music education. Historically, statutory music education in Ireland has been sorely neglected, thus access and opportunity to a range of musical genres, skills and knowledge, at all levels of education, remains unequal. Consequently, the pursuit of higher music education remains the privilege of students who have enjoyed access to private instrumental and/or theory tuition.

In any consideration of higher music education then, it is reasonable to assume that students from diverse musical backgrounds may have varying degrees of familiarity with the dominant musical values in higher education. Although similarities may prevail between the musical backgrounds and prior music education of students and lecturers, it is necessary to acknowledge the possibility of major gaps between the knowledge and skills acquired by students, and the curriculum demands and expectations in higher education.

*The Business of Higher Education*

In the Academy, social and pedagogical experiences are entwined in a complex web of political, economic and cultural matrices. In recent decades, higher education has seen extensive social, economic, and educational transformation (Barnett, 1990; David, 2007). In recent years, political demand in Ireland has given rise to the promotion of diversity in the socio-economic profile, age, ethnicity, disability and citizenship status of students (Higher Education Authority, 2010). Inclusive policy has afforded access to students from diverse backgrounds, for whom access may have been hitherto excluded. Following international trends, the Irish Universities Association recognises the importance of inclusion, listing 'Widening Participation' as one of its core objectives (Higher Education Authority, 2010). However, as I will argue later in the thesis, despite such policy interventions, issues of unequal access and opportunity persist (Lynch and Moran, 2006).

Increasing trends of investment and governmental interest in higher education and training, can be attributed to the rise of globalisation, technological advances, and increasing competition. Consequently, higher education has become synonymous with 'big business' (Barnett, 1997). Contemporaneously, the Irish higher education sector has been recruited in attending to the demands of research relevant to the 'knowledge economy':

> Into the future, real success and growth will depend on the country's ability to transfer the knowledge generated domestically into goods and services for world

markets requiring effective on-going relationships between enterprise and academia. (Forfás, 2004)

It is unclear the extent to which knowledge economy agendas have affected research orientation within Irish higher education. Such agendas imply that University departments and faculties compete for research and resource funding allocations, at the mercy of explicit assumptions of external validity and relevance. We can surmise therefore, that courses more oriented to the corporate field such as science, business and engineering, will tend to be prioritised over the arts and humanities.


*The Business of Higher Music Education*

In the context of the arts and humanities in the Republic of Ireland, music departments have historically been small and somewhat isolated (O'Flynn, 2009). In the UK context, the value of extra-curricular musical activities in university brochures and websites continues to promote the value of musical participation, despite the removal of music degree programmes (Pitts, 2013). The recent closure of music departments in the UK, at the University of Reading in 2006, Exeter University in 2007, and the University of East Anglia (to close in 2014), has heightened Irish music lecturers' awareness of the tenuous foothold of music within the arts and humanities (Smaczny, 2012). Furthermore, in response to higher education narratives of tradition, progress, widening participation and the market, music lecturers would seem to be under increasing pressure to balance demands for student-centered approaches to teaching and learning, with useful and 'relevant' content.

The image to emerge therefore is one of contested space for subject value within the curriculum in higher education on the one hand, and the increasing demands of the wider political, economic and educational sphere on the other. As I will argue in this thesis, musical value within higher education would seem to be produced and re-produced, not only according to cultural and educational values, but also according to the changing higher education landscape and wider economic values.

The bipartite nature of the research problem can be summarized thus: first, opportunity in higher music education would appear related to ideological assumptions of musical value, musical background and access to prior music education. This demands critical inquiry into the problem of access to musical knowledge and skills and the need to document the ways in which teaching and learning experiences are affected. Second, coming to an understanding of the ways in which broader higher education policy impacts on teaching and learning

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experiences, calls for an essential and timely investigation of the ways in which ideological assumptions of musical value are informed by the micro-context of the music department, and the macro-context of higher education policy and practice.

**Research Purpose**

This study explores the role that music education and musical value play in the musical backgrounds and experiences of music lecturers and undergraduate students in Irish higher education. While extensive discourse on musical value concerning school music curricula and practice abounds, as yet no comprehensive scholarly work has examined the ways in which ideological assumptions of musical value impact on the student and lecturer experience in higher education.

This research describes, interprets, and explains historical and contemporary issues that pertain to the context of Irish higher music education. It critically examines the ways in which musical backgrounds and prior music education impact on teaching and learning experiences in higher education. The thesis addresses issues of inequality and opportunity in music education with particular reference to the continuum from second to higher education levels. It considers students' musical backgrounds, prior music education and social class, and interrogates assumptions and ideologies of musical value in higher education. It provides some new perspectives on the ways in which ideologies of musical value and music education practices impact on notions of musicality and musical ability. In sum, this thesis forms a critical inquiry into ideologies and practices that affect students and lecturers in higher music education, and it documents significant implications for issues of access and opportunity at all levels of music education.

**Situating the Study**

*Research in Higher Music Education*
In a comprehensive compilation and summary of international studies within higher music education contexts, Jørgensen (2009) highlights a neglect of research output focusing on higher music education. This neglect stands in stark contrast he argues, beside the plethora of research on music in early-childhood, primary, and secondary education contexts.

Research in higher music education has tended to focus on music teacher identity formation (for example, Hennessy 2000; Biasutti 2010; McPhail 2012), the learning

processes of future professional performers in conservatoire contexts (Jørgensen, 2000; Gaunt 2010, 2011; Burwell and Shipton, 2011; Perkins, 2013), and the concept of roles and curricula in instrumental and vocal teaching (Lennon and Reed, 2012). Other studies have examined the influence of genre and gender on musical learning in higher education (Welch et al. 2008); points of similarity and difference in regard to 'classical' and 'non-classical' musicians (Creech et al., 2008), and attitudes to performance (Papageorgi et al. 2010). Research concerning the student experience in higher music education has revealed feelings of inadequacy and isolation (Kingsbury, 1988) and issues of confidence (Pitts, 2005; Burt and Mills, 2006; Burland and Pitts, 2007) among students of music, while ethnographic studies have problematised the Eurocentric view of music in higher music education (Kingsbury, 1988; Nettl, 2005; Feichas 2010).

Broader sociocultural perspectives on the student experience have been applied to the higher music education sphere focusing on the hidden curriculum (Pitts, 2003), students' musical backgrounds, anxieties and academic success (Burland and Pitts, 2007; Burt and Mills, 2006), issues of social class (Dibben 2004; 2006), and attending to issues of social justice and access (Younker and Hickey, 2009). Burland and Pitts (2007) identify a relationship between students' musical backgrounds and their feelings of self-doubt and anxiety in regard to theoretical knowledge and skills, and academic success.

While the transition from school to university has been researched in distinct disciplines such as English (Marland, 2003) and History (Booth, 1997; 2001), studies on the transition to higher music education are rare. Studies by Hurry (1997) and Winterson and Russ (2009) map the context of the transition to higher music education from a range of student and lecturer perspectives. These are examined in more detail in Chapter Four. However, as I shall argue, although their analysis of expectations and course content provides a map of the context, both studies do not consider the pertinent issues of access to musical knowledge and skills, and the potential consequences for teaching and learning in higher education. Furthermore, save for aforementioned studies, a paucity of research on lecturers' views within music education literature remains. From a critical perspective, this could be interpreted as an over-emphasis on the perceptions and experiences of students as 'consumers' of higher education (Barnett, 2000), and an unconscious oversight of inquiry into possible constraints and limitations experienced from the perspective of the higher education teacher/lecturer.

Curiously, research that brings ideology and musical value into sharp focus within the field of higher education remains elusive. In the context of the postmodern era, Barnett

(2003) questions the demise of ideology in the modern age, yet argues that it continues to invoke concepts of knowledge, enlightenment, and reason in the university. Reluctant inquiry into higher education ideologies may be due to fear of critique and exposure, whereby 'to place 'ideology' in the company of the university, is to cast doubt on the university's claims about itself' (Barnett, 2003, p.53). As Barnett (2003) asserts, such assumptions are misguided because ideology has not come to an end.

The ubiquity of music in mass media and popular culture places music as integral to people's everyday lives (DeNora, 2000). Formal music education has seen the gradual introduction of various genres and informal learning practices (Green, 2001; 2008b). From a postmodern perspective, all musics are of equal value, and no knowledge is more valuable than another (Reimer, 2003). In recognising that conceptions of music education are diverse and often contested, there is a need to critically examine the impact of changes that have been brought to bear on general music education and by extension higher education, on student and lecturer experiences. As I will argue throughout this thesis, higher music education seems impenetrable, precisely because ideologies about knowledge, reason and the Enlightenment serve as core identity markers of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1988). In any consideration of knowledge and the Enlightenment then, it is unsurprising that the Western classical/art tradition is central to such ideologies.


*Music Education as Eurocentric*

The dominance of the Western classical tradition within school music has been widely discussed over the last four decades within international contexts of music education (Small, 1977; Vulliamy and Shepherd, 1984; Green, 1988; 2003a; 2008; Elliott, 1995; Volk, 1998). Since Vulliamy (1977), Shepherd et al (1977) and Green (1988; 2008a) sparked the debate on the ways in which ideology and musical value impacted on the school music experience, formal music education in international contexts would seem to have made significant progress in terms of the breadth and scope of diverse musical styles and pedagogies within the secondary school music context (see Green 2008b; www.musicalfutures.org). Nonetheless, while extensive discourse on musical value concerning school music curricula and practice within the field of music education literature abounds, there is as yet no study on the ways in which ideological assumptions of musical value impact on the student and lecturer experience in a national higher education context.

Explorations of a Eurocentric perspective of music have tended to reside within the domains of conservatoire research. However, an ethnographic study of informal learning practices in a university by Feichas (2010), found prejudices about other musics and their value among undergraduate music students. Conducted at the Music School of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (EMUFRJ), the study examined entry procedures and particular course type(s). Her study revealed how space was created to re-evaluate the learning process through reflective engagement in informal learning practices. Through an acknowledgement and respect for others' musical skills and knowledge, students were able to reappraise the Eurocentric conception of music education. Although formal music education in Ireland has historically been conceptualised on the Western classical tradition, assumptions of musical value have only recently been interrogated (McCarthy, 1997, 1999; O'Flynn, 2005, 2006, 2009; Moore, 2005, 2011).

In the context of increasingly diverse musics and music education practices, it is not clear where and how higher music education fits. What is the purpose of higher music education? Moreover, what types of music and musical scholarship ought to obtain in higher music curricula? In a special issue on higher music education, Broad and O'Flynn (2012) query the paucity of research on undergraduate music degree components and posit:

> This could be interpreted as representing an adherence to ideas of musical autonomy that in turn act to negate the significance of any mediating influences...the musical content of a university-level music course is the curriculum, and all teaching and learning will inevitably follow the internal logic of that content. (Broad and O'Flynn 2012, p.3)

In this quotation, 'ideas of musical autonomy' refers to the ways in which the idea of the musical product becomes the primary focus of scholarly pursuit, in favour of the diverse sociocultural influences brought to bear in the process of musical creation and performance. As a subject then, music aligns with the principles of ratiocination, or the verticality of knowledge, which lie at the heart of the Western scientific method (Drummond, 2003). In practice, this manifests as preference given to art music over popular music, the acquisition of music literacy skills over improvising skills, and the ordering of musical knowledge into 'sequential learning, prescriptive goals and materials, test and national examinations...'(Drummond 2003, p.54). Arguably, such ideas are synonymous with the complex interplay between musical hierarchies and prejudices associated with ideological assumptions of musical value prevailing within a Eurocentric conception of music education.

Indeed, it can be argued that ideological assumptions become even more contested in the conceptualisation and design of curricula.

*Curriculum*

In a constructive analysis of the term 'curriculum' in higher education, Barnett and Coate (2005, p.14) highlight how the absence of the actual term in UK higher education policy documents, reflects a rebuttal of the idea of higher education as an educational matter with the all too frequent prioritisation of skills over knowledge. The authors discover a dearth of literature on curriculum in higher education. A tacit notion of curriculum coupled with a concomitant avoidance of the term is '...indicative of systematic interests at work for which the term curriculum would pose difficulties' (p.16). Conceptualised thus, interests primarily concerned with narrow, economic-driven agendas, affect the prioritisation of student skills over their development as human beings.

Although the term 'curriculum' tends to evade higher educational policy documents, prescribed curricula at primary and second-level education have exerted significant influence on teaching and learning (Apple, 1982). Indeed the predominance of such prescribed curricula often serves to alter the role of the teacher as 'creative planner and curriculum deliberator to that of an executor of prescribed knowledge and skills' (Apple, 1982, p.146). Ironically, the predominance of the curriculum and prescribed pedagogy at primary and second levels, contrasts starkly with the subliminal articulation of the curriculum in higher education. Whether tacit or explicit, it is necessary therefore, to acknowledge the power of the curriculum in the perpetuation of ideologies (see also Sugrue, 2004 on the Irish education system), the autonomy of the teacher/lecturer, and the higher education experience for the learner.

As this thesis argues, higher music education curricula are influenced on one hand by ideological assumptions of valued musical knowledge and skills, and by external policies of relevance and increasing student numbers on the other. In terms of genres within Irish music education, both Western classical music and Irish traditional music are primarily taught within formal educational contexts. And although more non-formal learning occurs at Irish traditional music sessions than would happen at a classical concert for example, it is in the realm of popular music where informal learning practices tend to be overlooked in higher education. The ability a guitarist (amplified or not) has to improvise, may be of little value in a course where sight-reading and score-reading are prerequisite skills for negotiating the

curriculum. Similarly, the indepth study of the entire 14 bar *Pierrot Lunaire* by Schoenberg may seem irrelevant to a final year student looking at employment prospects as a session performer. Thus, what is deemed valuable and relevant for inclusion in higher education music courses is borne out of external and internal ideologies of knowledge and musical value. While this overview briefly describes conceptions of curriculum, it is now necessary to situate the ways in which the concept of curriculum is pivotal to the historical context of Irish music education.

**Setting the Scene: The Irish Context**

Within the Irish educational context, the disparate pathways from which students encounter music education and acquire musical knowledge and skills, reveal unequal geographic and economic access to formal music education (Music Network, 2003). Equality of access to the study of music at second-level education in Ireland is inconsistent, due to the 'optional' status of music and the absence of musical traditions within schools. Thus, not all students have access to music education within statutory secondary education. A recent music education initiative established in 2011 named *Music Generation,* is being philanthropically funded by U2 and The Ireland Funds. As a nationwide music education programme, it aims to provide access to performance music education for as many young people in Ireland as possible. Yet, though the Irish government have pledged to take over the initiative when the philanthropic funds run out in 2016, whether such promises are kept remains to be seen.

*Higher Education Entry in Ireland*

In Ireland, full-time second-level education is split into Junior Cycle (12-15 years of age) and Senior Cycle (from 16-18). At the end of the Junior Cycle, students sit a standardised examination entitled the Junior Certificate. Although grades achieved at examination typically impact upon the subjects and levels that students can access at upper secondary (McCoy and Byrne, 2011), this pattern is not consistent with music, which has seen increasing enrolment at Senior Cycle without having studied the subject at Junior Cycle (State Examination's Commission, 2003).

Students who complete Senior Cycle, sit standardised examinations such as the Leaving Certificate Established (LCE), Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) or the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme; the former two offering direct access to higher education, where the LCA does not. Following completion of this national

examination, applicants for specific courses are ranked according to points (*numerus clausus*) derived from their grades. Consequently, the highest-ranking candidates are offered higher education places in the first instance. Notwithstanding the points system, most undergraduate music courses also stipulate entry on passing an entrance examination and/or audition or interview. Thus, entry to the majority of higher music education courses is dependent on a bipartite system of entrance tests as well as the number of points achieved from the state examination system. Consequently, music applicants may be doubly disadvantaged.

*Current Perspectives on Music in Higher Education*

Since 1995, students in Ireland have enjoyed the benefit of free undergraduate higher education However, 'free' higher education is a misnomer, since students must pay a registration fee each academic year of their studies. First set in 1995 as a nominal charge of €250 per annum, this fee increased tenfold to €2,500 in 2012. The rationale behind the initiative of 'free' higher education was to provide equal access and opportunity for all regardless of socio-economic background (OECD, 2004). Recent figures reveal a dramatic expansion in higher education participation rates from just 20% in 1980 to 72% in 2010 (Higher Education Authority, 2010). However, since the abolition of tuition fees for undergraduate studies in 1995, participation from lower socio-economic groups has not considerably altered (OECD, 2009).

*Higher Music Education in the Republic of Ireland*

Thirteen institutions offer music at undergraduate level within the Republic of Ireland. These include: five universities; four institutes of technology comprising two conservatoires; three colleges of teacher education, and one music academy. As I will illustrate further in Chapter Two, the preponderance of a heavy weighting and distribution of Western classical music would seem to represent its historical dominance in higher education. Moreover, with the exception of University College Cork (UCC), genre specific pathways at undergraduate level have only emerged within the last decade or so. Examples include the addition of an undergraduate degree in Irish traditional music performance at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick (UL) and Dublin Institute of Technology, Conservatory of Music and Drama (DIT), Dublin. The establishment of a lectureship in popular music and jazz music at UCC in 2001, and the inclusion of two programmes with a

popular music stream at Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) and Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT), signify a broadening of genres within Irish higher education.

Although a popular music diploma has been available in a number of smaller colleges of further education, no popular music degree was established at the time of the commencement of this research in 2009. However, 2011 saw the establishment of the first degree solely in popular music at Dublin Institute of Technology (BA in Commercial Modern Music) and in 2012, another BA in popular music was offered to school-leavers for the first time at Cork School of Music, Cork Institute of Technology (CIT). This recent inclusion of popular music degrees contrasts starkly with the diverse range of music programmes in contemporary and popular music on offer in the UK for the past decade (Hewitt, 2009; Gaunt and Papageorgi, 2010).

At this juncture, it is important to acknowledge that higher music education in Ireland is both complex and diverse. Whether a university, conservatoire, institute of technology, or college of education, each institution has its own unique history, tradition and practice. Music curricula as part of a BA or BMus within Irish universities have historically been more academic than the performance-focused BMus degrees within conservatoires. However, across and within institutions, the type of degree and curriculum students will encounter varies considerably. An example of two contrasting programmes across universities is the BA in Irish Traditional Music and Dance at the University of Limerick (UL) and the BMus at Trinity College Dublin (TCD). As illustrated further in Chapter Two, university programmes reflect the history and tradition of the institutions as well as their unique curricula. Thus, within the Irish higher education context, a range of musical traditions and practices are represented. Despite rapid higher music education expansion in recent decades, changes to formal music education at primary and secondary levels have been slow. This can be explained in part by the historical context of Irish music education briefly introduced here, and in more detail in Chapter Two.

*Music Curricula in Ireland*

Ireland was part of the United Kingdom until 1922 and its education system was governed by the principles and practices of British education policy and the promotion of colonial values, most notably in the nineteenth century (McCarthy, 1997). Historically, formal music education in Ireland at both second and higher education levels was conceptualised on the Western classical tradition (McCarthy, 1999; Stakelum, 2008; O'Flynn, 2009). Although

popular music was beginning to make an appearance in the educational context of the UK during the 1970s, changes to music curricula at second level to include not only popular music, but also Irish traditional music performance, would not occur in Ireland until two and a half decades later. Indeed, the introduction of a more diverse curriculum in the mid 1990s was not without detractors in higher education who cautioned the implications of falling standards in school music, and the potentiality of a less musically educated cohort at university (White, 1998; Boydell, 2001; Heneghan, 2001). In essence, the more inclusive nature of the revised music curriculum at second level threw into sharp focus the historical exclusivity of the music curriculum in Irish higher education. These changes gave rise to a number of high-profile debates about the transition from school music to higher education.

As further explored in this thesis, a gap between the knowledge acquired at second level and the expected knowledge on entry to higher education poses many challenges for students. Some have relied solely on state education for this knowledge on the one hand, and others who have had access to private instrumental and theory tuition encounter insufficient challenges, on the other. The historical context and documented narrative on the Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus briefly explained below, affords an insight into the ideological standpoints of educational policy-makers and practitioners in higher education.

*Leaving Certificate Music*

As already stated, the Leaving Certificate Established (LCE) programme comprises the culmination of assessment at second-level education (ages 12-18) and passing this examination is mandatory for entry onto higher education programmes. Within the Leaving Certificate curriculum, a syllabus for each subject contains prescribed and optional material from which the teacher and students select. Prior to significant changes to the Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus in the mid-1990s, the selection of music as a subject for Leaving Certificate remained the privilege of students who were attending private instrumental lessons and/or those who intended to study music in higher education (McCarthy, 1999). The older syllabus (Department of Education, 1974) reflected a model of music and musicianship in which Western classical music predominated and a strong emphasis on historical knowledge, analytical and notational skills prevailed. With a fear of dissipating numbers choosing music in secondary school and a drive to make the subject more inclusive (see also Ross, 1995; Wright, 2008 on the UK context), a revised Leaving Certificate Syllabus was introduced in 1996 which encompassed a performing, listening and composing model of

music education along with a broadening of musical genres (Department of Education and Science, 1996). Most notable was the inclusion of a compulsory performing aspect for all students at examination (which could form up to 50% of the overall grade), and the introduction of music technology. Essentially, a departure from a musicianship/literacy-based conception of music education to a more praxial one (Elliott, 1995), led to a radical overhaul of the curriculum. Following the introduction of the new curriculum, participation rates increased by 66% within a three-year period (State Examinations Commission, 1999).

Many music teachers who shared concerns about diminishing participation in secondary school music welcomed the aforementioned changes; however, some academics and music scholars expressed strong reservations about the changing nature of the subject. Discussions revolved around the potential suitability of the syllabus for students who might wish to study music at university (Heneghan, 2001) and that changes to music curricula at second level would lead to falling standards on entry to music degree programmes. Many debates ensued within higher education circles in the 1990s, and these highlighted contested ideologies of musical value, which were brought to bear most prominently at the Music Education National Debate (MEND). This is further investigated in Chapter Four.


*Personal Rationale*

My own personal experience studying music education at undergraduate level in university partly influenced my decision to take this research path. I came late to the study of music in my teenage years and quickly realised that I would have to gain high grades in performance and theory if I was to consider a future pathway in university. With the help of an excellent music teacher, the old second-level music curriculum stood me in very good stead in terms of music theory and analysis required for higher education study.

During a four-year period, I managed to accomplish a relatively high standard of performance on classical guitar (up to Grade 7 ABRSM[1]). Combined with secondary school music, this access provided a solid grounding in music and musicianship without the need for private music theory lessons, which in any case, I would not have been able to afford. Not having come from a classical background – my father and uncles are well-known popular session musicians - I found small group lectures and tutorials on music history and analysis at university very intimidating. During such lectures, it was common practice to discuss a particular composer's piece with reference to other compositions, many of which I was

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[1] Associated Board of the Royal School of Music Graded Syllabus of Examinations

unfamiliar with. Having achieved mediocre grades at the end of the first year, I considered withdrawing but I would have been unable to access another course. Because I was in receipt of a higher education grant which covered all fees and a small amount of maintenance, this allocation was for the duration of one degree only. Through sheer determination, motivation and a deep love for what I was studying, I succeeded in getting the highest degree award in the class cohort on graduation which was for me, an immense achievement.

*Professional Rationale*

Since 1994, I have taught general music and guitar in various educational settings including primary, secondary and peripatetic contexts and was appointed as lecturer in music education in a college of primary teacher education in 2006. My role as lecturer paved the way for my involvement as a member of council of the Society for Musicology in Ireland (2009-2012) and the Society for Music Education in Ireland (2010-present). The former council comprises many leading figures in musicology in Ireland, all of whom teach music in higher education with some holding positions as Chairs/Heads of Music Departments. Anecdotal evidence and rhetoric on incoming students has tended to revolve around falling standards and conflicting expectations at entry as an apparent consequence of the music curriculum at second level.

Having listened and read many discussions in recent years about what music degree students 'lack' in terms of their musical knowledge and skills, sparked an empathy in me for such students, and an urge to investigate whether the gap between second and higher education was due to curriculum changes at second level, or the historical Eurocentric focus in higher education courses. In acknowledging my own personal and professional experiences as well as my ideological assumptions, I was keenly aware of the need to be as reflexive as possible throughout the research process. It was essential to recognise that I was not coming from a value-neutral standpoint and though my own musical journey inevitably influenced the choice of research topic, I needed to remain reflexive during and after the research process.

**Aims and Research Questions**

A central aim of this thesis is to investigate and document ideological assumptions about musical value in historical and contemporary Irish higher music education contexts. As already stated, a prevalent common sense view holds that the study of music in higher

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education ought to represent a serious, intellectual engagement with music most commonly associated with the Western classical music tradition. This study endeavours to ascertain the extent of such beliefs among students and lecturers and the ways in which these relate to their musical backgrounds and prior music education. The research aims to discover why some conceptions of musical value and knowledge are more dominant than others, and the extent to which these affect student and lecturer experiences. More critically, the study considers the ways in which the curriculum as structure, the 'hidden' curriculum as social reproduction, and musical knowledge and skills relate to issues of access and opportunity in higher music education. In sum, the research explores the interplay between musical value, ideology and higher music education in the context of the Republic of Ireland; it includes the voices of both student and lecturer, and it considers the ways in which musical backgrounds and prior music education influence their experiences.

In particular, the following research question was investigated:

To what extent do ideological assumptions of musical value, knowledge and skills vis-à-vis the musical backgrounds and prior music education of students and lecturers, relate to issues of access and opportunity in higher music education?

Stemming from the main question, the following sub-questions are addressed:

- What are students' and lecturers' musical backgrounds and prior music education?
- What are students' and lecturers' beliefs about musical value, knowledge and skills?
- To what extent do students' and lecturers' experiences of higher music education relate to their musical backgrounds, prior music education and the broader context of higher education?
- To what extent do students' and lecturers' backgrounds and experiences relate to one another?
- In what ways are ideological assumptions of musical value and knowledge reflected in the curriculum (and the hidden curriculum); and how do such assumptions relate to issues of access and opportunity in higher music education?

The specific contributions that this study hopes to make to the field of music education are twofold. Firstly, the study presents an original historical and contemporary account of Irish higher music education in which ideological assumptions about musical value are situated within the context of Ireland's relatively recent post-colonial past. This distinguishes it from previous studies in higher music education that have had specific types of institutions and learning approaches as their focus, for example conservatoire education. Secondly, whilst it recognises previous applications of Bourdieu's conceptual tools of habitus, cultural capital, and field to higher education literature in general, the study presents an original perspective on the ways in which Bourdieu's tools apply to musical backgrounds, prior music education, and issues of access and opportunity within the Irish context.

**Methodology**

*Conceptual Framework*

As the thesis explores ideological assumptions of musical value and issues of unequal access and opportunity, an overall sociological perspective provided the framework for the study. However, a sociological perspective alone could not shed light on the ways in which students' and lecturers' expressed musical knowledge and experiences of music education, therefore music as 'object', was also considered with particular reference to the curriculum and broader musicological concerns. Conceived in this way, the research intersects between general music education and higher music education, whereby access to curricula and knowledge are considered through a structure/agency dialectic. More critically, epistemic access to musical knowledge emerges as a powerful means to bridge the gap between students' backgrounds, formal music education, and unequal opportunities in higher music education.

Working within this framework, I considered a number of sociological theories that might better explain emergent themes in the data. Employing Bourdieu's conceptual tools of field, habitus and cultural capital in the later stages of data analysis provided a means of illuminating the ways in which students' and lecturers' backgrounds and assumptions affected their experiences of higher music education. Although Bourdieu's concepts have been employed extensively in the areas of schooling and in studies on the sociology of culture, few empirical studies in higher education policy have employed his conceptual framework (Maton, 2005). As already mentioned, notions of higher education autonomy have been eclipsed by the rapid expansion of higher education framed by political and economical

interests. Through Bourdieu's framework, contested issues of autonomy in higher education policy and practice have thrown higher education as an 'object' of study into sharp focus (Maton, 2005). The question of autonomy in Bourdieu's framework and in music education philosophy thus affords insight into the *structuring principles* of the field of higher education on one hand, and the *structured field* of higher music education on the other.

For example, traditions and values that underpin the mission statement and the internal policies of a university can define its autonomy from a smaller technical college. We can take this idea further by suggesting that in a university, the field of the music department may take pride in the emphasis is gives to upholding principles of autonomy in the study of music. In other words, musical scholarship is pursued for its own sake with little intervention from vested economic interests. Viewed in this way, a field's autonomy can be seen as a marker of achievement or as symbolic capital, (a point I develop later in the thesis), but in the changing landscape of higher education, economic and political issues challenge ideologies and values central to such markers of achievement. Consequently, autonomous principles form the basis of struggles between agents in the field, who attempt to justify their positions through conservation or transformation of established power relations (Bourdieu, 1988).

In order to illuminate the role that the curriculum and implicit assumptions of valued knowledge play in student and lecturer experiences, the study draws from Bernstein's (1971) theory of the classification and framing of knowledge. For Bernstein, power relations influence the way knowledge is generated, legitimised and reproduced within a pedagogic context. Consequently, relationships of power and control are expressed through the concepts of the classification and framing of knowledge and in the manifestation of the hidden curriculum. In sum, employing the concepts of Bourdieu and Bernstein provided an analytical language of description that I found brought a higher level of abstraction and conceptualisation to the interpretation of data. At the same time, I have also aimed to ground all conceptual assertions in the data by 'blending together empirical evidence and abstract concepts' (Neuman, 2003, p. 440).


**Research Design**

The study was predominantly qualitative but employed quantitative elements in the design and analysis of the survey. Because the study included the perspectives of students and lecturers as well as public document discourse, a 'practical' approach (Creswell, 2003) to the research design meant that both numbers and words would be utilised in the analysis to best

capture the complex myriad of issues surrounding the research problem. Employing diverse data gathering tools allowed a diversity of perspectives and information on the research topic to be obtained. I drew on the strengths of some methods while overcoming the shortcomings of others (Creswell, 2003). In addition, through the inclusion of a variety of perspectives, it was possible to obtain a more holistic view of the context (Sarantakos, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

The research questions were addressed via a documentary survey, a national survey, interviews with students and lecturers, and three student focus group discussions. Although I initially considered the possibility of a case study design contrasting two or three institutions, such an approach may have been problematic within the Irish context. Had I set out to contrast specific institutions or cases, such a focused study may have made participants uneasy within the very small field of higher music education. For example, despite guaranteeing anonymity, there could have been a potential risk that individuals and institutions might be easily indentified from the small circle of Irish higher education providers. Consequently, ethical issues such as anonymity might have proved impossible.

The empirical research began in January 2010 and fieldwork for the main study was conducted from September 2011 – March 2012. It included students and lecturers from six distinct music programmes across eleven higher education institutions offering music to degree level in the Republic of Ireland. These institutions comprised: five universities, three conservatoires, one institute of technology and two colleges of teacher education.


**Data Generation and Analysis**

It was envisaged that emergent issues in the data generation process would inform the next direction for further probing or exploration. Consequently, the research process comprised three interrelated phases as illustrated in Figure 1.1. Various documents were employed as the first method of data collection but they were also accumulated and utilised throughout the data gathering process and during the write-up stage. According to Wellington (2000, p.110) documentary analysis affords insight into socially constructed manifestations of values, practices and priorities, or what he terms 'social products'. For the purpose of this study, researching documents provided a two-fold purpose.

First, they shed light on two separate fields of higher education and music education within the Irish context, thereby providing an aerial perspective on prevailing themes and issues. Second, they captured and reflected perspectives from general – higher educational

policy, to specific institutional assumptions, values and priorities. Documents included music education and higher education reports, Department of Education statistical data on student numbers and grades of music at Leaving Certificate level, and course prospectuses and promotional literature.
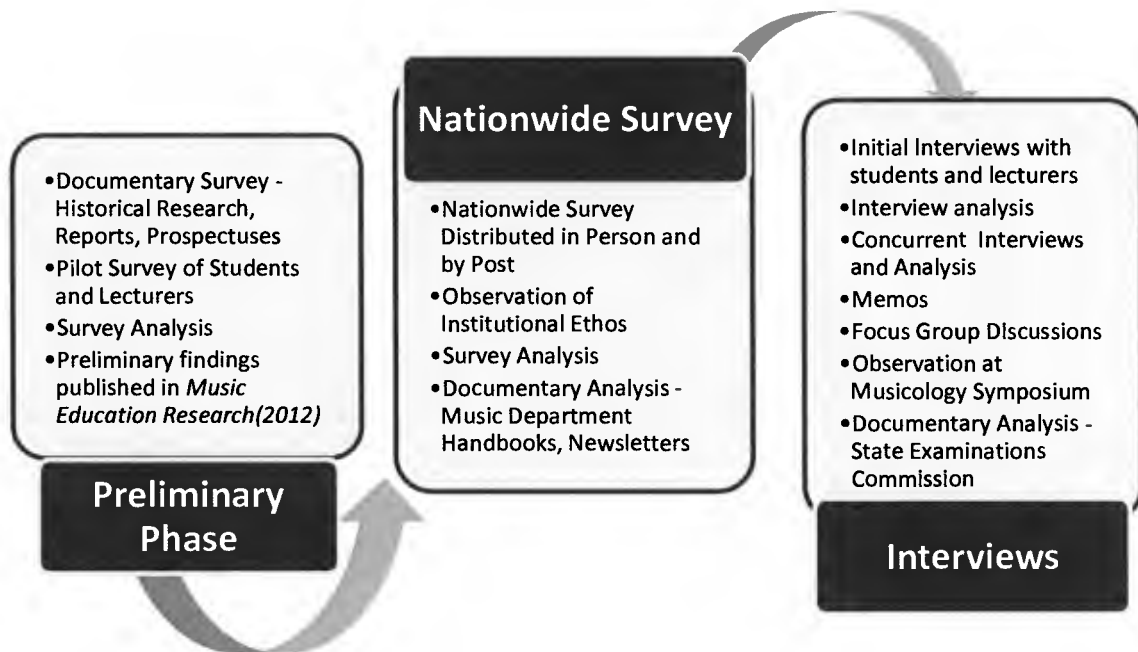


**Figure 1.1** Phases of Data Generation and Analysis

I examined various reports and documents relating to the topic of falling standards at second level which were conflated with discourse on diminishing knowledge and skills in higher education. I then set about collating data related to all higher education institutions offering music to degree level in the Republic of Ireland. This process included analysis of course prospectuses; staff numbers, gender and profiles, and content analysis of prospectuses and student handbooks. What occurred to me in these initial stages was the steadfast tradition of Western classical music in many of the higher music education options. Yet, a gradually changing landscape of musical genres and courses had emerged since I left university in 1994. This analytical overview provided the foundation for some of the questionnaire survey questions, as well as filling out the picture of the overall workings of each music department along with the curricula within each.

*Piloting and Preliminary Data Analysis*

In order to gain as many student perspectives on Irish higher music education as possible, a survey was designed which would capture students' views on issues arising from the

documentary analysis phase. Prior to the main phase of the study, the survey was piloted on a small group of students. The pilot procedure provided an opportunity to evaluate the layout, adequacy and relevance of the questions, the number of questions, the size of the questionnaire and the time required to complete it. All questions were checked and any ambiguities clarified. Questions which were vague, unclear or overlapping were either eliminated or made more explicit. The piloting procedure also included establishing a coding framework for each closed and open question.

Following the pilot procedure, I conducted an initial student survey in April 2011 with 60 students in one institution in the Republic of Ireland. This phase sought to identify emergent issues from qualitative comments which would then inform the next phase of the study. The initial phase raised questions not originally considered in the design of the survey and these were subsequently incorporated into the main phase of the research study. Moreover, some students mentioned interactions with music lecturers in less-flattering light, thus I felt it vital to provide a balance of perspectives by including the views of music lecturers as well as students. Findings from the initial phase were subsequently published in the peer-reviewed international journal *Music Education Research* in March 2012 (see attachment at the back of the thesis).

During the revision of this paper, further alterations were made to the questionnaire which would form the main phase of the study. It is important to clarify that the results of the initial phase of the study (Moore, 2012) were not included in the subsequent analysis of the main survey. This is because the results were not comparable due to the addition and removal of particular questions. I also felt that it was important to ensure that the main data collection phase was completed before the article was published. I was very conscious that the published article could potentially influence participation, as well as potentially biasing responses to interview questions. Therefore, all survey and interview data from the main phase of the study were collected and analysed prior to the publishing of the initial phase.

*Main Survey, Sampling and Distribution*

I had initially planned to gather data from a representative sample of students and lecturers from all music programmes within the thirteen institutions in the Republic of Ireland offering music to degree level. Despite repeated invitations to the Heads of two music departments with no response, it proved impossible to gain access to two institutions. Nonetheless, I was pleased to have gained access to music degree programmes within eleven out of thirteen

institutions representing universities, conservatoires and an institute of technology (Table 1.2) resulting in a total yield of 406 student questionnaires.

**Table 1.1** Sample of students from each institution type

| Institution Type | Freq | % |
|---|---|---|
| Universities | 201 | 49.6% |
| Conservatoires | 130 | 32% |
| Colleges of Education | 53 | 13% |
| Institute of Technology | 22 | 5.4% |
| Total | 406 | 100% |

I had initially envisaged a representative student sample (by year and programme), however a number of challenges presented, such as non-response from two institutions and difficulty in accessing a stratified sample. Given that the Higher Education Authority of Ireland (HEA) report graduating music students at approximately 400 per annum (HEA, 2011), I deemed the yield of 406 completed questionnaires indicative of current participation rates. While the sample is not representative, it is possible given the number of participants vis-à-vis the HEA figures, that statistical findings may be reflective of the broader music education milieu. As Table 1.2 illustrates, a larger proportion of first and fourth year students are represented in comparison to those in second and third year. This is because many students were off-campus during the fieldwork. As iterated earlier, the majority of participants were recruited on campus via hard copy. In attempting to include students who were off campus, offers were made to recruit via an online version of the survey. It was anticipated however that response would be low through the online version and unsurprisingly, only four students responded via this method. Of the sample of 406, 36% were male and 64% female and of the entire sample, 12% were classified as mature students.

**Table 1.2** Year of Study

| Year of Study | Freq | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1st Year | 169 | 41.6 |
| 2nd Year | 70 | 17.2 |
| 3rd Year | 66 | 16.3 |
| 4th Year | 101 | 24.9 |
| Total | 406 | 100.0 |

As mentioned earlier, it was necessary to include the lecturers' views in the data gathering process. As a consequence, the student and lecturer surveys were designed to incorporate identical questions (where appropriate) and to exclude unnecessary time-consuming ones. As illustrated in Table 1.1 questions pertained to: general background, musical background, beliefs about musical value, and the curriculum in second and higher education levels (See Appendix A for both questionnaires).

**Table 1.3** Student and Lecturer Questionnaire Structure

| Student Questionnaire | | Lecturer Questionnaire | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Section A: | General Background (Q1-6) | Section A: | Professional and Background |
| Section B: | Musical Background and | | Information (Q1-8) |
| | Music Education (Q1-10) | Section B: | Musical Background and Music |
| Section C: | Family Background (Q1-5) | | Education (Q1-9) |
| Section D: | Music and curricula (1-17) | Section C: | Music and curricula (Q1-9) |

Closed and open questions were interspersed throughout the questionnaire, and where open questions were asked, participants were provided with a limited amount of space to respond so that they would be more inclined to provide an answer. A number of structured questions based on list, category, quantity, and a three-point scale were adopted to appeal to participants. Such variety would ease the burden of participation and would be easier to complete in a limited amount of time. Additionally, this afforded a manageable process of analysis (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007). Consideration was also given to the ordering of the questions as they appeared in the questionnaire (Czaja and Blair, 2005). The benefit of employing a survey method lay in the contextual information and basic descriptive statistics of the sample provided, as well as aiding the selection of students for interview.

Distributing the surveys in person to students served a fourfold purpose: a) to provide a forum for explaining the context and purpose of the study; b) to be available to answer questions should they arise; c) to remove the lecturers in the role of distribution which may have inconvenienced them and inhibited student responses, and d) to meet lecturers and students in person in order to establish familiarity and a warm rapport should they wish to volunteer for a follow-up interview. In addition, I wished to gain an insight into the cultural aspects of each institution vis-à-vis the buildings and visible resources, musical artefacts and music-making. I travelled in person to all eleven institutions on various dates between

November 2011 and March 2012 in order to meet with Faculty, distribute surveys to students and to take field notes.

In most instances, I met with students just before the end of a lecture when the lecturer was free to vacate the room and I explained the purpose of the research. In light of the fact that many colleges conduct internal evaluation and quality surveys, it was very important to clarify that the research was not an evaluation of their particular course or university/college. I explained that rather the purpose was to investigate their musical backgrounds, prior music education, and their experience of higher music education. Students were informed that their participation was voluntary and anonymous. After this clarification, they were invited to take a survey and either a) fill it out then or b) fill it out later during the day and return it to an enclosed box which was left in the music department. On certain occasions all students stayed in the room and completed the survey which often gave rise to some revealing comments and glimpses into their experiences. For example, on a visit to University G, one student remarked 'This is the first time someone has actually asked us how we relate to the content, 'cos you know, some of it is bloody hard!'

*Lecturer Survey*

From analysis of institutional websites, approximately one hundred lecturers teach music at undergraduate level. Lecturers across all institutions were sent a postal survey and a personalised accompanying cover letter detailing the aims and purposes of the study (see Appendix D). Response was slow however, and though gentle reminders were sent, a relatively low number of 35 lecturer surveys were returned. It was not clear from websites which lecturers were employed on a full-time or part-time basis and the fact that many part-time lecturers might not have an assigned mailbox on campus may explain the slow response rate. For purposes of true anonymity, lecturers were not asked to include any identifiable information including the naming of respective institution(s). Consequently, it was not possible to ascertain the number of responses per institution-type. Of the sample, two-thirds were male and one third female. The majority were fulltime lecturers and two held the position as Head of Department. Diverse experiences in higher music education teaching were evident among lecturers. Although a minority were at the early (5) and later end of (4) the academic career spectrum, the majority had on average 10-15 years teaching experience.

*Survey Analysis*

Quantitative data were coded and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Analysis of the quantitative data mostly comprised descriptive statistics including frequency tables, cross-tabulations and where appropriate measures of association between discrete variables. All qualitative comments were transferred onto a spreadsheet according to each individual case. As Munn and Drever (1990, p.37) suggest, this method affords the opportunity to '...see what people's answers are to particular questions without leafing through a huge pile of questionnaires'. Through the coding of each individual case on a spreadsheet (see example in Appendix E), qualitative comments could be analysed in tandem with the SPSS file. The benefit of being able to see the data across all individual cases thus, assisted in the process of axial coding which identified possible relationships between data categories. At the end of the questionnaire an option to participate in an anonymous confidential interview was provided, and participants were asked to provide their email address for follow-up contact purposes.

From repeated scrutiny of the initial list of codes, a set of themes emerged from the survey that informed the purposive sampling method for initial follow-up interviews with students. For example, students who had expressed strong opinions in relation to musical value and their experiences of the curriculum at second level and in higher education, as well as students from a variety of musical backgrounds were selected. In regard to musical value, a number of students had written comments such as 'Classical is where it all began. Of course it's the most important' (Survey No. 213) and 'Don't know why we don't cover any Irish music even though it's our own culture' (Survey No. 96) and 'As a jazz player I really have to prove myself in a place like this' (Survey No. 42). Such comments illustrated a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives that required further enquiry.

*Interviews with Lecturers and Students*

Lecturers were purposively sampled by institution, Faculty position, gender, age, nationality, and module responsibilities as listed on the respective Music Department website. Those who were close colleagues or friends were not interviewed for reasons of interview bias. As I was mindful to avoid overburdening lecturers' already busy schedules, those who had returned the postal questionnaire were not asked to participate in an interview. One exception was a lecturer who at the time of interview, offered to complete the questionnaire. In total, 46 lecturer perspectives (35 surveys + 11 interviews) were captured in the data.

All interviews occurred in their own offices and at a suitably convenient time. Not all lecturers responded to the initial invitation thus, two institutions are not represented in the interview sample here. However, understanding the many prior commitments and responsibilities of academic staff, I was very pleased that twelve lecturers agreed to participate including two Heads of Department as well as fulltime and part-time lecturers at varying stages of their careers. Lecturers were predominantly male but were represented in each institution-type. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of lecturers had Western classical music backgrounds whereas as I will show, a broader range of musical backgrounds were prevalent among the student sample.

**Table 1.4** Characteristics of the Lecturer Sample

| Lecturers (n:12) | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Gender** | **Position** | **Institution-Type** | **Musical Background** |
| Male: 8 | Chair : 2 | University : 6 | Western Classical : 9 |
| Female: 4 | Senior Lecturer : 1 | Conservatoire : 4 | Bimusical : 3 |
| | Lecturer : 9 | Institute of Technology : 1 | |
| | | College of Education : 1 | |

The interview began with general questions pertaining to their musical backgrounds; their experiences of music education; what opinions they had on skills and knowledge needed for higher music education; their experiences of teaching; and whether they thought that their musical backgrounds and prior music education had a role to play in their experiences (see Appendix B).


*Student Interviews*

The duration of student interviews spanned from 30 minutes to an hour depending on the student availability and interviews often occurred between lectures. All interviews were scheduled at a time and place that suited the participants. The location of student interviews varied from vacant practice rooms, to college cafes and outdoor benches. Similar to the lecturer interviews, I asked students about their musical backgrounds; their experiences of music education at second level in particular; what opinions they had on skills and knowledge needed for higher music education; their experiences of learning in higher music education; and whether they thought that their musical backgrounds and prior music education had a role to play in their experiences. The order of questions was modified in terms of what seemed most appropriate in the context of the conversation. The ways topics were worded could be

altered or certain questions could be omitted or expanded upon depending on which seemed inappropriate or irrelevant with a particular interviewee. After jointly collecting, coding and analysing the first three interviews, a number of issues emerged which provided the springboard for a theoretical sampling approach.

*Student Interview Sampling*

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) the theoretical sampling method affords the opportunity to examine concepts from different angles as well as alerting the researcher to issues that require expansion or further clarification. As well as providing direction for each subsequent stage of data collection, a theoretical sampling approach required sensitivity not only to what I did, but also to how I went about probing issues that required expansion (Birks and Mills, 2011). As illustrated in Table 1.5, the student sample represents a balance of gender and a diverse range of characteristics such as age category, year of study and musical background (for more indepth presentation of participant characteristics see Appendix C).

**Table 1.5** Key Characteristics of the Student Sample

| Students (n:18) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Age Category | Institution-type | Year of Study | Musical Background |
| Male : 9 | 18-24 : 13 | University : 7 | Year 1: 5 | Western Classical :11 |
| Female : 9 | 25-34 : 3 | Conservatoire : 6 | Year 2: 5 | Irish Traditional: 1 |
| | 35-44 : 1 | Institute of Technology : 2 | Year 3: 4 | Bimusical:2 |
| | 45-54 : 1 | | Year 4: 4 | Pop/Rock:2 |
| | | College of Education : 3 | | Jazz:2 |

During the process of concurrent data collection and analysis, I noticed a much lower number of students who stated difficulties with the course volunteering for interview. Some questionnaires revealed both disappointment and negative experiences and such students would have been invited for interview had they supplied email/contact information. Conversely, students who seemed happy with their study pathway had volunteered for interview. Perhaps given my position of lecturer, there was an element of mistrust on the students' part, but it was nonetheless a pertinent finding in itself, that such students did not want to discuss or admit particular challenges in person. To try and counteract this problem, when I visited the next set of institutions, I announced that I was particularly interested in hearing the views of students a) from diverse musical backgrounds, b) who found the course 'didn't suit' them, or c) who found aspects of the course challenging. While this helped in

recruiting three 'new' types of students, the sample remained over-represented by students who appeared satisfied with their decision to study music.

*Student Focus Group Discussions*

In order to ameliorate reluctant participation by students who seemed to be encountering challenges, I pursued the idea of a student focus group discussion in order to provide more varied perspectives. Focus group research draws upon participants' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way that is not feasible using other methods, such as observation, one-to-one interviewing, or questionnaire surveys (Morgan, 1993). Attitudes, feelings and beliefs may be partially independent of a group or its social setting, but are more likely to be revealed via the social gathering and the interaction that being in a focus group entails. Compared to individual interviews which aim to obtain individual attitudes, beliefs and feelings, focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context (Krueger and Casey, 2000).

However, as with all research methods, focus group discussions can present some limitations. The researcher or moderator has less control over the data produced than in either quantitative studies or one-to-one interviewing (Morgan, 1993). The moderator has to allow participants to talk to each other, ask questions, and express doubts and opinions, while having very little control over the interaction other than generally keeping participants focused on the topic. By its nature, focus group research is open-ended and cannot be entirely predetermined. In addition, participants express their views in a specific context and so sometimes it may be difficult for the researcher to clearly identify an individual message. Therefore, it is essential that the researcher understand the role of the moderator in conducting a focus group discussion.

Student focus groups in three distinct institutions were conducted representing: i) final year students at a university (7); ii) second and third year students at a teacher education college (6) and iii) 1$^{st}$ year students at a conservatoire (10). Data categories that had arisen in previous interviews as well as existing questions, were probed in order to see whether varying attitudes and beliefs about musical value and higher music education might emerge. Once a meeting had been arranged, my role as moderator came into sharp focus. In this role, I needed to provide clear explanations of the purpose of the group, to help people feel at ease, and to facilitate interaction between group members (Morgan 1993). I also needed to promote debate and challenge participants and tease out a diverse range of meanings on the topic

under discussion. The style of interaction was informal, utilising semi-structured questions, with opportunities for examples and elaborations (Krueger and Casey, 2000).

*Interview Data Analysis*

The number of planned student and lecturer interviews was left open on the basis that I would keep interviewing until the data were repeating themselves or became saturated (Birks and Mills, 2011). This began to happen after ten or eleven student interviews and five lecturer interviews but it was difficult to tell given the varying musical backgrounds of each participant whether responses would continue in this way. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed as soon as possible after the interview. In addition, memos were also recorded sometimes with pen and paper, but more often than not with the audio-recorder. Listening back and appraising my own interview technique in particular after the first few interviews, caused me to reflect on own assumptions and forced me to attend to issues of reflexivity in my approach before and after the fieldwork. The transcripts themselves were open-coded but as analysis proceeded, coding concentrated on prevailing issues. The dimensions of the open or primary codes were extended through axial coding to identify relationships between categories.

Although I had been trained in using the qualitative analysis software *NVivo,* I decided against using it for the study because I found that it can force the researcher to compartmentalise data too easily and in my opinion, allow the assigning of categories too rapidly as well as the 'binning' of potentially relevant data. This process runs the risk of prematurely 'jumping to conclusions' about the data codes and categories. All of the qualitative data were analysed manually through the use of colour-coded *Microsoft Word* comments, as well as leafing through the hard copy transcripts and making notes in the margins. More commonly perceived as time-consuming and old fashioned, I found that I could examine the data in a tangible way and analyse it holistically as well as specifically.

By the time I had completed eighteen student and twelve lecturer interviews, I felt satisfied that the data were sufficiently saturated and no new themes were emerging. Whilst being mindful of a comparative approach to the analysis between students and lecturers, it was anticipated that different perspectives would be captured. Categories that emerged from the analysis of interviews did not present distinct binary opposing views between lecturers and students. Rather, a range of perspectives was captured amongst and between lecturers and students of music. As further discussed throughout this thesis, ideologies of musical

value reflected in many cases, the musical backgrounds and prior music education of the students and lecturers.

In interpreting the data, the importance of distinguishing between the ways students and lecturers talked about their experiences is representative of a more complex relationship between the perception of their agency as musicians, learners and teachers, and their participation in the legitimised discourses of the music department. As the findings will show, recurring themes emerged equally across and within the individualities of diverse institutions and programmes. While it is acknowledged that Irish higher music education is complex and diverse, referring specifically to the institutional context of each qualitative comment or quotation could potentially compromise participants' anonymity as assured in consent forms. When sensitive issues or critical incidents as experienced by participants are presented in the thesis therefore, specific contexts and programmes do not accompany each quotation. Though the overarching data categories were equally present across all of the institutions and programmes, where exceptions occur, the institutional context is more prominently highlighted in the data analysis.

Consideration was given to the interview process itself as a platform for discussion and reflection. Moreover, my background and 'insider' knowledge meant that reflexivity was pivotal in understanding how the interview process itself could shape the data collected (Mitchell and Irvine, 2008). Within this platform, I could negotiate the concepts of musical value and knowledge as it applied to participants' musical backgrounds and prior music education. More importantly, the interview data also implicitly revealed my knowledge of 'expert' practices in music and musicianship for example, 'Schenker'[2] analysis, atonality, and five-species counterpoint, as well as knowledge of current discourses and concerns within higher music education.

In total, the quantity of data collected amounted to 78 variables inputted onto SPSS, 80 spreadsheet pages of qualitative comment data and over 500 pages of transcriptions and field notes. While the quantity of data seemed rather overwhelming, the concurrent collection and analysis methods not only eased what would have amounted to vast quantities of pooled data, but also allowed for improvement in interviewing methods and the probing of many emergent issues.

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[2] A method of music analysis based on the theories of Heinrich Schenker which interprets the underlying structure of the hierarchical pitch relationships within a tonal work through graphical representation .

*Presentation of Qualitative Survey and Interview Data*

In order to distinguish between the qualitative data from the student and lecturer survey comments and interview data, it is necessary to clarify the way in which the comments are anonymously attributed. Both student and lecturer surveys are represented by survey number i.e. S121: Student Survey 121 and L32: Lecturer Survey 32. Student focus group participants are also given numbers i.e. S1. With regard to the interview data and transcription, all names of higher education institutions have been anonymised and interview participants have been given pseudonyms. Student pseudonyms are distinguished by first name only e.g. *Paula*. Full title for lecturers e.g. *Dr Jane Strong* precede the interview extract after which they are simply called by their formal titles i.e. *Dr Strong*. The only exceptions to anonymity are *Professor Harry White* and *Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin* who both wished to be named.

The layout of transcriptions clearly differentiates between the focus groups and comments by individuals that are isolated from the original context. This is done by leaving a space between different interview excerpts. Throughout the presentation of interview data, quotes are intended, as far as possible, to accurately reflect students' and lecturers' views. For the purpose of clarity and flow, repeated words/phrases and 'um or 'er' are only included when they affect the understanding of the syntax or significance of the issue under discussion. Ellipses are used to illustrate cuts in the conversation and when used within a paragraph indicate the omission of one or two sentences or phrases. Ellipses followed by a paragraph break indicate a different part of the interview. Otherwise, punctuation is designed to correspond with syntax, or occasionally short pauses in speech. The following example of an interview with a lecturer illustrates the transcription methods used:

***Original Transcription***
> *Dr Peter Enright (Classical Music Background)*
> G:    From your experience then, how do the Irish trad students find the curriculum when it comes to harmony and counterpoint?
> *P:*    They find it very difficult and it's something that 'em if I were, if I'd been here when the course were designed I think it would have been be looked at in much more detail we, we tend to find that the people who teach in the traditional courses here fully support the idea that the traditional students should be fully aware of all aspects of Western music in the same ways as we expect 'em students of classical music to be aware of Irish traditional music so they also 'em study that they don't specifically perform when a student gets. into third and fourth year as a trad player 'em all their modules can be picked from traditional 'em courses and that, at the moment in years one and two there are just two modules that are specifically for sort of traditional students, then they have their performance studies and they have various ensembles but

the rest, like a lot of the other students, are just shared common modules: common modules on the history of music aural training which I know from speaking to traditional students they find it very, very valuable even being taught it from a classical perspective because it's such an important part of 'em what they do but I make bones about it they find it very tough to get through years one and two; it can be a bit of a struggle and battle.

*Edited Transcription Method*

*Dr Peter Enright (Classical Music Background)*

G:    From your experience then, how do the Irish trad students find the curriculum when it comes to harmony and counterpoint?

P:    They find it very difficult...we tend to find that the people who teach in the traditional courses here fully support the idea that the traditional students should be fully aware of all aspects of Western music in the same ways as we expect students of classical music to be aware of Irish traditional music... at the moment in years one and two, there are just two modules that are specifically for traditional students, then they have their performance studies, and they have various ensembles, but the rest...are just shared common modules on the history of music, aural training, which I know from speaking to traditional students find it very valuable even being taught it from a classical perspective... but I make no bones about it, they find it very tough to get through years one and two; it can be a bit of a struggle and battle.

## Parameters of the Study

This study explores higher music education as experienced by students and lecturers from six courses within eleven higher education institutions that offer music at undergraduate level in the Republic of Ireland. Because of the profound differences in degree programme orientation, courses that focused predominantly on music technology or sound engineering were excluded from the study while limiting the sample to lecturers and students on BA, B.Mus, B.Ed, and B.Mus.Ed programmes.

At the outset of the project, I considered including Northern Ireland so as to have an all-island view, however the UK government reintroduced higher education fees in 2011 thus, students from the Republic would be less inclined to study there. In addition, the travel that was necessary for the fieldwork proved extensive and time-consuming and it was simply not feasible to travel such distance when working full-time.

I had also considered exploring the views of students who had applied to music courses and not been offered a place with a view to enquiring about whether their musical backgrounds and prior music education might have had a role to play in their failure to gain a

place in higher education. However, access to personal information by an external researcher would have been very difficult to attain and would have posed many ethical issues.

I contemplated the possibility of limiting my sample to first year students only with a view to building on other research, which explores the hopes and perceptions of music students (Pitts 2003; Burland and Mills, 2007). However, other studies of students' expectations and experiences of higher education (Booth, 1997; 2001; Marland, 2003) suggested that students' attitudes change over the duration of their degree courses. Moreover, I was curious to find out if student beliefs and attitudes might differ across year cohorts.

It should also be acknowledged that some issues, which were intriguing but not relevant to the focus of the research, have been omitted from the analysis. For example, very specific topics as exemplified below that were personally relevant to the participants but may not have emerged elsewhere in the analysis, were excluded from the study. In the following excerpt 'Fionn', a fourth year student at university describes his view on the differing listening practices of performers and audience members:

> *(Fionn, 4$^{th}$ Year, Classical Music Background)*
> I do believe that what you experience as a player is often very different from what you experience as an audience member. I mean with the violin for instance it's so much closer to you the tone is entirely different from what the other people hear and you see it in great violinists like say, Horowitz or whoever, they lean in when it's the sweet passages and you know they can appreciate the tone, but when it's hard they lean away, they get more critical that kind of thing, there is an argument to be made that the performances you hear are only an approximation of the music that has been written...

Differences in performance practice and the relationship between listening as a player and as an audience member could form a fascinating area of research within conservatoire music education in the Irish context. It would also be fascinating to compare and contrast performance and aural practices of Western classical and Irish traditional musicians. However, because this study has a broader focus within the overall higher music education context, issues like this one are tangential to the central focus of this study and are therefore not included in the presentation of the findings.

In summation, this study does not set out to compare institutions or music degree courses; rather it endeavours to provide an overview of the context while attending to an indepth account of higher music education experiences. These experiences are explored in light of student and lecturer musical backgrounds, prior music education and prevailing assumptions and beliefs about musical value and opportunity.

*Definition of Terms*

I wish to clarify how ideology is conceived in this study. What counts as music and musical knowledge in higher education is fundamentally grounded in assumptions, beliefs, and theories. Assumptions can be described as undercurrent or benign beliefs, appearing *a priori* or real, but are often legitimised and defended when called into question. Allow me to give a brief example. In regard to music, assumptions have prevailed about the types of music worthy of serious study on the basis of the musical materials themselves (Green, 1988; 2001; 2003; 2008a). The musical materials such as pitch and form for example, become objects of scrutiny. Presuppositions of how one begins to scrutinise the materials, tends to determine the requisite musical knowledge needed to engage with the musical materials. In Western classical music such presuppositions manifest as the preoccupation with the acquisition of music literacy skills. In this thesis, assumptions and beliefs are not bound to one particular ideology (such as that associated with Western classical music) *per se*, moreover they manifest as a myriad of contested ideologies found in the Irish historical and political context, higher education policy, and the wider public sphere. Thus, 'ideology' as a broader concept and 'ideologies' pertaining to diverse musics, practices and contexts are both considered throughout the thesis.

I should also like to take a moment to clarify what is meant by 'musical knowledge' and 'skills'. Similar to Green (2002a), both concepts are not considered entirely discrete areas of 'human activity or consciousness' (p.21). Though musical skills conjure an image of manual dexterity and ease when playing a musical instrument, they can also be embedded within musical knowledge. For example, the ability to improvise fast scalic passages over a chromatic chord sequence requires skills to execute the technical aspect of the playing, but it can be more meaningful when one has knowledge and understanding of the relationship between the chord sequence and the scales. In the area of performing, most music learning tends to focus on skills such as being able to play/sing a song first. Yet, knowledge of the repertoire and stylistic interpretation can bring a very different dimension to bear on the musical performance. Seen as complementary facets of musical knowing, both musical knowledge and skills as terms, are mostly used in tandem throughout the thesis except in instances where I refer to the compartmentalising of each.

Finally, the term 'Western classical music' was used in the survey and throughout the thesis to refer to music from 1400 to present (Renassaisance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20th and 21st Century). Equally, the term 'world music' was employed reluctantly instead of 'musics of the world's cultures' simply for brevity and to distinguish from other music

categories in the survey and in the presentation of findings. It is acknowledged however here and elsewhere (Moore, 2011), that the universal use of the term 'world music' in commercial and educational contexts, falls short in encompassing the many diverse cultures and their musics. In this thesis, it refers to traditional musics from around the world.

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations began from the outset of the study and will remain throughout the dissemination of the findings. It was imperative to consider the wider implications of documenting the relatively unchartered, yet very familiar territory of higher music education, with particular sensitivity. Ireland is a small country with a population of approximately 4.8 million and music education circles are equally small. Names of institutions and individuals from survey and interviews were anonymised from the outset of data generation and analysis. After piloting the lecturer survey, a number of close colleagues cautioned at potential identifiable questions in the survey e.g. asking for the name or type of institution in which lecturers were employed. It was vital for the study and the participants that I ensured a safe platform for the gathering of honest opinions without any fear of identification. Moreover, any distrust on a student's or lecturer's part to the data gathering process would have also impinged on the validity of the findings. Thus, consideration was taken in regards to ethics throughout the research by respecting the students' and lecturers' needs and interests.

Permission was sought to carry out the research in the first instance by way of a formal letter to the *Council of Heads of Higher Music Education in Ireland* (CHMHE). Subsequently, permission was sought from each music department Head to conduct the research with faculty and students. At all stages of data collection, both students and lecturers were informed about the nature of the research, the risks and benefits, as well as the amount of time they needed to commit to it (Anderson, 1998). They were given the opportunity to agree or refuse to take part as per the nature of 'voluntarism' (Cohen et al, 2007, p.51).

In the case of the student survey, completion of the survey did not require any sensitive personal data from the respondent. Names of persons, locations, and institutions discussed in the course of the study were omitted in any transcribed extracts of the interviews/discussions except in the cases of Professors Mícheál Ó Suilleabhain and Harry White. All other participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality and all participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any stage. It is important however to clarify at this juncture, that documentary evidence publically available via the worldwideweb or

prospectuses relating to admissions procedures, curricula, student handbooks, and public symposia/lectures are not anonymised. As these documents are already in the public domain, some institutions and persons are named in the presentation of documentary data. However, I have taken care in the way I present the narrative of the data not to reveal anything that might be damaging to individuals, the departments or the institutions involved, while at the same time, attempting to maintain a critical perspective appropriate to scholarly inquiries.

*Reflexivity*

From my own background as a lecturer, gaining access to and arranging interviews with lecturers in particular, was not problematic. Nonetheless, I was very mindful of my 'insider' knowledge of the field, of staff, and of some of the students. It was vital for me to be as reflexive as possible by allowing the data to speak, while being aware of the ways in which aspertions might have been made because of my role. For example, on certain occasions, I was introduced by music lecturers as another music lecturer which could have compromised confidentiality and trust on the part of the students. To counteract this potential problem, when the lecturer left the room, I assured the students that my role was that of a doctoral researcher and that the purpose of the research would endeavour to be of benefit to current and future students, whilst also affirming that completed surveys would not be shared with any member of staff or third party. In light of the open and honest spirit of all of the interviews, I would like to thank all of the participants sincerely for their time and I hope that the study will provide a platform for a constructive debate on the issues emerging in Irish higher music education.

**Overview of Chapters**

In the chapters that follow, I endeavour to unfold the storyline of the data and its related literature so that the threads of ideology, musical value, and unequal opportunity around which most of the data revolve, permeate the thesis from beginning to end. The thesis is divided into eight chapters with literature and data interwoven from Chapter Two to Chapter Seven. This type of structure allows for the issues to unfold as they did during the data generation process, as well as affording a grounded situating of the literature and data.

The story begins in Chapter Two with an examination of the historical, political and cultural context of Irish educational policy. Prevailing discourses and implicit ideologies of music education are critically examined, not only in Irish music education reports, but also in

student and lecturer experiences. In Chapter Three, I explore students' and lecturers' musical backgrounds with a particular focus on the ways in which parental influence, habitus, cultural capital and social class affect their musical pathways. The journey continues to examine the mismatch between second level and higher music education in Chapter Four with a particular focus on the extent of unequal access and opportunity in the transition from second to higher level. Chapter Five explores assumptions of ideology and musical value within Irish higher music education and investigates how an implicit taxonomy of musical knowledge and skills more commonly associated with Western classical music affects the student experience. The idea of curriculum and the 'hidden' curriculum is examined in Chapter Six with a particular focus on the classification and framing of knowledge as theorised by Bernstein (1971). Finally, Chapter Seven highlights the urgency within current debates in higher education around issues such as the devaluing of music within the wider university sphere, in education, and in public consciousness. To conclude, this chapter synthesises the findings in a conceptual model.

Finally, the thesis considers the implications of economically-driven agendas for higher music education curricula and practice. It proposes a reconsideration of epistemological and pedagogical approaches to music education at both second and higher education levels. For it is with a reappraisal of ideologies and approaches to music education that we may consider the challenges that students and lecturers in higher music education encounter, as well as the reproduction of musical value, access and opportunity at all levels of music education.

# CHAPTER TWO
# IDEOLOGY, MUSICAL VALUE AND THE IRISH CONTEXT

## Introduction

This chapter examines the concept of ideology as it applies to the Irish historical, political and cultural context. To begin, I consider the ways in which ideological assumptions of musical value feature in Irish cultural and educational discourse as well as the ways in which they are experienced and articulated by students and lecturers in this study. After a brief history of Irish higher music education, I examine the current provision of music degree courses in the Republic of Ireland and respective admissions procedures, as well as a content analysis of one course prospectus. Literature and data are interwoven to provide a contextual background against which current student and lecturer perceptions of the Irish context are set.

## Conceptions of Ideology

The theories of Marx (1982) and Marx and Engels (1970) have influenced the theorists that I use from this point onwards in the thesis namely, Lucy Green, Pierre Bourdieu and John. B Thompson, thus I present a brief overview of their most relevant contributions that apply to this study.

Unlike Hegel, who held that history represented the development of human consciousness, Marx (1982) argued that human consciousness was shaped by material and social conditions. Thus, for Marx, consciousness was determined by class struggles. Marx identified important relationships between people, or classes, based on the ability to own property or land, and one's social position as an employer or as one who sold their labour. These relationships formed social classes who, by sharing their experiences of the relations of production, shared a common worldview. Marx and Engels (1970) theorised that despite the imposition of ideological beliefs that may not benefit the 'ruled' classes, those who might be described as dominated by groups of people, are led to believe that the current state of affairs is of benefit to all:

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the same means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. (Marx and Engels 1970, p.64; original emphasis)

In this quote from the seminal extended essay *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels (1970, p.64) argued that the ruling class 'rule as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age'. And because the ruling class have control of ideas pertaining to the economy, society or education in which they exercise power, it is in their interests that the status quo be maintained.

Drawing from classical definitions and understandings of ideology, I propose two theories as they might apply to music education in general, and specifically to the Irish context. First, I explore Green's theory of ideology (1988; 2003; 2005; 2008) with particular reference to conceptions of musical value in Western classical music and its impact on music education. Second, I consider how Thompson's (1990) theory of cultural ideology might apply to contemporary conceptions of Irish music education through an examination of the historical and contemporary mediatisation of Irish traditional music.

**Ideologies of Musical Value: Western Classical Music**

Congruent with Marx and Engels (1970), Green (1988; 2003; 2008a) asserts that because ideologies tend to sustain values and relations, they benefit social groups that already hold beneficial positions. Music education has contributed to the production and reproduction of particular ideological assumptions which permeate wider social relations. She posits three central tenets of ideology: reification, legitimation, and the perpetuation of social relations. Reification is the attribution of abstract concepts with thing-like properties whereby the abstract concept appears to exist as absolute and universal. For example, Western classical music has been regarded as superior to popular or traditional musics because of its assumed universal, transcendent qualities. Western classical music has moreover, been perceived as the only music worthy of serious study because the reified ideological standpoint is often justified by the perpetuation of the canon and the 'great' composers. Social relations that accept ideological notion(s) such as the aforementioned, appear legitimate leading to the perpetuation of things as they already are. Ideology can be understood therefore, as the

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representation of ideas, values and assumptions of powerful groups within society which aid the perpetuation of the social relations and the values of particular interest groups 'at the expense of others while at the same time appearing to be "objective" or disinterested' (Green 2003, p.264). Thus, Western classical music education has historically been perpetuated and reproduced predominantly by the middle classes and the bourgeoisie. At the same time, traditional musics or folk musics have tended to be associated with working class groups. As I go on to discuss shortly, Green's position can be applied to the context of Irish music education, insofar as contestations of musical value have appeared to construct a dichotomy between Western classical music and Irish traditional music in education. But before I examine the Irish context, I wish to examine the ways in which ideologies of musical value have been perpetuated.

*Music as Aesthetic Art Form*

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, various ideological assumptions of musical value were conceived. One assumption of aesthetic theory was that of the definition of artistic beauty whereby music '...consists simply and solely of tones and their artistic combination' (Hanslick, 1986, p.28), thus music was autonomous from its creator and abstracted from the performer and receiver as an absolute object. Scruton (1983) would propose a similar viewpoint in that we imagine music as being connected to the emotions but that music exists independent of social action and function, thus prevailing as an esoteric entity.

In her extensive philosophy on the meaning of music, Langer (1957) claimed that the aesthetic qualities of musical works represented forms of human feelings such as tensions and resolution. Such a conception of aesthetics served to provide the listener with insight into the human feeling, also echoed later in the views of Swanwick (1999) and Reimer (2003). Contrary to these beliefs were the arguments put forth by Blacking (1973); Small (1977); Nettl (1983) and Vulliamy and Shepherd (1984) who, while recognising that music invokes feelings, argued that such an absolutist perspective ignores the inherent and social significance of music. Small (1998, p.136) asserted that Langer only gave recognition to one style of music, namely that of the Western classical tradition and that this cannot be generalisable to '... all human musicking...'.

Part of the problem with beliefs and assumptions such as those aforementioned, is that certain musical properties are said to be of more value because of their presupposed ability to transcend time and social context. Musical traits such as universality, complexity and

originality are attributed and valorised as pivotal to the value of the music itself leading to the reification of music obtaining of those traits (Green, 1988; 2003; 2008a). The musical object (the music itself), that appears to exist autonomously from the time and place of its conception, is believed to be of the utmost value. Moreover, such beliefs are legitimated when people purport that in acknowledging such transcendent values, music will better serve the wider public and educational contexts. Although such an objectified view of music assumed by the Western classical tradition is problematic for those concerned with expanding music education practice, I will go on to argue that ideologies of musical value are not exclusive to the Western classical tradition. Indeed, they tend to permeate all musical genres whereby certain practices are more reified than others.

## Higher Education: The Irish Context

### Irish Higher Music Education Programmes

Historically, the European model of higher music education has been based on different conceptions of musical knowledge. This model manifested in universities as a primary focus on theoretical training in areas of music analysis, history, pastiche and original composition. In conservatoires, applied instrumental/vocal practice took precedence with complementary music history and theoretical knowledge (Rainbow and Cox, 2006). The tradition from the Oxbridge model of music education was 'designed primarily in the interests of preparing performing musicians who also possessed a theoretical and historical understanding of music' (Jorgensen, 2003, p.87). Arguably, the perpetuation of the Western classical canon within music education in general, and in higher education, ensured that such works within Western classical music sustained a higher level of importance over other musical genres such as jazz, folk and popular music. Indeed, the influence of the European model of higher music education at university is also reflected in the development of music at Irish universities.

### Higher Music Education: An Historical Overview

Beausang (2002) recalls that when she began her music degree at University College Cork (UCC) in 1953, music was available at just two other universities, namely Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and University College Dublin (UCD). In order to provide a background to the Irish higher music education context, I conducted historical research into the founding and provision of higher music education at all three institutions. The collation of this data in Table 2.1 provides some insight into the historical and political influence on Irish higher

music education. In the section that follows, I wish to mention some of the more prominent music figures in higher music education.

Founded in 1592, Trinity College Dublin witnessed one of the earliest appointments in Britain or Ireland of a professorship of music in 1764, and composers such as Robert Prescott Stewart, Ebenezer Prout, Brian Boydell, and Hormoz Farhat would occupy this position. The first Chair of Music at University College Dublin (UCD) was created in 1913 by Reverend Bewerunge, while influential composer John Francis Larchet went on to become professor of music from 1921 to 1958 (Sadie and Tyrell et al, 2001).

**Table 2.1** Historical Overview of Irish Higher Music Education[3]

| Trinity College Dublin | University College Dublin | University College Cork |
|---|---|---|
| **Founded in 1592**<br>**First chair/Prof of music** | **Founded in 1895**<br>**First Chair/Prof of Music** | **Founded in 1845**<br>**First Lectureship in Music - 1906** |
| **Earl Mornington (1764-1774)**<br>Vacant from 1774-1845<br>John **Smith** (1845-1862)<br>Robert **P. Stewart** (1862-1894)<br>Ebenezer **Prout** (1894-1909)<br>Percy **Buck** (1910-1920)<br>Charles **Kitson** (1920-1935)<br>George H.P. **Hewson** (1935-1962)<br>Brian **Boydell** (1962-1982)<br>Hormoz **Farhat (1982-1995)**<br>Chair has been vacant since 1995 | **Rev. H. Bewerunge** (1913-1914)<br>Charles **Kitson** (1914-1920)<br>John F. **Larchet** (1921-1958)<br>Anthony **Hughes** (1958-1993)<br>Harry **White** (1993-present) | Annie **Patterson** (1924-1934)<br>Aloys **Fleischmann** (1934-1980)<br>Seán **O Riada** (1963-1971)<br>David **Cox** (1994-2003)<br>Paul **Everett** (2003-2009)<br>Mel **Mercier** (2009-2011)<br>Jonathan **Stock** (2011-present) |

Born of Irish-German musicians who had both studied at the Royal Academy of Music, Munich, Professor Aloys Fleischmann would follow this pathway in 1932 in order to study composition. Interestingly, all of the professors would seem to represent the predominance of the British/Anglo-Irish/European (and Iranian in the case of Farhat) ancestry on the one hand, and a privileged music education on the other. All studied music formally in prestigious academies/conservatoires and most had/have a considerable compositional output. Indeed, all enjoyed what we might describe as a privileged education having attended prestigious

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[3] Data retrieved from http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libraryproxy.mic.ul.ie/subscriber/ and the Encyclopaedia of Irish Music

conservatoires and schools of music both in the UK and in Europe before being appointed in Ireland.

The influence of colonial legacies on music curricula at all levels in the nineteenth and early twentieth century is notable (McCarthy, 1999). When Fleischmann took up his post at UCC in 1934, music was rarely taught in Irish schools (Beausang, 2002). A keen advocate for music education, Fleischmann embarked on a series of campaigns to establish music as part of people's lives both in education and in the community. This gave rise to the preparation of undergraduate music students, many of whom were nuns for the teaching of music in schools (Sadie and Tyrell et al, 2001).

In the 1950's, university music students were few. Beausang (2002) recalls being the only student in Fleischmann's lectures on harmony and counterpoint in 1953 when two others from her cohort happened to be absent. As an emerging discipline in universities and colleges, numbers were low until the 1970s, when higher education and music departments saw a rapid expansion as a result of the introduction of free second-level education in 1967 and a higher education grants scheme (Beausang, 2002). During this period, Irish traditional music began to flourish in UCC and music was included as a BA degree subject at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth (ibid). In 1986, a Bachelor of Music Education programme was launched conjointly between Trinity College Dublin, the Royal Irish Academy of Music and Dublin Institute of Technology, Conservatory of Music and Drama. A BA in music at Waterford Institute of Technology (then known as Waterford Regional Technical College) began in 1987. Music degrees were also developed at conservatoires such as the Dublin Institute of Technology, Conservatory of Music and Drama and at the Cork School of Music, Cork Institute of Technology. A chair of music would be created at the University of Limerick in 1993 which would culminate in the establishment of the Irish World Music Centre in 1994 (now known as the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance).


*The Influence of Irish Higher Education Legacies*

What kind of perspective can we gain then from this historical overview? I would like to highlight two influential legacies namely, 1) the influence of patriarchy, and 2) a Eurocentric conception of music education. First, the historical background to Irish higher music education illustrates how higher music education was instigated and maintained to a large extent by men of Anglo-Irish or European ancestry. As Table 2.2 reveals, only three females out of a total of thirteen institutions hold the position of Head of Music, thus it could be

suggested that the patriarchal influence lives on. The predominance of males in senior academic positions would also appear to be consistent with international studies in higher education which reveal similar hierarchical and patriarchal patterns (Bagilhole, 1993; Saunderson, 2002; Reay et al, 2004). Second, until changes occurred to second-level music curricula in the 1990s, higher music education in Ireland was predominantly conceptualised on the Western classical tradition. While I acknowledge the recent expansion of higher music education provision in terms of music degree orientation and more diverse genres, it is important to note that the Anglo-Irish influence would still appear to influence and shape current curricula in universities.

**Table 2.2:** Gender of Heads of Music Departments in the Republic of Ireland[4]

| Institutions | Department Head/Chair Male | Department Head/Chair Female |
|---|---|---|
| Universities | 4 | 1 |
| Conservatoires | 2 | 1 |
| Institutes of Technology | 1 | 1 |
| Colleges of Education | 3 | 0 |
| Total | **10** | **3** |

**A Eurocentric View of Higher Music Education**

The tradition of musical scholarship at university as established by the ethos of the institutions and the respective Heads/Chairs of Music, can be said to have had a profound influence on shaping higher music education curricula. Presenting data from the documentary survey on undergraduate music provision, Table 2.2 illustrates the chronological development of all undergraduate degree programmes with major music components in the Republic of Ireland. In order to collate this data, I gathered admissions and modular information from music department websites and course prospectuses. The chronological information was sought via the web, historical documents and via email.

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[4] Data is accurate as of 12 March 2013 however changes to posts in the interim may alter the numbers and gender.

Table **2.3** Chronology of Undergraduate Provision, Curricular Focus and Entry Procedures in all 13 Institutions Offering Music Degree Components

| Institution | Year Degree Est. | Courses on offer | Entry Procedures in addition to Leaving Cert and Points System | Western Theory and Techniques | Irish Traditional Music | Popular/Jazz | Multicultural/ World Musics |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TCD | 1764 1986 | BA, BMus, BMusEd+ | Written and Aural Test Interview +Audition | Core | None | Elective | Elective |
| UCD | 1914 | BA BMus | None Written and Aural Test | Core | One Module | One Module | One Module |
| UCC | 1934 | BA, BMus | Written Test, Audition, Interview | Electives | Electives | Electives | Electives |
| Mater Dei | 1966 | B. Rel. Ed. Music | Written Test, Audition, Interview | Core | Not specified | Not specified | Not specified |
| NUIM | *** | BA, BA (Mus Tech) BMus | None Written, Aural Test and Audition | Core | One Module | One Module | One Module |
| SPD | 1974 1992 | B.Ed* BA | Test of Aptitude Post Entry | Core | Core | Core | One Module |
| MIC | 1974 1992 | B.Ed* BA | Test of Aptitude Post Entry | Core | One Module | One Module (BA only) | None |
| DIT | 1987 | BMusPerf BA in Commercial Modern Music | Written, Test, Audition, Interview Audition, Interview | Core None | Core Strands None | None Core | None Elective |
| RIAM | 1986 1990 | BMus (Perf) BMus (Comp) | Written Test, Audition, Interview | Core | Core None | None | None |
| CIT | 1999 2012 | BMus (Perf) BA (Pop)* | Written Test, Audition, Interview Audition, Interview | Core | Electives | None | None |
| WIT | 1987 | BA | Written Test, Audition, Interview | Core Modules | Modules | Modules | None |
| DkIT | 2003 2010 | BA (Applied Music) BA (Music and Audio Production) | Written Test, Audition, Interview None | Core Modules | Core | Core Modules | None |
| UL | 2002 2008 | BA (Irish Music and Dance) BA (Voice and Dance) | Audition, Interview | One Module + ENT** | Core | Electives | Electives |

*B.Ed – Since 2012 Music is offered over 5 education electives only. Music education/curriculum music is compulsory.

**ENT : Ear, Notation, Theory ***Commencement dates for these courses were not available despite numerous efforts to retrieve this data.

+ BMus Ed Course is run conjointly by TCD, DIT and RIAM

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As illustrated, the majority of courses of the entire twenty-three music/humanities/education programme list stipulate entrance tests or auditions in their admissions procedures. Minimum criteria at audition varies where some institutions look for 'potential' while others have clearly stated minimum graded requirements. The emphasis given to each music genre on Table 2.2 is derived from the content of music department websites and prospectuses. However, it is important to note that while it might appear that some curricula have a rather narrow focus, this may not pertain in actual practice, whereby teaching and learning approaches within modules may incorporate diverse musical styles. Although this table provides an overview of the extent to which Western classical, Irish traditional, popular and world/multicultural musics appear to be weighted on the curriculum by their presence as core modules or electives, it did not go far enough to explain how genre emphasis might operate in practice. Therefore, it was vital to pursue this further by investigating assumptions and values implicit in course prospectuses and from the perspectives of the teachers and learners in this context.

**Perceptions of Irish Music Degrees**

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, most music degrees in Ireland were historically based on the notion of the Western classical canon. Although the landscape of higher education provision has broadened in recent decades, in student interviews it emerged that the wider perception of Western classical music as the dominant genre prevailed. In the interview excerpt that follows, *Paula,* who was in her first year of a BA at a college of teacher education, perceived that the majority of courses were classically focussed. This was in her opinion, also closely related to the legitimacy of the type of music degree one might pursue:

*Paula (1ˢᵗ Year, Classical Music Background)*

G:   So, what type of music degree did you want to pursue?

P:   Well, I wanted to go to Cork to do music but we couldn't afford to you know, send me away for four years, so I came here but in Cork it was still going to be the classical music...it was classical music everywhere really, except if you want to do trad in UL but you know by the title that's going to be Irish music but every other music course I looked into was classical music you know?...So it's expected that it will be just classical music...

G:   Why do you think it's dominant then?

P:   It's not an elitist thing but it could be seen as it's the more classy music, that kind of a way, that it's of the higher ranking social status of 'oh I'm studying

classical music' you know? If you went in and said 'oh, I am studying Hip Hop or alternative music' people would kind of look at you like you'd four heads, you know that kind of way!

While Paula perceives higher music education in Ireland as limited to Western classical music, she appears to contradict herself when she says that it is not 'elitist', yet studying classical music is 'more classy'. In her view, wider societal expectations indicate that studying alternative or popular musics would meet with disapproval.

*Course Prospectus: Example of Conservative Music Education*
What was evident from university/college documents was the fact that the longer established university music departments such as TCD and UCD continue to articulate a focus predominantly on Western art/classical music. To provide a concrete example of this, I present an overview of the description of music at Trinity College Dublin. After a brief overview of the history of music at TCD, the Music Department handbook states:

> The Department of Music has always been recognised as the most academically prestigious music department in the Republic of Ireland. This is reflected in the calibre of entrants to its programmes, the research record of the staff (part-time as well as full-time), the careers of its graduates at BA and doctoral levels, the roles played by the staff in the national development of the subject, and in the eagerness of other institutions to develop links with the Department... The undergraduate programmes are intended to give students the best possible theoretical and practical understanding of music, as it is studied and understood at university level. The course covers the main areas traditionally the province of a university-based music education.
>
> www.tcd.ie/Music/assets/Handbook_2009-10

While we might assume that the articulation of its music education as 'university-based' denotes the legacy of an Oxbridge-style music curriculum, it is not until the outline of modules however, that this picture unfolds. History, Instrumentation, Aural Skills, Keyboard Skills, Harmony, and Counterpoint constitute core modules within both the BA and BMus degrees at TCD. A specialisation option from year three onwards includes options in Musicology, Composition or Music Technology. A recital/performance can replace a dissertation or composition in the final year, however students must avail of their own instrumental teacher throughout the course in order to arrive at a suitable level appropriate to a fourth year performance recital.

Such a clear articulation of the overall context and modules in this handbook is a positive initiative for prospective students as they can immediately see whether the course will suit their musical backgrounds and interests. Equally, we can also surmise that the definition of a university music education as epitomised in the handbook is rather conservative. As data in this thesis goes on to illustrate, courses that are predominantly conservative in their approach to music, tend to suit students who have had much formal music education prior to entry and pose many challenges to those who have not.

Notwithstanding the conservative perception one might have from the prospectus alone, further enquiry into the curriculum at TCD demonstrates that the legacy of the university's leadership in the area of composition has given rise to its recognition as one of the most progressive departments in regards to new music. Many lecturers at TCD have a considerable compositional output, for example, Donnacha Dennehy who lectures in composition, is a founding member of the popular new music group *Crash Ensemble* which fuses electronic and computer music with diverse genres and artists.

However, what makes TCD's BA and BMus courses distinctive within the Irish context, is the absence of Irish traditional music throughout the curriculum. This may be attributed to the historical Anglo-Irish influence and historical context of TCD. According to *Annemarie*, a mature student, the absence of Irish traditional music is a result of faculty expertise. In her view, the music department capitalises on such strengths and leaves the business of attending to Irish music to other institutions:

> *Annemarie (Mature Student, 4<sup>th</sup> Year, Pop/Rock background)*
> G:   So, you don't do trad in the course then?
> A:   Well... I don't know very much about trad so I can't really comment on how much of it is lacking. I have noticed it's not there and I still know nothing about it.
> G:   And would you think that's a bit strange being an Irish university?
> A:   Well if you look at our teachers no (laughs). I mean we don't have Micheál Ó'Súilleabháin coming in, you just need to do a bit of research if that's your angle...well like there's a lot of things that are overlooked here, and trad is one of them but you know, they overlook counterpoint and continuum playing in other colleges, so you know, it's swings and roundabouts...
> G:   I see what you mean. So, are there any students in your year who are trad students and do you think they might find that a bit strange?
> A:   I really don't know, I'm not immersed in trad culture at all so like, I don't miss it because I was never steeped in it...

What is evident in Annemarie's quote is the importance of the historical and cultural ethos of particular institutions. This can be seen to influence the curriculum in two ways: a) carrying on musical traditions and styles that have historically been valued in an institution e.g. harmony and counterpoint, and b) the lecturers' musical backgrounds and areas of expertise as indicative of the content that will be covered in the music degree itself; a thread which is followed later on in Chapter Six. Also relevant, is how Annemarie's minimal experience with Irish traditional music would seem to have influenced her expectations. She appears unaware of its invisibility on the curriculum, thus we can surmise that because she has little experience of Irish traditional music, her expectations and experiences differ from the following student who commented in his survey:

S286: Being an Irish university I think we should at least have one module in Irish trad, but we don't which is disappointing, as I play trad myself.

Almost all other universities/colleges now incorporate a module or series of modules on Irish traditional music, thus from Annemarie's insider perspective, it would seem that TCD perceives its strengths lying elsewhere. Yet from the 'Other's' perspective, it represents the historical shunning of an indigenous musical tradition. This exclusion is identified by Vallely (2002, p.1) in an article titled 'Knocking at the castle door: a place for traditional music at third level?' in which he challenges the hegemony of art music within state music education vis-à-vis Ireland's historical 'Victorian textbook attitude' and argues for traditional music as an independent area of study. As established earlier, Irish traditional music began to be integrated into Irish higher music education in the 1970s, first in University College Cork (UCC), and much later at the University of Limerick (UL) under the leadership of Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin. This late emergence of Irish traditional music not only in higher education curricula, but also at second level needs further explanation.

*Irish Traditional Music: The Wild Flower*

In an interview I conducted with Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin[5] as part of the research for this thesis, he recalled the accommodation of Irish traditional music in formal music education curricula through metaphor. He described how the undesirable wild plants (Irish traditional musicians) were excluded from formal school and university music education, and the Western classical musicians (cultivated plants in the hothouse) were favoured. He then

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[5] Prof Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin is Chair of the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick

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explained how Irish traditional music came to be accommodated in formal music education in Ireland as a result of the changes at second and higher education levels:

*Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin (Bimusical Background)*
...traditional music to some degree was just left to get on with itself like a wild plant outside, which is what it was very happy to do... the whole question of (to continue with the horticultural metaphor), whether one should allow for the outdoor plants to spend some time indoors, the school thereby is the hothouse or the walled garden because it's got to do with cultivation and a certain degree of control of course, but it also has got to do with that thing in humanity which desires cultivation, which desires agriculture, which desires control as well... so it's got to do with formality/informality in a way, whereby it was possible to enter into a debate where a door to the conservatoire was left open, not locked..

In Ó Súilleabháin's metaphor, we get a sense of the 'Other' (Irish traditional music) being finally accommodated in the conservatoire conception of music education. His salient suggestion that the 'wild flowers' or Irish traditional musicians wanted recognition and in order to engage with scholarly debate, points to an acknowledgement of a need to cross the formal/informal divide. I use the terms formal/informal here simply to describe the importance of *formalising* something in the justification of its purpose. The terms have of course been used in several music education contexts and though I will refer to the ways in which they relate to music learning later, here I employ the terms in their conventional sense. Also at play in terms of the Western classical – Irish traditional dichotomy however, is the hegemonic position of Western art music, not only in Irish higher education but at all levels of formal music education. In order to understand how this came to be, an examination of the historical context of Irish education affords us with a number of perspectives.

## Music Education in Ireland: A Bimusical Culture

Until Ireland became a sovereign independent state in 1922, it was connected economically, politically, culturally and ideologically with the UK (O'Flynn, 2009). In 1831, the British government established a national system of education for Ireland (Stakelum, 2008). Music was formally introduced in 1841, and the Hullah manuals of instruction which were in use in England at the time, formed the basis of the curriculum in Irish primary schools. The Hullah method comprised a progressive, graded syllabus of singing and music literacy, but as Stakelum (2008) notes, the compulsory singing of 'Happy English Child' for all primary school children represented some of the colonial influence on music education in Ireland.

While parallels between the association of music and social categories between England and Ireland can be found during this period, O'Flynn (2006, p.6) notes that revivalist interests in folk and traditional music differed considerably because '...Irish culture was symbolically appropriated by separatist-nationalist interests and as such became a site of opposition and struggle'.

Moreover, in the years that followed, music education was '...underpinned by political agendas related to ethnic or national identity – the promotion of colonial values in the nineteenth century, and the transmission of native Irish ideologies in the post-dependent years' (McCarthy in Heneghan, 2001). Thus, the legacy of colonialism and nationalist opposition, led to the idea of two distinct separate cultures. On the one hand, the Irish cultivated aspirations of the preservation of indigenous musical traditions. On the other hand, the canon of Western classical music came to be privileged in statutory music education (McCarthy, 1999). Consequently, a bimusical culture evolved in Ireland (McCarthy, 1999; O'Flynn, 2005).

Where bimusicality denotes the ability to understand and be equally proficient in two distinct musical systems (Hood, 1960), bimusical culture with reference to post-colonial Ireland, can be defined as two *autonomous* musical cultures which reinforced differences between Ireland's indigenous music and its Western classical heritage. O' Flynn (2005) describes this as 'an overarching colonial-nationalist dialectic through which discourse the labels of Irish/national/traditional and Anglo-Irish/colonial/classical emerged as exclusive sets of terms' (O' Flynn 2005, p.193).

Since the establishment of the nation state in 1922, the manner in which different ideologies of musical value compete with each other for domination of learning spaces reveals an Irish traditional – Western classical dualism (McCarthy, 1999; O' Flynn, 2009). In aspiring to the idea of equal and distinct value in both genres, the ideological and historical contexts appear to construct ideas of otherness. Consequently, ideological assumptions of Western classical music and Irish traditional music tend to be contested at institutional and state levels (O'Flynn, 2009).

Part of the problem with the preoccupation with a Western classical – Irish traditional dualism is the eschewing of popular music within Irish musical and educational discourse. Most studies in Irish music have either disregarded popular music, or have, at the most, referred in passing to a few choice Irish artists as phenomena of international success (O'Flynn 2009). While an overemphasis on a dualistic notion of Irish culture/heritage and art has predominated music education discourse, diverse musical cultures within contemporary

Irish society have been largely lost and neglected in Irish educational policy (O'Flynn 2009; Moore 2011). O'Flynn summarises it thus:

> ...on the one hand, traditional music and classical music are valued on broad educational grounds. On the other hand, popular music is not valued in terms of Irish national culture and accordingly, is generally not accommodated in conceptions and configurations of arts education (O'Flynn, 2009, p.55).

Unlike the struggle for space in regard to popular music on the curriculum within the context of the UK and US (Swanwick 1979; Vulliamy and Shepherd 1984; Green 1988, 2008), music education in Ireland can be best described as beset by a unique set of tensions. Such tensions have historically revolved around the place of Western classical, Irish traditional and popular musics within formal music education. The tensions around popular music are considered in Chapter Five, however at this juncture, I explore the ways in which ideologies of musical and cultural value have manifested in Irish traditional music practice.

**Ideologies of Musical Value: Irish Traditional Music**

In this section, I consider how ideologies of Irish traditional music have been brought to bear within the history and practice of the tradition. First, I explore the ways in which the historical and political revival and preservation of Irish traditional music reflected ideologies of the nation state, and how these appeared to construct universal conceptions of authentic Irishness. Following an investigation of documentary discourse and empirical data from lecturers and students, I address prevailing assumptions of Irish traditional music, its place in higher education, and perceived notions of accessibility and social class.

Similar to Marx and Green, Thompson (1990) holds that ideologies shape and determine the associated attitudes that significantly allude to the social consensus. As ideologies are produced and reproduced, a context of inequality emerges that establishes hierarchical relationships. If music is ideological, then it must operate ideologically. For Thompson (1990, p.60-61), then, 'modes of operation' must be in evidence. As ideology gives meaning, so the modes of operation are concerned with the way in which that same meaning is sustained and perpetuated. An examination of the historical context affords a glimpse into the production and reproduction of ideologies pertaining to Irish traditional music.

## Irish Traditional Music: Revival, Promotion, and Commodification

*Revival and Promotion*

Prior to independence, the national government took an active role in the preservation of Irish traditional music, leading to tensions between a state-sponsored organization and musicians (Fleming, 2004). While largely motivated by cultural nationalism, the cultural revival that occurred from 1890 to 1921 also succeeded in Irish political independence and in establishing national cultural organizations that would shape Ireland's cultural identity in the next century. The establishment of the Gaelic League in 1893 and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in 1884, (the former promoted the Irish language and the latter revived Gaelic sports), revived and standardized aspects of Irish culture through their promotion on a national scale (Cronin, 1999). Signalling the beginning of a dramatic turnaround for Irish traditional music, a group of nationalists and musicians from the Dublin Piper's Club founded Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in 1951, now commonly referred to as Comhaltas or CCÉ.

Through a combination of nationalist politics, music competitions, centralized bureaucracy, and grassroots activism, Comhaltas has played an important role in preserving and revitalizing traditional music in Ireland. Vallely (1999, p.79) writes, 'The atmosphere of [Comhaltas's] early years was urgent; 'revival' was seen as a mission to pass on valued traditions and ensure their survival and enhancement for posterity'.

In this brief historical account, we can see how resistant ideological thought about the preservation of Irish music shaped, and determined meaning for the revival as well as the associated attitudes that significantly alluded to the consensus of that social group. From a Marxist perspective, the institutionalising of nationalist values through the education system and in local communities vis-à-vis the Gaelic Athletic Association and the revival of the Irish language, can be seen as an attempt by the new ruling group to represent its interests as beneficial for the general interest of that society:

> For each new class, which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it, is compelled…to represent its interests as the common interest of all the members of society…it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones. (Marx and Engels, 1970, pp. 65–66)

Thus, events such as the encounter referred to in the Piper's Club above, became deployed to reinforce and reify new ideologies. Current ideologies (let us use those related to Irish traditional music) and their particular contexts and settings thus remain separate and

different from historical ones (Western classical traditions), whilst deploying reference points of meaning in order to further frame and contextualise their differences.

Today, Comhaltas boasts over four hundred branches and an Irish-based membership in the region of thirty thousand (Fleming, 2004). The organisation benefits from a formalized social network for practitioners, whereby thousands of children and adult beginners are introduced to the music through music education, competitions, recordings, and publications (Fleming, 2004). Formal competitions as well as informal sessions comprise *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann* (known also as the "All-Ireland Fleadh," or simply "the Fleadh") which is the culmination of several county and regional fleadhs, each with rounds of competitions.

Fleming (2004) highlights similarities between the competitive aspects of Irish traditional music (as evidenced in the *Fleadh)* and those of classical music (in *Feis Ceoil* [6]competitions). Competitors are a) divided by age category, b) separated by instrument (for example, fiddle, accordion, or flute), c) by dance/style of music (such as reels, jigs, slow airs, or hornpipes), d) by ensemble (such as solo, duet, or trio). In her ethnographic fieldwork at the Fleadh in 1999, she notes the formal nature of the competition where:

> At least a hundred people, parents, spectators, and competitors were seated...facing the stage in the small theatre of a local school. At the front of the room, two judges sat at a table and a lone chair stood on the stage. The judge called the names of competitors one by one. The room was completely silent while the competitors played their tunes and each mistake could be heard clearly.
>
> (Fleming, 2004, p.244).

One could argue that in aspiring to preserve and treasure Irish indigenous music, Comhaltas would also appear to exhibit tensions between its concomitant remit as preserver of Irish traditional music, and as purveyor of performance 'standards'. Although it is worth noting that the idea of a sequence of progression in musical training is not exclusive to Western classical music as ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood (1960) reminds us:

> Perhaps it is not necessary to remind the reader that we are speaking of the world of music, that training in basic musicianship of one order or another is characteristic of cultivated music wherever it is found and to some extent is unconsciously present in the practice of ingenuous music. It may be of some comfort to the music student of the West to realize that the Chinese, Javanese or Indian student also must jump through a series of musical hoops.
>
> (Hood, 1960, p.55)

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[6] Feis Ceoil An annual Irish music competition that focuses solely on Western classical music

An example of formalised progression in Irish traditional music is evident in a set of graded examinations for Irish traditional music students entitled *Scrúdú Ceol Tíre* (SCT, translating as Irish Music Examinations) that were introduced in 1998 and a Diploma in Irish Music Teaching (*Teastas i dTeagasc Ceolta Tíre*, TTCT) by Comhaltas. In the former, 12 Levels in Elementary Cycle, Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle are specified. Candidates must partake in all four sections of the examinations which include: performance, aural awareness, musical discussion (this takes the form of a written submission in Senior Cycle) and music literacy. The opening paragraph of the syllabus headed 'The Pursuit of Excellence' reads as follows:

> It is now generally acknowledged that Irish traditional music should enjoy the fullest recognition and equality, with all the necessary resources, within the education system and at all levels. One hopes that this will be achieved for the new millennium. (SCT Examinations Syllabus, 1998, p.1)

Implicit in this statement is the latent inequality that Irish traditional music suffered in formal education prior to the introduction of the CCÉ examination syllabus. However, I would argue that in aspiring to achieve equal status and recognition, it is somewhat ironic that an indigenous musical culture appears to imitate the formal structures of Western classical music as well as the explicit notion of 'excellence'.


*Irish Traditional Music as a Commodity*

In this section, I examine how the hegemonic position of Western classical music would seem to have been eclipsed by that of Irish traditional music through its mediatisation and the perceived historical associations between both musics and social class.

For Thompson (1990) a neutral conception of ideology allows for the theories of those such as Marx and Engels (1970) to be acknowledged and explored, but also considers how contemporary agents such as the media determine ideological constructs. In the contemporary setting, whilst the infrastructure of the nation state and political institutions and organisations remain vitally important, institutions such as the media can be equally if not more influential in maintaining social constructions and relations of domination. Ideologies therefore, are not restricted solely to class-based struggles and the explicit and direct relationships of power and domination, but so too other equal and possibly even more important sites. Such sites include the day-to-day experiences of the contemporary setting; for example, the classroom, the shopping mall, the office, and the media.

One operational mode of ideology is that of *Unification*, whereby meaning is sustained 'by constructing at the symbolic level, a form of unity which embraces...a collective identity, irrespective of the differences and divisions...' (Thompson, 1990, p.64). If we apply the concept of unification to the Irish context, it allows us to consider the ways in which 'Irish Music' can be essentialised. In other words, as a marker of identity, it is assumed that all music that is 'Irish' applies only to Irish traditional music. Thus, we can begin to understand how alternative Irish musics such as contemporary classical become lost, or at least hidden. While this digression might at first glance seem irrelevant to this study, it attempts to frame the historical and political context of Irish higher music education.

One could argue that when music and the Irish spring to mind, one thinks instantly of artists who have achieved international fame and recognition as Irish/popular/rock artists such as U2, Sinéad O'Connor, The Cranberries, Van Morrison, and The Chieftains. The cultural phenomenon that was *Riverdance* (originally an interval piece in the 1994 Eurovision song-contest), can be seen as symbolic in terms of affirming a sense of Irish identity, as well as a perceived awareness of music as an exportable product and an era of new Irish national identity (O'Flynn, 2009). Moreover, multiple mega-productions of Irish themed shows have ensued from the *Riverdance* phenomenon, including *Lord of the Dance, The Three Irish Tenors, The Three Irish Sopranos* and *Celtic Woman.* A mere *Google* search of the keyword 'Irish Music' yields immediate links to websites exclusively associated with Irish Traditional Music as well as a plethora of images of Irish public house music sessions.

The assumption moreover, that the Irish people are inherently musically gifted has historically been 'appropriated in nationalist imaginings of Irishness' (O'Flynn, 2009, p.22). Such assumptions continue to affect investment in the arts and in arts education which are assumed to be already present (O'Flynn, 2009), and these might explain the historical neglect of music education in state policy. The argument by White (1998) that the genre of Irish Classical music is far from the Irish musical imagination (as well perhaps as the international perception of music in Ireland) can perhaps be better accommodated in terms of how the concept of 'Irish Music' is mediatised:

> *Professor Harry White (Classical Music Background)*
> I think in Ireland there's a different kind of stand-off between traditional music which itself has become very commodified...which has its own hierarchy and discrimination and elitism...but nevertheless the point is, that traditional music prestige is abetted by a kind of nationalist agenda. Now I don't mean as in Sinn Féin or some sort of die hard republicanism, but I do mean in terms of European Music and Nationalism... the kind of national aural

signature that traditional music enjoys, tends to fortify the idea that only what you can say about this kind of music is legitimate... and the idea of saying, we're also Europeans, we also read English novels, and we also might want to listen to what's happening in Russian symphonies you know... the idea of making that equation is undermined by the other equation between national identity and the demands of talking about traditional music...

In Professor White's view, Irish cultural discourse has idolised Irish traditional music while concomitantly ignoring other Irish musical cultures. It would seem that in affirming the more dominant sense of Irish identities with Irish traditional music, other identities such as Anglo-Irish identity, or European identity, have been absent from cultural discourse on Irish musical culture (see also White, 1996; 1998). Thus, an all-pervasive view of Irish musical culture as synonymous with Irish traditional music, has tended to dominate cultural discourse on Irishness. Such assumptions he asserts, neglect the interests and identities of other Irish minority groups with a keen interest in Western culture, and have contributed to the decline of public interest in Irish classical music.

*Music of the People? Irish Traditional Music and Social Class*
Áine, a final year university student, describes her perceptions of the social class dimensions inherent in conceptions of both musical genres. In the following extract, parental values of social class and gender were transmitted, whereby piano lessons were seen as a 'badge of respectability' (Rainbow and Cox, 2006, p.303).

> *Áine (Year 4, Bimusical Background)*
> *G:* Could you tell me a bit about your musical background then?
> *A:* Well, I did the piano first and then I started the whistle with the Comhaltas branch, do you know every child has to learn the tin whistle or whatever, but my parents used to be very strict on the whole there's three girls, so the girls have to learn how to play the piano, like do you know the usual idea of etiquette and so on and then like I would have done. theory the whole way up along and I really love music theory that's like my forte…

From her bimusical background, Áine appreciates both Irish traditional and Western classical music yet she frames Irish music as the ordinary and for all ('every child', 'whatever'), while Western classical music emerges as an implicitly middle class pursuit. Currently studying a course in Irish Traditional music, she went on to explain how the perception of her choice of course is perceived in terms of social class and expectations:

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*Áine (Year 4, Bimusical Background)*

...a lot of people don't see traditional music as something serious like you know, when I say I'm doing my BA in Irish music and then they say oh you get a degree in *that* now? Whereas if you say you are studying music in Dublin or whatever, it's like oh yes, lovely classical music, excellent... so it's kind of like a perception that Irish music is not degree worthy, or Irish music is like music of the lower classes I suppose, when you compare it to being like classical or that being upper class, like that's a way of you know, describing it.

In one of the lecturer interviews, I asked Dr Louise Parker's opinion on the idea of class and musical background and genre. She described Irish traditional music as the 'music of the people' due to its apparent accessibility. She then equated the accessibility of the music with its popularity and referred specifically to popular music in this regard:

*Dr Louise Parker (Classical Music Background):*

The thing about it is when you think about it, the traditional music was the music of the people, like classical music was never the music of the people... if you could afford to send whoever to piano lessons... it's one of these things that wasn't accessible to most people, whereas traditional music was you know accessible, and now the whole pop, rock, jazz thing like that's *really* accessible...it's so readily available to them, and it's so easy to actually sing along to a song on the radio, as opposed to getting classically trained to be able to perform...

In contrast, another lecturer equally proficient in both Irish traditional music and Western classical maintains that Irish traditional music is not as accessible as one might assume. Moreover, he describes it as a very 'middle class' pursuit:

*Dr Ian O'Brien (Bimusical Background)*

...with traditional music if say for instance you... do the whole summer circuit, well then that involves having the disposable income to go to the Willie Clancy Summer school...you know stay there for a week or for your whole family to stay there for a week, then to go to Tubbercurry...and likewise for the Fleadh, likewise for the instruments you know, so there's a certain middle class thing about it. I think there's a certain kind of barrier towards participation. I mean you can't play the concertina or the uilleann pipes unless you can afford the concertina or the uilleann pipes, and they're expensive, good ones are really expensive you know. It'd be a lot easier to get a flute or a piano you know, so there are certain aspects that would be more you know uneven in that regard.

The notion of accessibility and the possible equation between accessibility and music genre popularity, was a theme I chose to pursue during the third focus group which took place in a

conservatoire of music. I wanted to try and establish how Dr O'Brien's views which seemed to be grounded in his experience as an 'insider' or as a traditional musician himself, or Dr Parker's outsider perspective, might resonate with student experiences.

The discussion began with the students' decision to pursue performance at a conservatoire. The majority of the group had some encounter with Irish traditional music in primary school either through the tin whistle or some Irish dancing but the group agreed that at some stage one had to choose a particular pathway in terms of either learning aurally or as one student described learning notation 'through the traditional way':

*Student Focus Group No 3*

G: How did you come to choose classical music or did some of you do Irish traditional aswell?

S7: Well I think as child growing up you were either a trad musician or you were a classical musician, you know? You had to choose, you couldn't really do both because one way you were learning through aural skills and the others you were you were learning through the traditional way so it was all you know... it was always one, or the other, or nothing (group laugh)

G: In what ways might you have encountered Irish traditional music then?

S2: I suppose...I was from a very traditional community so you know, you do your Irish dancing lessons...I played the tin whistle... other than that not really (laughs) but I would have been very much aware and especially in national school of that aural tradition, then...getting into secondary school and suddenly realising oh, actually you do have to write these things down and then finding that a bit complicated.

G: Do you think then that the trad was more accessible than classical?

S4: Well, yeah in that you got it in primary school with the tin whistle and that but I really think it depends on where you're from, you know? Like I'm from Dublin so I wouldn't really have come across it at all except for in school.

S8: I don't think so, like I didn't even do tin whistle in primary school. I did the recorder, so I've never had any experience playing trad at all, so I think it really does depend on where you grow up...

According to this group of students, the idea of accessibility of Irish traditional music would seem to depend on the local community and school culture. However, it could also be argued that the same could be said for access to Western classical music. Either way, we can surmise that while the school promotes what it deems valuable but in terms of provision, one would seem to be dependent on the local community for music education in either genre.

## Irish Traditional Music in Irish Higher Education

It was evident from the student surveys that notions of cultural identity and 'our own musical heritage' featured prominently in students' reasons for the level of importance they attributed to Irish traditional music. In the interviews, two students and one lecturer gave very strong reasons why they thought Irish music didn't really need to feature at all in higher education, for example, 'Now the idea of getting a degree in Irish traditional music, that's just nutty' (Lecturer, Matthew Canning). In one of the focus groups, students from Irish traditional, classical and bimusical backgrounds shared their thoughts on the classical versus traditional dichotomy. More specifically, they mentioned the value of both musics as perceived by lecturers:

> *Focus Group Discussion No 2*
> G: So, what sort of background do you think someone should have in order to study at this level or what do you think should be the ideal?
> S1: It definitely helps if you've done all classical anyway.
> S5: 'Cos like if you're just a trad player like, they'd be lost, not like your classical player...
> S2: You can see why they needed to have those entrance tests.
> S5: You definitely need classical.
> (all say yeah)
> G: Yeah? Why?
> S2: Because you've so much theory and you don't do any of that in trad...
> (group agreement)
> S4: Some people who play trad can't read music so...
> S5: It's kind a rule round the place that if you do trad like as say your practical, the examiners don't really, I say examiners, the lecturers, they don't rate it at all as merit, they just kind of go 'oh it's not really a skill'... (some agreement from group)

In interviews with lecturers and students, it became apparent that students from Irish traditional music backgrounds were perceived as struggling with Western techniques in notation and sight-reading skills, analysis, and engagement with other musical styles. Similar to the view expressed by the students above, a lecturer from a conservatoire expressed reservations about the inclusion of Irish traditional music in a conservatoire context. Such reservations related to mixed ability in musicianship lectures and tutorials along with other courses which cater specifically for students from Irish music backgrounds.

Sarah, a bimusical student, who began learning violin at age four, progressed onto piano, then learnt the Irish harp in the aural tradition but is now pursuing a music performance

degree in a conservatoire, recognises the advantage of having skills from both traditions but admits that she thinks classical music demands more skill than Irish traditional:

> *Sarah (2ⁿᵈ Year, Bimusical Background)*
>
> G: Do you find then that you're kind of unusual in the context of the college here or do you find that there are others that can play both styles?
>
> S: Well yeah I suppose I am an exception... like there's a guy in my year and he's probably *the* pianist in the year, he's unbelievable and he says he wishes he could do that, like he can't learn things by ear, so, yeah I think there should be more stress on it, like I think classical music is great but it shouldn't just be oh, I have to have the pages in front of me or like I can't play you know? But still...like I'd prefer classical and you know without sounding horrible, I think there is more skill to it than trad...

In another conservatoire context, the curriculum also seemed to be experienced rather differently by Irish traditional musicians. According to Dr Peter Enright (Western classical background) who teaches on the overall BMus programme, students enrolled in the Irish traditional course find the shared modules in history and aural training valuable but much more challenging than the classical students. Moreover, rates of attrition are much higher for the traditional student:

> *Dr Peter Enright (Classical Music Background)*
>
> G: From your experience then, how do the Irish trad students find the curriculum when it comes to harmony and counterpoint?
>
> P: They find it very difficult... at the moment in years one and two, there are just two modules that are specifically for traditional students, then they have their performance studies, and they have various ensembles, but the rest...are just shared common modules on the history of music, aural training, which I know from speaking to traditional students find it very valuable even being taught it from a classical perspective... but I make no bones about it, they find it very tough to get through years one and two; it can be a bit of a struggle and battle.
>
> G: And to what extent would they would the attrition rate kind of compare we'll say between at the end of year one or even year two with say a classical player and a trad player you know
>
> P: It would be higher for the trad player

One wonders whether the methods of aural training and dictation in particular are simply unsuited to the learning styles of Irish traditional students' musical *habitus* (this is further explored in Chapter Three), which primarily utilises the ABC method of notation. In a different conservatoire, Dr Emer Murphy, a lecturer who was classically trained in violin lauds the aural and dictation skills of a well-known Irish traditional fiddler's thus:

*Dr Emer Murphy (Lecturer, Bimusical Background)*
...It's just phenomenal the amount of trad musicians I know that have really good musical literacy skills...now it tends to be notation in their own way, I don't know if you've ever seen Siobhan Peoples notation? I've been in rooms with her and there's two tunes going on and she's there writing something else down, she's just phenomenal, you know? ...that said it's kind of in the style of trad but it's fine you know as in ABC or whatever...

Dr Murphy went on to explain how she has come to reconsider her prior assumptions of musical knowledge as a consequence of her current immersion with diverse musical genres. As a lecturer in the conservatoire, she also performs on a regular basis with different Irish traditional, folk and popular groups. It could be suggested then, that because she has had experience of performing across a diverse range of genres, that she has learned to appreciate the more aural practices of certain musics, thus challenging her prior assumptions of valued musical knowledge and skills.


**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have traced the historical context of Irish general music education and Irish higher music education as influenced by the European model of conservatoire education. This historical overview, illustrates the hegemony of Western classical music within education contexts that has obtained at all levels of education for centuries in the case of the universities, and for many decades in other institutions. Equally, the hegemony of Irish traditional music reflected its political, social, and cultural revival in the emergence of the nation state in 1922. Thus, we can begin to understand the contested space within and beyond higher education that reflects dominant ideologies of musical value and the association of each with particular social class groupings. The perceived exclusivity of Western classical music was also present in lecturers and students views on Irish traditional music. Data from this chapter suggests that the exclusivity of music education within the Irish context is not necessarily confined to the Western classical tradition. Rather, both musical genres have relied on transmission through formal (one-to-one or group lessons) and/or non-formal (situated learning such as a pub session or church choir) contexts. Regardless of learning mode or tradition, the pursuit of both musical traditions requires the financial means to purchase instruments, tuition and examinations or competitions. Thus, access to music education whether Irish traditional or Western classical, emerged as dependent on the support of parents/guardians, vis-à-vis social, economic and cultural capital

# CHAPTER THREE
# MUSICAL BACKGROUNDS, MUSIC EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CLASS

## Introduction

Historically, the notion that musical talent resides among a minority has pervaded formal music education and wider society. Nowadays, it is generally accepted that most people are musical, or at least have the potential to be musical (Blacking, 1973; Mills, 2005; Welch, 2005, Pitts, 2012). We now know that the more music is valued and cherished in our cultural and educational experiences, the more likely our musical potential will develop (Howe, Davidson and Sloboda, 1998). For example, studies in early childhood have shown the multifarious ways in which musical enculturation occurs in the family and home environment (Campbell, 1998; Barrett, 2009). Having cultural experiences however, is just one step in our formative music education and not everyone who has early musical experiences will go on to study music formally. Opportunities are moreover, often dependent on having the financial means to pay for instruments and lessons. It is necessary to assume therefore, that the past experiences which undergraduate students and lecturers have will vary, such that they are not coming to higher education from the same cultural and musical foundations.

Reay (2004) argues that Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and cultural capital are not merely ideas for debate but function as conceptual tools in empirical analysis. In this chapter, I examine the ways in which Bourdieu's theoretical tools of habitus, cultural capital and field can further our understanding of how different musical pathways shape students' experiences of higher music education. Following an application of Bourdieu's concepts to musical enculturation and the social reproduction of musical value, I investigate the ways in which social class factors in the pursuit of higher music education. To conclude, I explore the extent to which students perceive their musical backgrounds and their prior music education as influencing their experiences of higher music education.

## Field, Habitus, Cultural Capital

### Field
Bourdieu (1977a) describes field as social environments inhabited by a number of groups in which spheres of play can be dynamic but can also be areas of struggle for domination and

power. Taking the latter description, the ways in which ideologies of musical value compete with one another for space and place in Irish music education policy and practice, represent a struggle for power. The concept of 'field' can be applied to the micro-context of the music department within which different knowledge fields compete for space on the curriculum, and to the macro-context of higher education policy. The field embodies the socio-historical institutional context, settings, dispositions, and values that students and lecturers must negotiate. However, the ways in which the field is negotiated and experienced can depend on the student's musical background or *habitus*, and prior music education or *cultural capital*. The dynamics of the field, while not insurmountable, provide undeniable advantage to some rather than others. In describing field, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 98) use the analogy of a game where some are equipped with 'trump cards' and a natural 'feel for the game'. Thus, field players require strategies and a belief that the game is worth the effort. Although I have described field in brief here, its relevance becomes heightened within the context of challenges to higher education and its relationship to habitus. It is therefore explored in further detail in Chapter Seven.

*Habitus*

Habitus can be interpreted as the 'tastes, habits, norms, values, and traditions of a particular society or community of likeminded agents' (Bourdieu 1990, p.52-65). It can also be considered as dispositions to thought, action, understanding or perception that the individual acquires as a member of a particular social group or class. Bourdieu (1990) maintains that such dispositions operate at an unconscious level yet they have a profound effect on the way an individual or group experiences and responds to the world or social environment. Habitus is the 'subjective' that becomes noticeable in the 'objective' field (Grenfell and James, 1998; Grenfell, 2008). In relation to higher education, we can posit that when a student encounters the field, their habitus can generate a wide range of possible actions depending on how it fits within the field.

*Cultural Capital*

While cultural capital may be acquired, it naturally stems from habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). One attribution of cultural capital by Bourdieu (1977a) was that of the added power associated with participation in the beaux arts, but as Lareau and Weininger (2003) point out, this initial use of the concept has been overused in educational research. Indeed,

Bourdieu's concepts have been widely criticised as being too structural and deterministic (Sullivan, 2001; Noble and Davies, 2009). I would argue however, that the way in which cultural capital has been employed in quantitative studies within education (Sullivan, 2001; Noble and Davies, 2009) to negate Bourdieu's concepts, is one-dimensional.

For example, in a study of the validity of the correlation between cultural capital and educational attainment, Sullivan (2001) surveyed pupils in their final year of schooling to examine if parental educational background resembled that of the pupils and their aspirations for further study. In measuring cultural capital, as objective cultural goods, she asked respondents to rate reading, television, music, participation in public or formal culture as part of a range of activities as well as testing pupils' cultural knowledge of famous literary and other figures and their use of language through vocabulary test scores. She did not find a correlation between 'listening to classical music or playing an instrument, and linguistic ability or cultural knowledge' (Sullivan, 2001, p.909). Sullivan posited a simplistic causality to this result as, 'visual or musical forms... not based on words... therefore [students are] less likely to develop the skills that are rewarded within the school' (p.910). Thus, used in this rather crude way, she did not find a correlation between cultural capital and educational attainment.

While Sullivan (2001) operationalises cultural capital in a one-dimensional sense (objective cultural goods), Bourdieu (1984) points out that cultural capital exhibits in a number of ways. First, it can be embodied in early childhood from enculturation; second, institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications; and third, objectified as cultural goods for example, a musical work. These dimensions enable us to explore musical and educational experiences in a broader manner than that employed by Sullivan (2001).

In this study, I focus on broad qualitative facets to cultural capital as well as measurable components such as access to musical instruments, formal tuition and graded examinations. As a relational concept, cultural capital exists together with economic, social and symbolic capital. Economic capital pertains to wealth and is the means of acquiring institutionalised cultural capital through having finance to pay for lessons and instruments. Social capital comprises the social networks between family, friends and wider society. Symbolic capital as it relates to the field of higher education is further discussed in Chapter Seven.

Of more significance is how cultural capital refers to the ways in which ideologies come to be legitimised and reproduced in education and society (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). What remains problematic in regard to assumptions of musical value is a tendency 'to perpetuate the values of particular, interested social groups at the expense of others' (Green

2003, p. 264). As stated in Chapter One, skills associated with the Western classical tradition such as music theory, historical and analysis tend to be unequally distributed by virtue of unequal access to and opportunity in music education. Thus, competence in the skills associated with the Western classical tradition functioning as cultural capital in higher music education, engenders 'exclusive advantages' (Lareau and Weininger 2003, p.579) to those from Western classical music backgrounds.

Cultural capital can be seen then, as a manifestation of the student's habitus and his/her negotiation of the field of higher music education. Moreover, cultural capital as musical competence, can be interpreted as skills and knowledge inextricably linked with success in traversing the musical tradition in question. Yet as I will go on to show accruing capital, and in particular cultural capital, is far from equitable. The dynamics of the field provide undeniable advantage to some rather than others.

*Habitus: Musical Enculturation and Parental Influence*
In its broadest sense, musical enculturation refers to the everyday experiences of music which lead to the acquisition of musical knowledge and skills (Merriam, 1964; Green, 2002). More importantly, enculturation in music is entwined within particular social and cultural contexts (Nettl 1983; Campbell, 1998; McCarthy, 1997). From early childhood onwards, we make sense of the musical structures and nuanced sounds which underpin the music we are surrounded by, and internalize the ways that music is constructed. As Green (2002) points out, early enculturation as a music-maker begins with the exploration of sounds and at a later stage, music learning pathways can diverge into predominantly formal music education or informal music learning. Hallam (2001, p.69) notes that tacit music learning occurs '...without conscious awareness as we absorb the music which is being played around us'. Studies in the psychology of music education (Sloboda and Howe 1991; Davidson et al, 1996) point to a strong association between parental encouragement and musical ability, as well as success in instrumental learning. Thus, we can begin to understand the influence that early childhood and parental encouragement has on one's musical development.

In this section, I explore the strong roles that parents and siblings played in endowing musical habitus on their offspring, either directly themselves through social networks via cultural capital, or through private tuition via economic capital. I then consider the ways in which schools of music and music teachers produce and reproduce musical habitus in their music education practice.

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**Habitus, Cultural Capital and Musical Pathways**

Across the student surveys and interviews, parents, siblings, and close relatives were strongly represented as having a significant influence on the students' interest in musical activities. Similar to findings by Pitts (2012) on the study of the impact of music education on musical participation, recurring responses included listening to music in the home, having financial and practical support for instrumental lessons, being brought to concerts, competitions and Fleadhs. In many cases, parents were the students' first instrumental teachers, and in twenty-two student cases, at least one parent was a professional musician or music teacher.

*Lecturers' Formal Music Education*

All 35 lecturers learned their main musical instrument formally through lessons with a local teacher, school of music or a combination of both. None had learnt informally and only 17% had a combination of learning modes on second or third instruments. The majority (23) began formal tuition on their main instrument before the age of ten while the remainder (12) began in their early to late teens. 22 lecturers cited keyboard as their main/first instrument in contrast with eight orchestral instruments, two voice and three traditional Irish instruments.
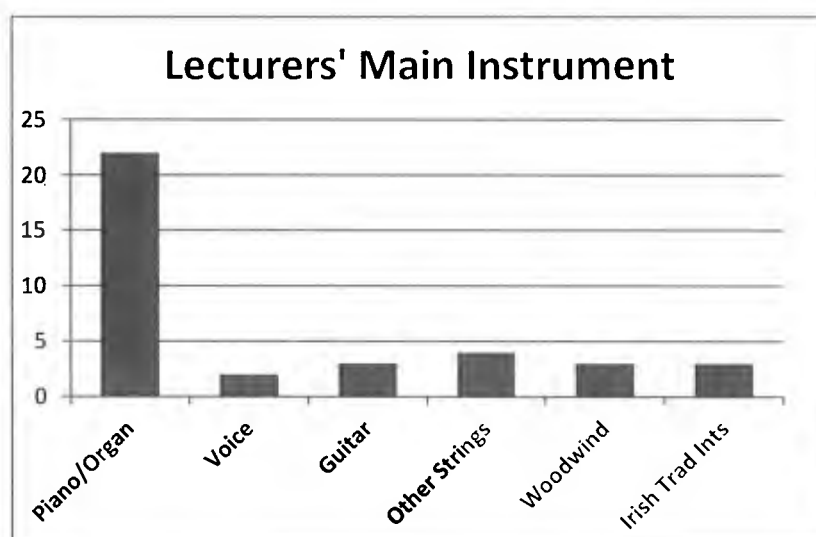


**Figure 3.1** Lecturers' Main Instrument

Two-thirds of lecturers had studied music theory formally and all of this sub-sample had achieved Grade 5 or higher prior to entry to higher education. It would seem that the majority of lecturers had experienced an overriding formal music education prior to their own

experiences of higher education. The majority of lecturers had taken second-level state examinations in music and nine of those were UK state examinations.

While the surveys elicited data on the lecturers' prior music education, it was vital to capture the narrative of their musical backgrounds in the form of interviews. From the purposive sample of twelve lecturers, nine had a formal Western classical background and three described themselves as bimusical or having a combination of formal and informal musical experiences. The following interview excerpts have been chosen from two music lecturers who, despite being of a similar age described contrasting experiences of the role that the state played in providing music education at primary and secondary levels.

In the first excerpt, Dr Philip Hannon describes how musical fluency began for him in primary school and local church choirs in the UK whereas in the second excerpt, Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin learned music informally in rock bands before seeking formal music education when it was not provided by the state:

> *Dr Philip Hannon (Classical Music Background)*
> *G:* Could you start by telling me about your own musical background?
> *P:* Well I suppose it's a long story...I actually can't remember a time when I couldn't read music...I learnt the recorder in primary school in England, when I was 6 and I was reading notation and playing the recorder very fluently within a year of that then ...and then I was in church choirs as well...so, I was always quite fluent.. when you're in a church choir you soon learn to sight sing and I think that's one of the greatest benefits actually of learning so young...

Thus, early learning and community involvement in the church choir proved invaluable to Dr Hannon in terms of fluent notation skills. In contrast, Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin's musical background was situated in a rural context where music was not provided for locally or by the state. He sought out a piano teacher in his teenage years and later on a nun who would be the catalyst in his decision to study music at university. Thus, for Professor Ó Suilleabháin, a later engagement with music informally sparked the desire for a formal music education:

> *Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin (Bimusical background)*
> M: Because I was a teenager in the 1960s I happily formed lots of rock groups, got out my guitar, learned all the Beatles numbers as they came out...so I learned my music in those rock groups. I learned musical direction in them and musical arranging and in the meantime, I was also doing piano lessons and exams with a local piano teacher.
> G: What about music in school then how was that?

M:    Well that's an easy one 'cos there was none! It wasn't taught and to the best of my knowledge it still isn't, it's a Christian Brothers Boy's school...no one knew it was a school subject and I remember finding out and someone gave me a curriculum and...I thought what's this? So then I went around the town to see if I could find someone to teach me...I went to the music teachers, one was my own piano teacher, and then another one as well and both declined, they didn't have any experience. Then I went around to the church organists, they said no... finally, I found a presentation nun called Sister Ita who took me under her wing so therefore, it was outside the school system...that I did the Leaving Cert.

Such contrasting backgrounds illustrate the ways in which geographic location and the absence or presence of state music education can impact on one's ability to access formal music education. This point is still relevant to this day where as I explain in Chapter Four 12% of students surveyed did not have access to formal music education at second level.

*Students' Formal Music Education*

An overwhelming majority of students (93%) had taken lessons on their main instrument. The minority who had not (7%) included students who were studying voice and dance and had not taken formal lessons in voice. First/main instruments are illustrated in Figure 3.2.

In terms of popularity, voice nudges very closely to piano/organ as first/main instrument and according to the interviews, such popularity might be attributed to the recent explosion of television talent shows. It could also be attributed to the late teenage discovery of vocal potential. Two-thirds of the sample had taken graded examinations on their main instrument. Of this sub-sample of 263 who had acquired instrumental grades (see Figure 3.3), 29 had achieved Diplomas, 189 have Grade 6 or higher, 23 have Grades 3 -5 inclusive and 8 have achieved gold medals in performance at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin. Although one would expect many students to have achieved a high standard of graded examinations, almost a third (132) of the sample did not sit any graded examinations. Moreover, students who chose informal learning as the predominant learning mode of their first instrument related to instruments one might associate with this mode such as Guitar; Voice; Piano; Bass; Drums; Low Whistle and Violin.
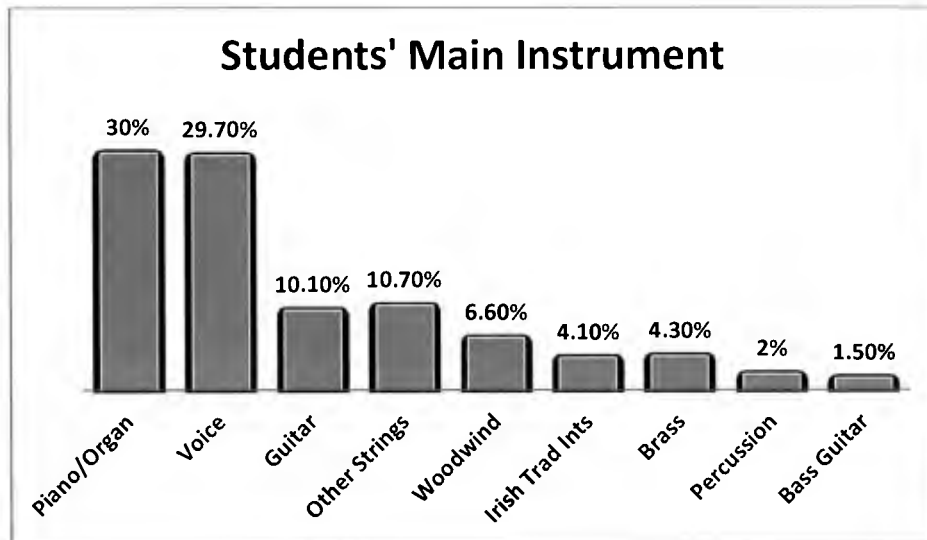
**Figure 3.2** Students' Main Instrument
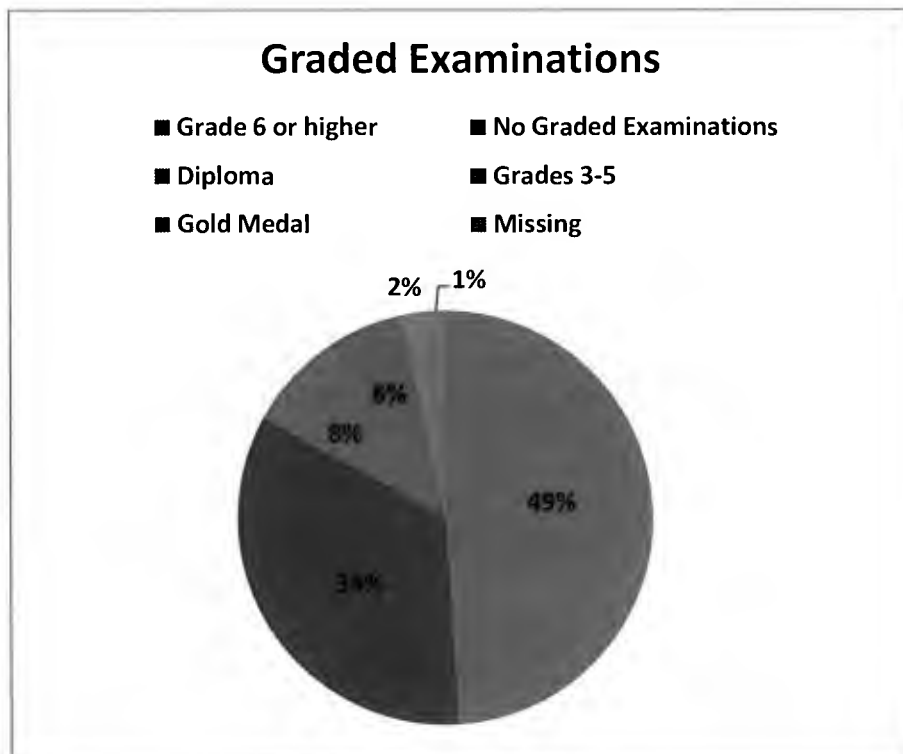


**Figure 3.3** Percentage of students who had taken graded instrumental examinations

*Other Instruments*

Although over half of the sample specified one main instrument, just under a third specified two instruments or more (see Figure 3.4). Interesting to note was the role of different musical

styles in students' musical learning. For example, in one particular student questionnaire, performing across classical, Irish traditional and popular musical styles was represented by the student's ability to play the piano, cello, accordion, harp and bodhrán and bass guitar. 14% of students were classified as bimusical in terms of their ability to play Western classical and Irish traditional instruments as well as stating that they had a combination of formal and informal learning experiences.
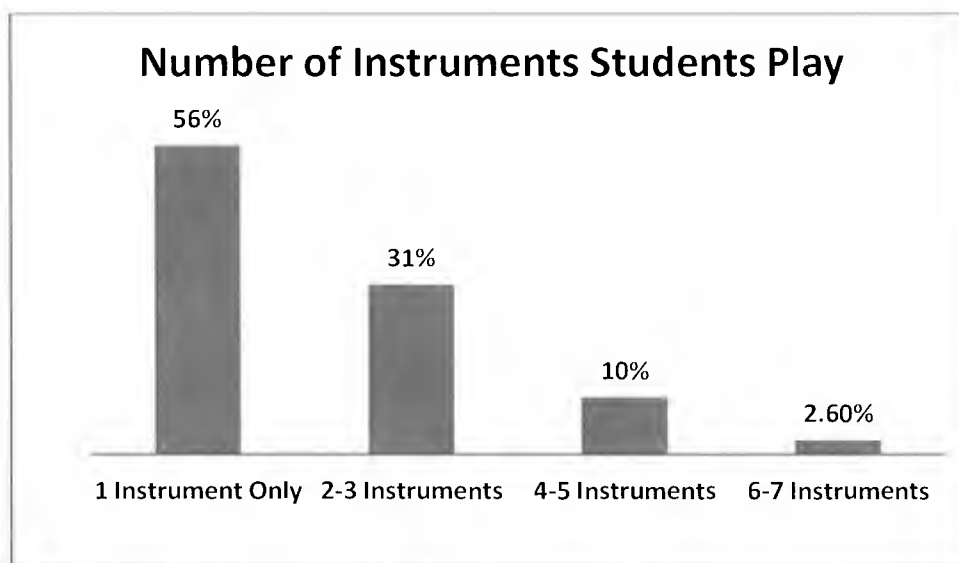


**Figure 3.4** Number of instruments played by students

**Musical Pathways and Parental Interest in Music**

Through an analysis of qualitative responses to the open survey question, 'To what extent have your parents/guardians supported your music education?' the student surveys were broadly categorised. These categories were then coded in more detail to produce more detailed outlines, showing the influences mentioned by each respondent (see example in Appendix E). The coded responses were then compiled to give numerical overviews of the most widely reported influences. Five categories emerged from the overall theme of parental influence/support (see Table 3.1) including: a) Musical Family/Parental interest in music; b) Economic capital; c) Encouragement; d) Self-motivated music education, and e) Parent-motivated music education. The strongest themes within the numerical overviews were then further probed during student interviews to provide more detail on their early musical experiences. While I explored each of these codes separately to begin with, it was also essential to revisit the data and cross-examine how parents' social class and educational

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achievements as well as any mentions of musical interests, might have influenced the musical pathways of the students. More importantly, I needed to examine whether such influential aspects also related to the students' experiences of music in higher education. I will address these in more detail shortly, but first let us examine the influential factors as illustrated in Table 3.1 in more detail.

**Table 3.1** Rank Ordering of Parental Influence/Support Factors (Number of mentions)

| Parental Influence/Support | Number of Mentions |
| --- | --- |
| Musical Family/Parental Interest in Music | 147 |
| Financial Support/Economic Capital | 96 |
| Encouragement | 64 |
| Self-Motivated | 57 |
| Parent-Motivated | 45 |
| None | 20 |
| Blank | 22 |

*Musical Family/Parental Interest in Music*

In presenting a selection of comments from the 147 mentions of this category in the student survey, I wish to highlight iterations of both informal and formal recollections of musical enculturation. 20 students had a parent who was either a professional musicians or music teachers/lecturers. In a further 6 cases, both parents were professional musicians or practicing music teachers/lecturers. Other students referred to the strong influence that their parents' musical tastes or musical listening habits had on their own interest in music. In these examples, students ascribe the parental influence as having stemmed from informal learning through listening and participating in impromptu music sessions in a process one student calls 'osmosis' (see also Green 2002a):

S33: My mother is a wedding singer professionally. I grew up to her learning new songs and constantly singing at home. She also taught herself piano, keyboard and guitar and encouraged me to do so. My Aunty is a recording artist and now teaches a children's choir.

S124: None of my immediate family (mother, father, siblings) play any instruments, but all of them have always had a huge interest in many types of music (my parents both love 70's and 80's pop and disco music, my brother and sister are both metal heads, and we

all are quite familiar with a lot of classical music) strangely enough my entire family has perfect pitch, despite no musical training, so clearly just listening to music all the time is the best way to learn.

Other students also mentioned being taught to play an instrument by a close relative:

S11:   My mother is a piano teacher so she started teaching me music when I was very young my father plays music too so they encouraged me a lot to play music.

S233:   Aunt is a music lecturer and was my music teacher from age of 4.

Parents' listening habits and tastes (including 'good taste') were also mentioned as well as being brought to concerts and what the following comments have in common is their specific reference to Western classical music. This feeds into the notion of social and cultural capital as advantaging the student who studies music in higher education where Western classical music predominates:

S148:   Mam has good taste in music and a good record collection Dad paid for lessons and bought the box set of all of Beethoven's symphonies.

S243:   Dad plays piano and I listened to his music collection form a young age. They took me to concerts, operas, and other performances. They got me hooked.

*Financial Support/Economic Capital/Encouragement*

There were 96 mentions of having received financial support from parents. Given that an overwhelming majority of students (93%) had taken private lessons on their instrument, and the question asked the extent to which their parents supported their music education, one might think that financial support would be more widely acknowledged. For example, one student survey stated 'None but support and paying for my lessons' (S378). It was as if an implicit assumption that the word 'support' meant approval. By contrast, some of those who acknowledged financial support in their comments also mentioned that it would not have been possible without their parents' financial input. In the following cases, financial support is identified as the support mechanism by which students acquired their musical knowledge and skills as well as instruments and travel.

Iterations of the time and financial investment in travelling from the West to the East coast of Ireland each week as well as paying for National Youth Orchestra of Ireland (NYOI)

and Irish Youth Wind Ensemble (IYWE) courses, highlight the extent to which musical enculturation and economic capital enabled this student to participate in a variety of courses:

S142: My family played a major role in music ed. Aunt runs the local choir at home (my first musical experience) also owns music school (first formal lessons in instruments) did Grade 6 with her then travelled from Clare to Dublin every week for private lessons in DIT with trumpet. Mum brought me every week. Paid for NYOI courses and IYWE courses, c. €500 per course.

*Self-Motivated Music Education*

Students who did not attribute any particular support from parents in regards to their musical backgrounds or prior music education, mentioned being the only one in their family who had a deep interest in music as well as describing their parents as 'unmusical'. More significantly, the theme of self-motivated music education recurred many times even though this category was not as significant as the others:

S7: The best example is that I asked to play the clarinet - not them telling me I have to – very supportive.

S112: None what so ever, my learning was self directed as I am the only musician in the family.

*Parent-Motivated Music Education*

The perceived association between starting music in early childhood and future success in higher music education emerged as a recurring theme. Data from student surveys and interviews gave rise to a code I termed 'parent-motivated music education'. Formal music education was initiated and propelled by some parents who were anxious for their children to start lessons. This finding resonates with that of Pitts (2012) who found that parents' own musical ambitions influenced their ideals for their children's music learning. In this study, students expressed this in language such as being 'sent' to lessons, 'put into a school of music' as well as the parents' passion or eagerness for their child to begin at an early age. Thus, motivation came initially from the parents and not the students:

S73:    I was sent to nearly all available music teachers in my locality. My parents and my brother are all passionate about music and wanted me to have as many opportunities as were available!

S350:   My Mam got me up every morning before school and made me practise. She also sat in on all my lessons.

In the student interviews, more detail was given on the ways in which parents initiated the students' music education. Melanie, a second year student, describes following in her siblings' footsteps as she was 'just put into the Limerick School of Music':

> *Melanie (2<sup>nd</sup> Year, Classical Music Background)*
> ...my three older sisters all play piano violin the flute so I would have always have heard the music so like you know I was just put into the Limerick School of Music by my parents...

When asked if she thought she felt obliged to follow in her siblings' footsteps, she explained her desire for this to happen regardless of being 'pushed'.

Significant memories of parents' music-making emerged in thirteen out of eighteen interviews and such parental influence seemed to generate motivation for learning within the family culture. Matt, a mature jazz student described his ability and innate interest in music as a preordained 'genetic' passing on of the family culture:

> *Matt (4<sup>th</sup> Year, Mature Student, Jazz Background)*
> G:  From your background as a jazz musician, did you learn formally? Did you start off as classical musician first and then branch into jazz or how did you go get into jazz?
> M:  Well I suppose it was down to genetics I suppose at the end of the day. My great-grandfather, my grandfather and my father were all jazz musicians actually, jazz trumpeters...so, the real education took place at home eh, and at weekends and evenings listening, always listening to records and tapes and going out gigging from a very young age...with my Dad's band...
> My dad was a musician in the army band in the Gloucestershire regiment...so I used to go in and sit on the end of it and play fifth trumpet even though there was only 4 trumpet parts they'd make one up for me. Or I'd go in and sit there from about literally from about 7 years old. So literally by osmosis I picked the stuff up...

In general, interview responses suggested that the students enjoyed caring home environments where there was parental support and encouragement for musical activities. In many cases, it was parents or siblings who set the musical atmosphere in the home, through

their own behaviour and musical tastes, the presence or absence of instruments, recordings, and sheet music, and the extent to which they encouraged, or even pushed their children to take lessons and then to persevere with practice. There was a sense of music as a pre-ordained activity for students whose parents had also learnt music and in many cases had taught their children the basics. Overall, parental input was appreciated by students. Moreover, some interviewees were extremely grateful of the depth of parental input in their musical education where they were supported and encouraged.

*Social Reproduction and Musical Experience*

When children's parents are Western classical musicians or interested in Western classical music, it is often assumed that their children are also musical. And if such children are privileged enough to attend private instrumental lessons which teach technique, notation and Western classical theory, then those children will have an advantage in a context where such skills are valued. Children who come to school with strong musical backgrounds will inevitably have an advantage over those that do not. Seeming to lack interest and ability in music, such students are alienated from school music and labelled 'unmusical' although they may be actively engaged in other musical practices outside of school (Green, 2005).

In her earlier work, Green relates this to patterns of social class '...middle class children are much more likely than working class children, to play orchestral instruments in schools; working class children are much less likely to take music options at school, and to go on to study music at university or conservatoire...' (Green, 1999, p.165). It can be argued that students who have acquired understanding of the forms, styles, and notation associated with the classical tradition, and who may already be socialised in the expected norms and discourse of the classical tradition, have more relevant cultural capital in a music degree where classical music predominates over those who do not. Moreover, students' musical habitus and by association their musicality, or bimusicality within the field, has the potential to impact in a profound manner on the ways in which they describe their experiences.

In acknowledging that the majority of students surveyed and interviewed had the financial means to access to private instrumental/vocal tuition, it was necessary to inquire into the issue of social class backgrounds and higher education access and opportunity.

**Social Class, Opportunity and Higher Education: Rhetoric or Reality?**

> Despite clear indications of improvements in working class/race/gender educational chances, social class is a major regulator of the distribution of students to privileging discourses and institutions. If we are going to talk about democracy, culture and education, and if we are to be serious, then we have to consider the constraints and grip of class-regulated realities.
>
> (Bernstein 2000, p. xxv)

International research on the changing demographics of higher education reveals that the broadening of access and entry routes increasingly blurs the identities of students in terms of their age, social background and other characteristics (Erlich, 2000). Put more succinctly, students with different profiles and characteristics may have different experiences in college. The link between higher education participation and social class has been documented in international contexts (Reay et al., 2001; 2005). Moreover, children of parents from higher social classes are more likely to benefit from higher education compared to children from lower socio-economic groups.

Despite widening participation policies in the UK, inequalities persist amongst working class and middle class students (Crozier et al, 2008). Employing a predominantly qualitative approach which included 88 interviews and questionnaire data, Crozier et al (2008) mapped students' learning experiences across four different higher education institutions. Findings revealed that students' profiles along with their experiences differed according to the relevant higher education institution they attended. Moreover, through the interplay between familial, social and academic experiences of the students, the study found that middle class students were further advantaged socially by virtue of their habitus, while working class students had constrained learning experiences and avoided the social milieu at university.

*Social Class and Higher Music Education*

In the UK, a study of social class and entry into university music courses revealed a strong association between socio-economic background and academic achievement (Dibben, 2004; 2006). Referring to a recent review of teaching at the University of Sheffield, Dibben (2004) illustrated that undergraduate music programmes failed to attract students from lower socio-economic groups. While she acknowledged a general trend of entrants to higher education from higher socio-economic groups, there is no current study on the range of socio-economic backgrounds of students of music in higher education. It would appear that socio-economic

background is a determining factor in access to many undergraduate courses including music in Ireland, even though higher education fees have been abolished.

In their examination of the system of music education in the US, Younker and Hickey (2007), explore social justice in the teaching of music in school-based programmes. Using narrative inquiry of four diverse teaching scenarios: elementary schools in urban and suburban areas of the US; elementary classrooms in Hungary; and a junior high band room; they examine various economic, social and cultural dimensions of each others' teaching environments. In the scenario of the junior high band room, Younker paints a picture of a typical rehearsal environment:

> The space is filled with chairs, music stands, desks, pictures, plaques, chalkboards, and posters. The routines carried out by the students as they unpack and put together instruments, retrieve music folders, adjust chairs and stands, and begin to warm up...reflect a group of individuals who appear to have communal purposefulness. (Younker and Hickey, 2007, p. 222)

In this illustrative account, such an environment reflects many aspects that could be described as privileged: first, the space is resource-rich with many reminders of previous musical successes – plaques and pictures; second, the students are readily equipped with instruments and music folders which most likely contain sheet music; and third, they are socialised into the routine of the rehearsal with the initiation of warm-ups. They postulate that if the conductor were to describe the students and their musical backgrounds, the descriptive phrases '....might include academically successful, motivated and involved, trained by private teachers, from families that are involved, and middle to upper class' (p.222).

They attribute such viewpoints to the identification of students who resonate with values similar to their own, '...those who began studying music privately at an early age, were successful in the performance-based ensembles in schools...' (p.223). Younker and Hickey (2007) go on to question admission to programmes at university level and ask if auditions, acceptances, rejections, represent the construction of power within institutions (see also Froehlich, 2007). Such issues of access, resonate strongly with this study as the ability to gain a place on the majority of music programmes in Irish higher music education depends on meeting the requirements of auditions and entrance tests. Such procedures implicitly favour students who have enjoyed access to private instrumental and theoretical tuition and who have been financially and culturally supported at home and in school. Thus, those imbued with social and 'cultural capital' enter undergraduate music courses in higher education with an already acquired understanding of the forms, styles, and notation associated with the

classical tradition and may already be socialised in the expected norms and discourse of the classical tradition.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the *Deaf Ears? Report* (Herron, 1985) stated that 'Irish children have the worst of all musical worlds' because of the lack of infrastructure and commitment by policymakers to instrumental music provision in schools. Three decades later, children still access instrumental lessons privately, thus accessing instrumental tuition, necessitates having the financial means to do so. While considering the musical backgrounds of parents and siblings of students in higher education, the role that social class and educational achievement might play in this study could not be ignored.

*Higher Education and Social Class: The Irish Context*

Irish society is often perceived as a classless society because class boundaries are not as strictly defined in Ireland, yet 'the reality is that they are more rigid and harder to penetrate than in many other societies' (Tovey and Share, 2003, p.161). Following a study on the influence of social class and early years education within the Irish context, Donohoe and Gaynor (2003, p.71) confirmed that similar to international studies, 'the class into which we are born influences where we live, how we spend our leisure time, the papers we read, our educational prospects and our earning potential'. It is thus reasonable to assume that there might be an association between higher education access and social class background.

Social class background of new entrants in higher education in Ireland was first documented in the *Investment in Education Report* (1966). Further official reports such as the *National Education Convention Report* (1994) and the *White Paper on Education* (1995) highlighted the need to address educational disadvantage and equalise the social class profile of higher education students. While considerable progress has been achieved in the expansion of higher education opportunities, it remains the case that the majority of students who benefit from higher education are from the middle and professional socio-economic groups (Delaney et al, 2005).

The *Eurostudent Report* of 2001 indicated a clear correlation between fathers' educational level and students' participation levels in higher education (Ryan and O'Kelly, 2001). Similar trends were observed in the *Eurostudent Survey II* (Darmody et al., 2005) and *Eurostudent Survey III* (Delaney et al, 2009). According to the aforementioned studies moreover, trends indicate that the majority of students participating in higher education come from professional and senior manager/official backgrounds. A stark contrast is to be found in

the under-representation of students whose parents have less than a lower secondary qualification and over-representation among students with upper secondary and higher education qualifications. The *Eurostudent Survey III* accounts that three quarters of students in higher education have at least one parent who has a Leaving Certificate or higher qualification. With this last study in mind, I should like to draw some comparisons between the data in this latter report and the data from this study.

I wanted to ascertain an overview of social class markers that pertained to the participants in this study. Similar to the aforementioned studies, I used two measures of social class in the student survey: occupation of mother and father, and the highest educational attainment of mother and father. What I did not include was markers of socio-economic background or levels of income as these would have been personally sensitive and may have deterred students from completing the survey. As already indicated in Chapter One, the results shown here are not generalisable because of the student sample and it is acknowledged that for some, they represent a rather crude measurement of social class. Nonetheless, the results point to salient findings that could lead to further research.

*Occupations of Students' Parents*

An open question related to parental occupation was posed: 'What is/was your mother's/father's occupation?' and this elicited diverse answers. These answers were then coded using the Central Statistics Office of Ireland classifications of occupation and then categorised into three International Social Class Indicators of 1) Professional/Managerial; 2) Non-Manual/Skilled Manual; and 3) Semi-skilled Manual/Unskilled Manual. Over 90% of the sample gave enough information to classify the occupation of both earners.

In the case of the occupation of both mothers and fathers, almost half were in the Professional/Managerial category while a minority (7%) were in the semi-skilled/unskilled manual category. In keeping with trends outlined in the *Eurostudent* Surveys, Figure 3.5 indicates that fathers and mothers from professional/managerial backgrounds make up almost half of the student group. This group is therefore, slightly over-represented compared with their prevalence in the national population 43% (CSO, 2011). Of more significance, is the under-representation in my study of those in the semi-skilled manual/unskilled manual group (11% fathers, 7.4% mothers) compared to the national population (17%). Furthermore, from the entire valid total of 376 completed answers from the sample of 406, only one parent was unemployed, while a minority of parents had returned to education as students.
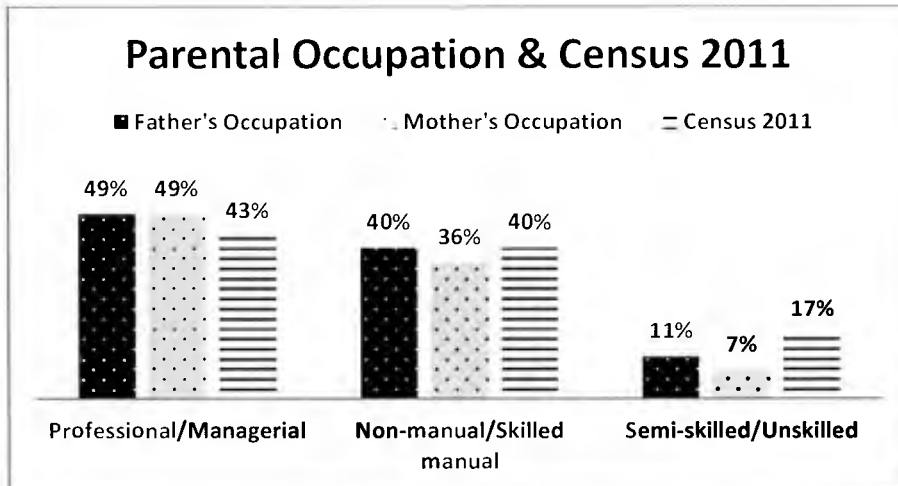
**Figure 3.5** Comparison of Parental Occupation Categories with Census 2011 Household Statistics

*Educational Attainment of Students' Parents*

Bourdieu (1977b) states that 'academic qualifications are to cultural capital what money is to economic capital' (p.187). Within the historical and political Irish context, the exportation of financial wealth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from Ireland to Britain left a dearth of indigenous industrial opportunities in post-colonial Ireland (Lynch, 1990). Cultural capital credentialised as educational attainment was moreover, 'a far more important determinant of status and power than core capitalist states with considerable indigenous industrial wealth' (Lynch 1990, p.3). While one could argue that Lynch's paper was written before the industrial boom in the late nineties known as the 'Celtic Tiger', in which Ireland was ranked as one of the top ten wealthiest countries in the world (O'Flynn, 2009), the legacy of the importance and value placed on acquiring educational qualifications has not dissipated (Lynch, 2006). Therefore, in this study, I was curious to know whether the level of parental educational attainment would echo Lynch's theory and how the data would compare to similar national studies.

In order to measure educational attainment, I asked two separate closed questions: 'What, if any is/was your mother's/father's highest educational attainment?' followed by an instruction to tick one box only from a myriad of options from Primary – Post Doctoral. In the *Eurostudent Survey IV* (Harmon and Foubert, 2010), results indicated that the vast majority (73%) of students in higher education had at least one parent with a Leaving Certificate or higher qualification. In this study, the cumulative figures of students' parents attaining a Leaving Certificate or higher qualification amount to 88% of students' mothers

and 80% of students' fathers (see Figure 3.6). Perhaps of more significance was the percentage of parents with postgraduate qualifications (mothers – 16%; fathers – 21%).
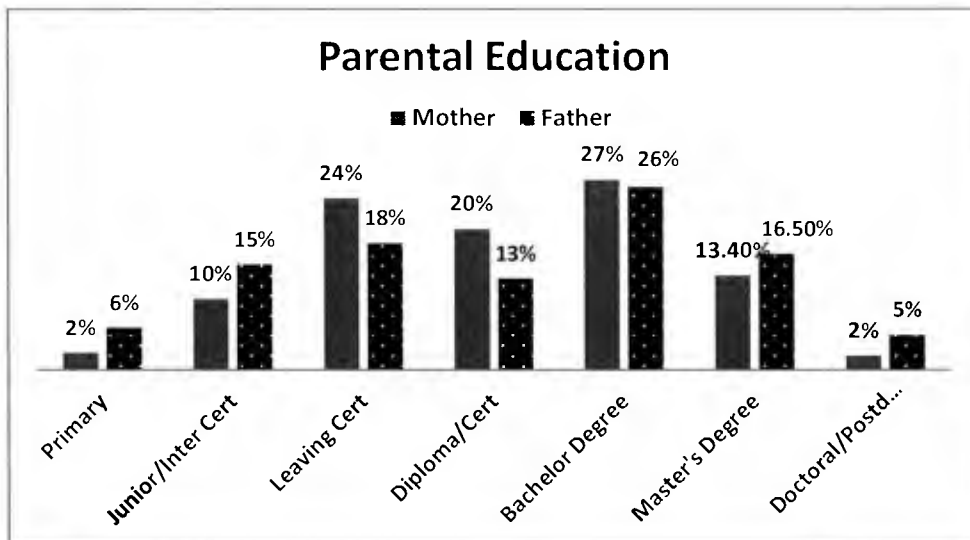


**Figure 3.6** Highest Educational Attainment of Students' Parents

In line with previous *Eurostudent reports I, II,* and *III,* a positive relationship between parental education and participation in higher education was found in this study. For example, Figure 3.7 shows that 44% of student's fathers in the *Eurostudent Study IV* earned a third-level degree in comparison to 25% of the population of men aged 40-59. A similar pattern emerges for students' mothers (Figure 3.8), whereby 48% earned a higher education degree in comparison to 28% of women aged 40-59. In this study, the percentage of parents with a higher education qualification is relatively consistent with *Eurostudent Survey IV*, however the percentage of parents with education up to lower secondary and higher secondary differs considerably. As illustrated in Figure 3.8, twice as many parents have Leaving Certificate or higher than in the *Eurostudent Survey IV*. Consistent with national trends (OECD, 2009), figures in the *Eurostudent Survey IV* illustrate that parents with less than a Junior Certificate qualification are under-represented in higher education, while students' parents with upper secondary and higher education qualifications are over-represented. In this study, the level of educational attainment is even more pronounced with the over-representation of students whose parents had a higher education qualification, with an average of 40% having undergraduate and/or postgraduate qualifications while only an average of 12% had less than a Junior Certificate qualification.

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**Father's Highest Educational Attainment**

1=Males 40-59
2=Eurostudent
Survey 2009/2010
3=This Study

| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Up to Junior Cert | 44% | 41% | 20% |
| Leaving Cert or Higher | 28% | 15% | 31% |
| Higher Education and above | 25% | 44% | 49% |
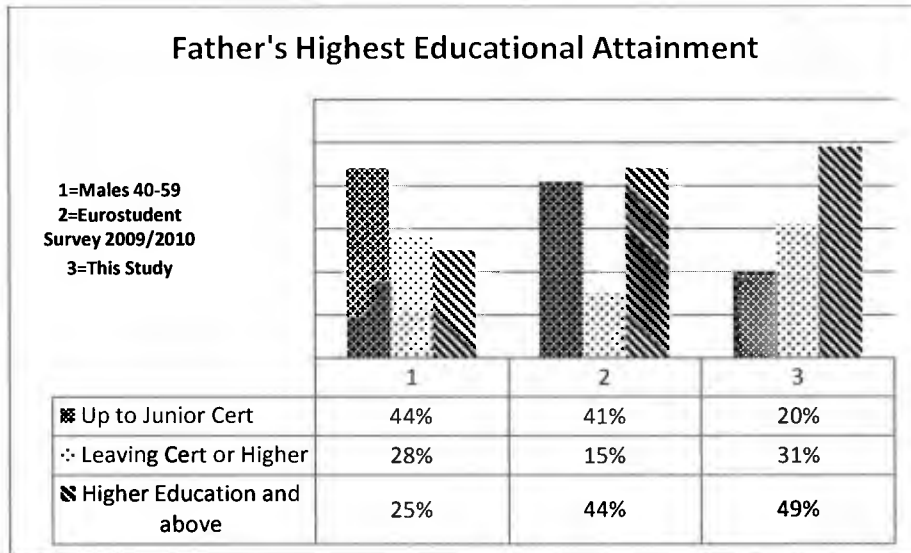
**Figure 3.7** Comparison of Father's Education – Census; Eurostudent IV; This Study

**Mother's Highest Educational Attainment**

1=Females 40-59
2=Eurostudent
Survey 2009/2010
3=This Study

| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Up to Junior Cert | 42% | 30% | 13% |
| Leaving Cert or Higher | 31% | 22% | 45% |
| Higher Education and above | 28% | 48% | 42% |
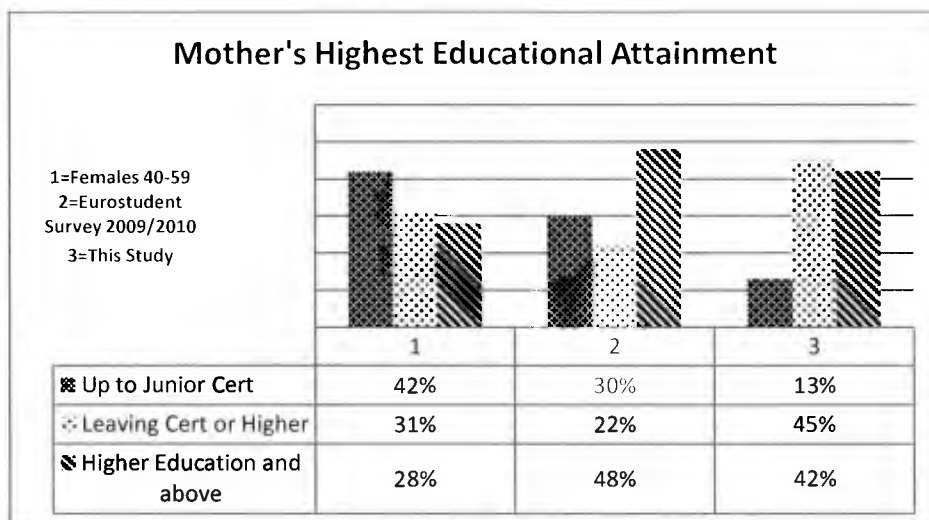
**Figure 3.8** Comparison of Mother's Education – Census; Eurostudent IV; This Study

What then, can we summarise about the social class backgrounds of the students in this study? In acknowledging that the student sample is not representative, generalising would be foolhardy, however, it is possible to draw some tentative inferences.

First, parents' occupations are relatively consistent with other higher education reports in an over-representation of students from professional/managerial backgrounds, and a severe under-representation of students from semi-skilled/unskilled backgrounds prevails. Second, the level of education of students' parents is proportionately higher than other higher education reports. Moreover, it would appear to closely resemble Dibben's (2004) study in

which parents of music students had exceptionally high levels of education in comparison to other disciplines at the University of Sheffield.

It would seem therefore, that parents with high levels of education place a high value on music education. As iterated earlier in the thesis, specialist instrumental tuition is not available free of charge in the Republic of Ireland and therefore requires economic capital to pay for it. Moreover, the investment of time, travel, and transport to and from lessons requires considerable parental support. Students in Dibben's (2004) study did not seem to be aware of the privilege they enjoyed as a result of being able to access instrumental lessons and instruments. Similarly, Mantie (2013) found that students participating in extra-curricular music ensembles in higher education did not fully appreciate the privilege they enjoyed having acquired cultural capital through extra-curricular instrumental lessons as well as participating in private school music ensembles prior to university. Accessing a higher music education programme is therefore, framed in a context whereby economic, cultural and social capital are unequally distributed. Moreover, masking this inequality is the neo-liberal rhetoric of higher education 'choice'.

**The Paradox of Higher Education 'Choice'**

In a critique of increasing neo-liberal agendas within Irish higher education, Lynch (2006) argues that indications of political shifts towards the right have been signalled by an uprooting of power from educational institutions to their respective 'consumers'. She states: 'choice is the carrot with which people are duped into believing that they will have freedom to buy what higher education they like in some brave new market' (Lynch 2006, p.3). In a study of school 'choice' and disadvantage, Reay and Lucy (2003) describe how choice is mistakenly described as agency, when in reality it 'often masks the fact that "choice" is a marker of economic capital' (p.138).

In the Irish context, Lynch and Moran (2006) examine how the perception of educational choice functions in two ways. First, in practice; whereby students (and parents) who lack economic, social or cultural capital are prevented from private educational options, and second, ideologically; in concealing 'the will and the means to choose behind a facade of equal opportunities rhetoric' (p.221). While the focus of their study was on second-level education, it is possible that their findings might also have relevance to the higher music education context in Ireland.

Many would argue that music courses at higher education level have expanded in number and scope over recent decades and that there is plenty of 'choice' in terms of market expectations for a relatively small population. However, thinking of choice and opportunity as ideological assumptions, in which students with sufficient musical talent and ability have the means to overcome obstacles, only serves in the perpetuation of social and class reproduction. Such assumptions blind us to the fact that there needs to be 'equality of condition to promote substantive as opposed to formal equality of opportunity' (Lynch and Moran 2006, p.221). Without equality of condition, students who have sufficient economic, social and cultural capital can not only continue to avail of and access private music education in childhood, but they also have *real* choice in terms of accessing a higher music education course that best suits their needs and backgrounds. Overlooked in educational policy is that students do not always want a choice of university; rather, affordable, accessible, and available university education of high standard ought to be available (Tight, 2003).

Many of the students in this study felt lucky to have been given opportunities to participate in state music education, yet 12% of the students surveyed and four of those interviewed did not have access to formal music education in their secondary school. John (second year mature student) emphasised that the desire to learn music was of his own volition and was entirely self-financed. This contrasted starkly in the case of Robyn, a first year student of violin and piano.

Robyn associated her musical opportunities with inherited talent whereby just like her mother and her three sisters, she had always wanted to go to a school of music and eventually study performance in a conservatoire. She described how she had considered studying music at The Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester (as many of her friends had auditioned there) but that in the end she wanted to stay in Ireland. When I asked her about the issue of fees since their reintroduction in the UK and how much it would have cost, she was unaware of the cost implications. It appeared that her decision was solely based on her preference. As she and her sisters compete regularly in competitions, I asked her opinion on the costly nature of upgrading instruments as musical progress becomes more competitive. She replied:

> *Robyn (1ˢᵗ Year, Classical Music Background)*
> ...like some of my friends have violins worth thousands like €20,000 and it's ridiculous... Now mine wouldn't be that much but still... but my youngest sister like hers would be worth more than mine I'd say...I suppose like people would kind of realise you've to kind of make the decision, do you really want to go for that. Like

my mom doesn't mind spending money on instruments and things because she knows that they'll be used of course and that that we're serious about it...

It is important to highlight the ways in which Robyn's cultural social and economic capital have enabled her own musical pathway and given her choices in terms of access and opportunity. In particular, her awareness of what many others would see as socio-economic advantage could be best described as tacit, or what Dibben (2004. p.8) describes as an 'invisible norm'. It would appear that socio-economic background is a determining factor in access to many undergraduate courses including music in Ireland even though higher education fees have been abolished. Thus, those imbued with social and 'cultural capital' enter undergraduate music courses in higher education with an already acquired understanding of the forms, styles, and notation associated with the classical tradition and may already be socialised in the expected norms and discourse of the classical tradition.

**Musical Backgrounds and Prior Music Education: the Perceived Impact**

One of the recurring themes in the student and lecturer accounts was the perceived association of starting formal music early in childhood with future success in higher music education. Consistent formal music education from a very young age would seem to have benefited first year student Melanie, who having achieved success in many piano competitions, describes her experience as 'thoroughly enjoying the first year of this music course'. Cormac's mother (a professional musician) recognised the benefits of music education from an early age. As one of the top students in his first year at a conservatoire, he describes how he has reaped the benefits:

> *Cormac (1<sup>st</sup> Year, Classical Music Background)*
> C:    My Mum had me in lessons from the age of 4. She is a musician herself so she wanted us to get a really good start.
> G:    Do you think that an early start is a good thing then?
> C:    Definitely, yeah...I mean I have such a good grounding right from the start you know? I don't think I appreciated that much in my teens mind you (Laughs), but I see where it has got me now.
> G:    Do you think then that you find the course easier than someone who wouldn't have that grounding?
> C:    Well yes and no, I mean I work really hard too but I think it has helped me enormously in my grades. Like I'd be one of the top few you know...

When I examined the survey data more closely however, it was evident that some students alluded to negative experiences in childhood whereby they abandoned music for a period

before returning to study in their teenage years. This was more prevalent in the institutions with what could be described as a broader curriculum and a more diverse student body. I decided to probe this issue further with a university focus group:

*Focus Group No 1:*

G:    In what ways do you think students' musical backgrounds impact on their experience of higher music education?

S1:    Early exposure can either drag you in towards music or pull you away.

S5:    Parental influence is huge if you have a musician in the family, it makes a big difference too. I've no musician in the family and they were bamboozled by it...

S3:    But there is one thing for example with people who weren't musically inclined in their younger years there is a certain  paranoia, like parents will have that expectation so your confidence and your ability really come to the fore like you question your abilities but I think it also makes you work harder.

S2:    Yeah, if you want it enough you'll do it anyway, if you are driven enough you will want it.

Such varied experiences show how the home environment can impact on music learning during childhood and in higher education. Students with a parent who was a keen listener but did not necessarily have any skill as a player had learnt to appreciate what it meant to be 'musical'. Although the majority of students had learnt music formally at some stage, we can see that variations in access and starting-age invariably highlight inequality of opportunity.


**The Structural Principles and Practices of Habitus**

Thus far, it is acknowledged that habitus is a product of the home environment and that social class inevitably plays a part in the acquisition of cultural capital. However, I would like to consider habitus in another more nuanced way in relation to music. As an embodiment of individual histories or we might add, musical trajectories, habitus has many layers (Bourdieu, 1990). These layers can encompass individual behaviour and attributes, or in this case, musical behaviour and attributes. We can suggest that students from musical backgrounds where parents listen to Western classical music, learn a musical instrument and bring their children to recitals might better understand the 'rules of the game' in a music department where such behaviour and practice were commonplace. Consider a music course or institution where Western classical music is the predominant focus, for example. Students with a background primarily in Irish traditional music might feel that the objective field was not 'for the likes of them'. For Bourdieu (1977b), the real nature of culture (as collective

habitus) is characterised by the structuring of principles in which agents produce regulated practices:

> The system of dispositions – a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured according to its principles... (Bourdieu, 1977b, p.82)

I would like to extend this idea to musical cultures for a moment. I should like to consider how habitus (whether embodied or institutional) as a manifestation of culture, generates principles and practices. Applied to Western classical music, the principles of the canon would have the score and the composer at the core of its principles, thereby the learning practices would revolve around reading music notation. In a different way, the aural tradition of sharing music represents the principles of Irish traditional music, while the practice would then comprise primarily learning by ear. While acknowledging that musical practices such as those identified below are not mutually exclusive, i.e. Irish traditional music can encompass notational practices and Western classical music playing by ear, it is the dominant principles and practices of a musical culture that endows its distinctiveness. Moreover, learning practices tend to be inextricably linked with the pedagogical practices or action pertaining to the principles of the musical culture.

Habitus enables a further understanding of the dispositions students have acquired vis-à-vis musical practices, traditions, and prior music education experiences. Although potentially dynamic and fluid, musical habituses are influenced by structures of principles and practices which can be embodied in curriculum and pedagogy. Thus habitus is, 'durably inculcated by the possibilities and impossibilities...opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in the objective conditions' (Bourdieu 1990, p. 54). More critically, students' musical habitus and by association their musicality, or bimusicality within the field, can impact in a profound manner on the ways in which they experience higher music education.


*Bimusical Habitus*

As mentioned in Chapter One, the term 'bimusicality' originally coined by ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood (1960) was used to describe the ability some people have to be equally proficient in two distinct musical systems. Based on the premise that the world consists of a series of musics, which are understood most fully when they are learned, he believed that the socio-musical as well as socio-cultural aspects of music could only be interpreted through performance and immersion. In a broad application of the term bimusicality, O'Flynn (2005)

suggests that it can enable us to understand different types of music-making while recognising the value of formal and informal modes of learning. However, because ideological assumptions of what counts as music learning can differ significantly, informal learning modes as well as their association with a particular type of 'inferior' genre, can be easily dismissed.

As already highlighted, some students and lecturers in this study were equally proficient in both Western classical music and Irish traditional music having been supported equally in both musical systems from an early age. Lecturer, Dr Annette Long recalled being 'surrounded' by Irish traditional music in the home; however, Dr Alan Maguire said that neither of his parents was very musical although they encouraged him. Both lecturers learned both musical traditions concurrently, however in both cases one musical system was more developed at a later stage. For example, Dr Long was told by her classical teacher that she had acquired 'bad habits', while Dr Maguire realised he had not been taught 'well' by his first piano teacher until he went to study with another teacher. Both lecturers learned music informally alongside their formal instrumental tuition but they chose one specific musical path at a later stage. Of interest perhaps, is the fact that both lecturers now teach ethnomusicology modules in their current practice. It could be suggested then, that experience in both musical traditions has given them more flexibility in their higher education practice.

A more prevalent theme among many students was the belief that particular pathways were critical for future success and opportunities. In other cases, an influential figure (teacher, parent, family friend) had persuaded them to focus their energies away from the initial genre or musical system in favour of a formal Western classical approach. In the cases of the aforementioned lecturers and some students, interest in Western classical music developed at the expense of Irish traditional music. In the context of Ireland's bimusical history then, it is possible to interpret some experiences of musical engagement in a different light. In the following student interview excerpt, Fionn's bimusical background is illustrated in terms of his mother's classical and his father's Irish traditional music background. However, a family friend persuaded him to pursue classical violin studies with her:

> *Fionn (4th Year, Bimusical Background, now Classical)*
> ...well we always kind of had music in the family, my Mum sang and played the harp and her family had always been interested in music, she used to tell stories about hearing Mozart for the first time when she was 13, whereas my Dad had a traditional music background... he plays the flute, piano, dances and has won various

competitions, so yeah I mean there's music around. Anyway, I took up the uilleann pipes...then my mum, you know she kind of thought we had become musical enough, until a friend of hers who was a violin teacher came over for tea one day and heard me play and she said 'I like him. I want to teach him the violin', and here I am 16 years later still playing the violin...

What is of particular interest is how he goes on to express his teacher's beliefs with particular deference, 'this lady' and how he has adopted the same beliefs about his ability to mix styles on one instrument:

> G:    Ok. And was that classical violin or traditional?
> F:    Oh, classical. This lady doesn't believe in mixing styles on one instrument. I'm sure there are people who can pull it off but I'm not one of them so always did classical with her...

Not surprisingly, Fionn doesn't play Irish traditional music anymore and has concentrated on classical since his encounter with this violin teacher. It would seem that his violin teacher's beliefs or ideological assumptions that mixing styles was a bad idea – presumably because of the possibility of developing 'bad habits', have been reproduced in the student's narrative that he is not able to 'pull it off'. What we can see from this encounter is that although Fionn's habitus was a product of his early childhood experience it was also reshaped by the structured principles of Western classical music and the practice of his influential violin teacher. Thus, while habitus reflects the social and cultural context in which it was generated, it can also be reshaped through schooling and various social encounters (Reay, 2004).

The social reproduction of musical values from teacher to student would seem to have had a bipartite influence on Fionn's musical pathway. First, he chose to heed the advice of his teacher and give up his Irish traditional music habitus in favour of a Western classical one, and second, this experience has most likely informed his choice of music degree and institution of higher education. He later expressed how the encounter with this teacher reaped rewards for him in being able to access a university course where the focus is predominantly Western classical. Had he not begun classical violin, his higher education route may have been rather different.

Another student I interviewed told me how he began to teach himself the piano by ear and initially loved playing jazz standards and improvising over soundtracks. Such practices were discouraged however, when he began formal piano lessons. He recalled how lucky he was to have encountered a 'proper piano teacher' who '... told me to forget all that stuff' because he needed 'to learn to play properly' (Christopher, 2nd Year, Conservatoire Piano Student). According to his teacher, his 'technique was all wrong and his sight-reading was

non-existent'. Thus, the practices that he had acquired informally were not in line with the practices of Western classical music. He explained how thankful he was for having the teacher point this out to him for otherwise he would not have acquired a place at the conservatoire. One wonders however, what musical pathway he might have pursued had he encountered a jazz piano teacher. His practice might have been less restrictive, but his ability to access a higher music education degree programme may have been curtailed.

Musical habitus as fluid and dynamic can be conceived therefore, as shaped not only by parents or siblings, but sometimes in more profound and significant ways by influential teachers whose ideological assumptions of musical value, knowledge and skills are brought to bear on students' and lecturers' musical trajectories. Thus far, I have discussed how musical enculturation in early childhood as well as formal music education can result in unequal opportunity in applying for and being successful in higher music education. What then, of the experiences of students who had extensive musical backgrounds and those who had little prior formal music education? To what extent were their experiences of higher music education related to their musical backgrounds or prior music education?

**Like a Fish in Water?**

In the student survey, I posed two closed questions on whether students thought that their musical background and music education had had an effect on their experience in higher music education. The vast majority (92% and 90% respectively) answered yes to this question.

A follow-up comment box asking for reasons why, elicited 366 completed answers. Of this sample, 266 (72%) described their experience as affirming and that they enjoyed being challenged; 100 (28%) described their experience as alienating, and a minority felt that they were not being challenged enough. Of the 72% who gave positive/affirming answers, almost half referred specifically to their musical backgrounds and/or music education as a reason for this. Similarly, of the 28% who mentioned having negative experiences, half of this sub-sample referred specifically to their musical backgrounds and prior music education.

Table 3.2 shows a selection of comments from both types of experiences and these illustrate the ways in which the students see a relationship between their experiences in higher music education, their musical backgrounds and/or prior music education. Three cases highlight student experiences that can be described as 'affirming' their musical habituses and

cultural capital. These students felt a natural extension of their previous music education experiences. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) posit:

> ...when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a 'fish in water': it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.127).

In contrast, the three student cases whose experiences could be best described 'alienating' because of their habituses and the 'wrong' kind of cultural capital. They seemed like 'fish *out* of water', so to speak. Encountering an unfamiliar field with unexpected demands, resulted in expressions of insecurity and anxiety. This was also found in a study by Burland and Pitts (2007). Out of the six student cases shown below, only one student referred specifically to his Irish traditional music background. This particular case is rather striking because the student perceives his Irish traditional music background as 'not adequate for the standard being taught here'. Thus, there would appear to be limited agency for the student whose musical habitus and cultural capital or relevant knowledge and skills are not sufficient for negotiating the structural principles and practices of Western classical music.

Table 3.2 Six survey cases that illustrate the **affirmation** and **alienation** in students' experiences of Higher Education

| Total | Affirming | Experience | Musical Background and Prior Music Education | Alienating | Experience | Musical Background and Prior Music Education |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 366 | n:266 (72%) | | | n:100 (28%) | | |
| | S 72: | My musical skills have improved vastly. I have learned in depth different types of musical traditions and used these in my own practice. | My prior education in music has given me the opportunities to learn faster while in my course. | S 67: | I am not going to be keeping on music as an art subject next year as I feel it is too difficult | I believe that my traditional background was not adequate for the standard of music being taught here. |
| | S 149: | It's been fun it doesn't seem like work at all | I have knowledge of all kinds of music so I know what area I want to focus on Thanks to my education I don't struggle in harmony or counterpoint. | S 174: | My experience is quite negative one so far as I find the course very intense at the moment. | I think having prior experience is a must for this college, it is almost impossible to compete with students who have taken lessons and theory classes here in this college since they were young children. |
| | S 200: | Very good experience. The course allows those who are motivated to improve rapidly and those new to the field to learn at a good pace | A private musical education highly prepares you for a music course. Unfortunately I can't say the same for the music course at second level. | S 217: | I have had some difficulty with the narrow constraints of the course. It's very much classical only in terms of how theory and harmony is taught. | Yes I think my lack of formal education in this subject has caused difficulties. Support is practically nonexistent. |

The remaining five students specified prior music education as inhibiting or aiding factors in their experiences. Private instrumental and theory lessons would seem to have given certain students an advantage whereby they can move at a faster pace than their peers and are clearly enjoying the course. By contrast, those who were not enjoying the course referred to the intensity of the learning experience, the Western classical focus, and their compulsion to drop the subject.

Although students equated almost 50% of both affirming and alienating experiences with their musical backgrounds and/or music education, it is important to acknowledge that each individual experience most likely depends on the actual context and the curriculum. For example, students attending a conservatoire had more concerns relating to their level of performance when compared with their peers and in many cases, students in universities had more concerns about their music theory and history knowledge. While the aforementioned cases provide a snapshot, they are by no means intended as a homogenous representation of the students' experiences. What then, of the other half of the sample where alternative reasons were given?

Many students stated that they were enjoying the course despite their knowledge shortcomings and that they were pleased to be gaining knowledge and skills in which they were hitherto deficient, while other students mentioned being determined because of their love for the subject. In the negatively categorised experiences, students stated that they found the workloads difficult, that course content was unappealing, and that they were not prepared for the transition from secondary school.

As illustrated in the student surveys and interviews, students enter higher education with particular musical values, knowledge and skills as influenced by their musical backgrounds and prior music education Their experiences of teaching and learning are thus constructed and construed within the contexts of the *fields* of higher education and the music department. However, learning experiences in the field of higher education are influenced by the musical values associated with musical habitus and cultural capital. Students' prior assumptions of musical value and knowledge are reappraised in the context of an unlevel playing field and point to experiences in an affirming-alienating dialectic. In other words, a sense of affirmation emerges in the accounts of students who possessed *valued* musical knowledge and skills. Conversely, students with less valued knowledge and skills expressed a sense of alienation, throwing into sharp focus the ways in which unequal musical opportunities continue to impact on higher music education.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I examined the ways in which Bourdieu's theoretical tools of habitus, cultural capital and field can further our understanding of how different musical pathways shape students' experiences in higher education. Findings indicate that students whose musical backgrounds were not predominantly Western classical have different but arguably, less relevant cultural capital in the socio-cultural context of music departments where Western classical music predominates. What students bring to the table vis-à-vis their musical backgrounds and music education in conjunction with institutional expectations and curriculum demands, reveal tensions inherent in ideological assumptions of musical value and equal opportunity. It would appear that through the interplay of habitus and cultural capital, students' ability to 'fit into' the socio-cultural context of the field or music department is determined. The questions left unanswered at this stage of the research process pointed to the extent to which statutory music education enables or hinders access, particularly the point of transition from second to higher education level. Thus it is the transition from secondary school music to higher education which provides the focus for the next chapter.

# CHAPTER FOUR
## THE TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION: UNEQUAL OPPORTUNITY?

## Introduction

This chapter explores the extent to which the music curriculum and examination at second level prepares students for higher music education. At the outset of this chapter, I examine the transition from school to university widely discussed in the literature pertaining to the humanities. This is followed by a consideration of the literature on the transition from school music to university music and this sets the context for the presentation of data on the Irish context. Documentary analysis of various reports conducted by the State Examinations' Commission (1999; 2003; 2007), are integrated with similar themes from the survey, interview and focus group data.

As outlined in Chapter One and further investigated in Chapter Three, access to formal music education in Ireland is unequal. Access to instrumental music provision depends on geographical location and economic capital for private tuition. Moreover, the historical and political neglect in the provision of a continuum in formal music education from early childhood to primary and second level (McCarthy, 1997), has allowed unequal access to perpetuate.

Similar to the UK, music at primary level in Ireland is taught mostly by generalist teachers. Such teachers are already charged with delivering a very broad curriculum, thus having excessive demands placed on them. Recurring issues of self-confidence in primary teachers' musical ability (Hennessy, 2000; Holden and Button, 2004; Moore, 2010) can result in avoidance of the teaching of music in pre and post-service contexts. Therefore, the musical experiences a child has at primary level, are largely, dependent on the teacher(s) they encounter. In some classrooms, much music-making occurs; in others, very little music education takes place.

In the Irish secondary school, the music teacher introduces his/her class to music in First Year at the age of twelve. Although a minority within a possible group of twenty-five to thirty students may have experienced private music tuition, others may not have enjoyed similar opportunities. Thus, music at second level in particular, is fraught with challenges for

the teacher and learner. And though it is but one cog in the education system, it has many ramifications for teaching and learning in higher music education.

Consider, for example, the gap between the knowledge acquired at second level and that expected on entry to higher education for students who have relied solely on state education. Students who have had privileged access to private instrumental and theory tuition may be presented with minimal challenges, while those without prior private tuition may struggle to keep up. In acknowledging that the Leaving Certificate Music Examination could be considered by many as a conclusion of their studies at second level, critics have suggested the inappropriateness of regarding the examination as part of a continuum in this regard (MacLiam, cited in Heneghan, 2001). But what about the student who wants to pursue the study of music in higher education? A glimpse at the transition to higher education in the general literature and in music sheds some light on the issue.

## The Transition to Higher Education

The transition from school to university has been researched in areas such as English (Marland, 2003; Smith, 2004) and History (Booth, 1997; 2001). These studies recognize the potential difficulties arising in study skills, note-taking and the importance of the first year experience in student retention. While it is assumed that students will have at least experienced both English and history during their primary and secondary school years, the same cannot be said for subjects which are often classified as optional, for example, languages, science, music, and art.

Gallagher-Brett and Canning (2011) examined the mismatch between foreign language acquisition at school and in university compared to other subjects at A-Level. Interviews with second level teachers and lecturers revealed that unlike disciplines in the humanities, the enhancement of critical thinking and creativity was unavoidably limited, due to the emphasis on the acquisition of language (linguistic) *skills*, such as vocabulary and grammar in order for students to be able to converse and communicate in a new language. In contrast to a subject like English which tends to focus more on *content* such as literature and poetry, language students were not likely to be competent enough linguistically, to understand and evaluate literature in a modern language.

Parallels can be drawn to a certain extent in terms of the acquisition of language skills and musical skills. For example, a child may begin to learn an instrument formally or informally and acquire the ability to perform a piece of music either through notation or by

ear. In both cases, language and music students may be unaware of broader content in terms of literature and music theory for example, thus making the transition to university difficult when such critical analysis is required. Moreover, modern languages and music are often encountered for the first time in formal second-level education. Thus, the demand for more time in the development of skills and content of music or languages is far greater than subjects such as English and History.

**The Transition to Higher *Music* Education**

Few studies in music education have examined the transition to higher music education and the two that I shall focus on here have commonalities despite being decades apart. Hurry (1997) explored the value of A-level music courses as preparation for higher education music courses through a survey of music lecturers in higher education, personnel in the music industry, and both A-level and undergraduate students. Adopting a selective sample of twenty-five universities, colleges and conservatoires, she distributed a questionnaire on all aspects of A-level music. There are four prominent findings that I wish to highlight.

First, success in music theory and graded examinations on entry to higher education was preferred by some lecturers to having A level music. Second, Hurry notes that 'several lecturers commented upon the need for foundation courses in tonal harmony and the history of music to bridge the gap between A-level and music degree courses' (p.32-33). Third, the approach to music history and analysis was deemed too narrow with only a few set works and topics as opposed to a 'highly valued broad-based knowledge and understanding of musical styles' (p.37). Fourth, over half of the lecturers surveyed, conducted rigorous interviews and/or entrance tests with the ability to discuss general music knowledge/interests as the most important criteria, followed by performance and aural tests. Although Hurry does not clarify whether the discussion of general music knowledge pertains to Western classical music only or not, it reflects a high importance placed on propositional knowledge or on knowing *that* (Swanwick, 1999). Moreover, parallels can be drawn from Hurry's study and the debates that occurred on the Leaving Certificate at the Music Education National Debate (2001) which is discussed in more detail shortly.

A study by Winterson and Russ (2009) examined the transition from school to university among undergraduate students and lecturers in music and music technology. Similar to Hurry's study some twelve years previous, lecturers felt that students' skills in music analysis and harmony and counterpoint had weakened, while 22% of students found aspects of

analysis difficult. There was also a tendency for more traditional universities to retain narrow pathways in composition and neglect composition in popular and film music genres. Winterson and Russ (2009) conclude aptly with the conundrum facing higher music education. On the one hand they recommend that higher education:

> should attempt to build on the much wider range of 'musics' that students are now familiar with rather than (over-?) prioritising Western classical and contemporary art music (Winterson and Russ, 2009, p.353, original emphasis).

On the other hand, they caution against basing curriculum changes on consumer demand and a resultant incoherence in curricula. Thus, while both Hurry (1997) and Winterson and Russ (2009) map the context of the transition to higher music education, they do not consider the pertinent issues of accessing musical knowledge and skills and the consequences for higher music education teaching and learning. Although I discuss ideologies of musical value and knowledge in more detail in Chapter Five, from the data explained in Chapter Three, it is necessary to understand the importance of knowledge acquisition in terms of cultural capital, access, and the transition to higher education.

Considering general music knowledge for a moment whereby importance is placed on knowing *that* Chopin was a Polish composer, or *that* the clarinet in Bflat is a transposing instrument. If this type of knowledge is not included at second level, a clear demarcation may exist where those with economic and cultural capital are afforded a distinct advantage on application to music courses where entrance tests require such knowledge. As discussed in students' musical backgrounds in Chapter Three, many students acknowledged the benefit of early enculturation and parental interest in music. It can be argued therefore, that possessing the linguistic codes (Bourdieu, 1977a; Bernstein, 1971) required for the discussion of musical knowledge, whether acquired in the home and/or in the school, confers some students with a distinct advantage over others. Contrast this with a candidate who is self-taught on the guitar for example. While he/she may be as good a performer as someone formally trained and may have a wealth of knowledge of popular music history, he/she may lack general knowledge *about* Western classical music. For example, the nationality of specific composers or *whether* or not Colin Davis is a more accomplished conductor than Neville Mariner. Thus, issues of access and opportunity emerge in considering the role of Irish education policy on the Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus. A critical inquiry into content and assessment changes to this state examination is necessary in order to evaluate the aims and results of said changes.

**Bête Noire? Perceptions of Leaving Certificate Music**

In this section, I examine the differences between the old and new music syllabus in Irish second-level education and increased participation on foot of the changes to the syllabus. In her description of the political rationales for music in Irish education, McCarthy (1997) differentiates between primary school music, which was supportive of nationalist values, and secondary school music, which was the custodian of colonial values through the importance it placed on Western classical music. The perception of music as a difficult subject at second level can be attributed to the strong emphasis on music theory which was similar to conservatoires models in the UK (McCarthy, 1999). Small (1977) was critical of this emphasis in British music education, stating that:

> ...the training of professionals is unfortunately taken to a very large extent as the model for music in education generally, including that of the vast majority who have no intention of making. music a career... thus completing the vicious circle which excludes the majority of children from any significant musical experience in school (Small 1977, p. 194).

The importance placed on Western classical music at second level resulted in the perception of music as elitist since it was presumed that students choosing music would have the means to pursue instrumental tuition privately. The older music syllabi entitled the *Intermediate Certificate* and *Leaving Certificate* focused predominantly on the acquisition of music literacy, composition and dictation skills, with a minor emphasis on performing. Performing an instrument as part of the examination was optional, and comprised a prescribed syllabus of repertoire from the Western classical tradition only. It was compulsory for candidates wishing to perform as part of the Intermediate level examination to have obtained Grade Four (ABRSM standards) and Grade Six at Leaving Certificate level. Thus, dependence on private music tuition in addition to the over-emphasis on music theory and analysis, can be said to have rendered the subject inaccessible. As I will illustrate shortly, the unpopular nature of music was reflected in low numbers of students taking the subject.

The expected knowledge for music students at senior cycle was reflected in the syllabus demands. All students would have studied four-part harmony (SATB writing), two-part counterpoint and they would have composed a 16 bar melody with one modulation or key change. Six complete orchestral set works were to be analysed indepth. The study of Irish traditional music comprised information 'about' traditional Irish instruments, dances, collections and music collectors and other historical facts. Arguably, the ability to engage

with complete scores demanded extensive music literacy skills and the ability to express such analysis in academic essays. Prior to the review of the old Leaving Certificate, a range of problems were identified that lay the blame on the existing syllabus. Among these were the unpopular nature of the subject evidenced by falling student numbers for examination; a higher proportion of females than males at senior cycle; unrealistic levels of attainment in musicianship and theory aspects, and the overall inaccessibility of the subject for the majority of secondary school students (MacLiam, cited in Heneghan, 2001).

A review of the syllabus led to an overhaul of the philosophical assumptions underpinning the old courses. Two new syllabi emerged entitled the *Junior Certificate* (DES, 1991) and the *Leaving Certificate* (DES, 1996). With a strong emphasis on performing, listening and composing as theorised by Swanwick (1979), the new courses stressed a core practical aspect to music making for all students. According to the current syllabi, candidates must perform at both levels on any instrument as solo performer or as part of a group, and have a range of genres from which to choose. In the *Leaving Certificate Syllabus,* candidates may choose performance, listening, composition or music technology as 50% of their overall grade, and therefore have more choice for the practical examination. It could be argued however that the idea of 'choice' conferred within the syllabus also gives the teacher options to avoid covering aspects of the curriculum that their students might relate less favourably to or find more difficult.

As I will go on to stress in Chapters Seven and Eight, debates on the overemphasis of more horizontal or everyday knowledge (Bernstein, 1971) in the curriculum need to occur, to ensure that all students have epistemic access to theoretical or 'powerful knowledge' (Young, 2008). To give an example: an increased focus on performing would seem to have necessitated a reduced focus on set works; consequently, four set works (of which some are particular movements of pieces and not the complete work), comprise some of the new syllabus (see Figure 4.1). These works include three art music works of which one is by a contemporary Irish composer and one popular set work. The set works rotate biennially, thus the popular album 'Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' by The Beatles, rotates with 'Bohemian Rhapsody' by Queen.

A more holistic approach to music teaching and learning has led to different approaches to the assessment of musical techniques such as harmony and counterpoint. As highlighted in Chapter One, such changes were welcomed by music teachers who had seen a steady decline in student numbers in their classrooms. However, as we shall see shortly, music lecturers

cautioned about the possibility of falling standards in music literacy as a consequence of the performing emphasis.

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┌─────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Leaving Certificate │          │ Leaving Certificate │
│       (1974)        │          │       (1996)        │
└─────────────────────┘          └─────────────────────┘
        │                                │
    ┌───┴──────────────────┐        ┌────┴─────────────────┐
    │ Music and Musicianship,│       │     Performing       │
    │       Analysis         │       │     Listening        │
    │                        │       │     Composing        │
    │ Classical Performance  │       │ Students elect to do │
    │ Or Written Project 25% │       │ 50% of one or        │
    │                        │       │ combination of the   │
    └────────────────────────┘       │ above including Music│
                                     │ Technology           │
                                     └──────────────────────┘
    ┌────────────────────────┐       ┌──────────────────────┐
    │ Art Music (6 set works)│       │ Art/Classical (3 set works)│
    │ Irish Traditional Music│       │ Popular (1 set work) │
    │                        │       │ Irish Traditional Music│
    └────────────────────────┘       └──────────────────────┘
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Figure 4.1 Synopsis of Old (1974) and New (1996) Leaving Certificate Curriculum

The uptake of music as an exam subject increased by 66% in a three year period from 1997-1999 (see Figure 4.2). In comparing the numbers taking Leaving Certificate Music in 1998 (1,799) and in 2012 (6,166), an increase of 243% is evident over a fourteen year period. It can be suggested therefore, that music's popularity, as evidenced in the increase in candidates opting to study it, may be attributable to the overall change in content and assessment.

Number of Candidates

7000

6000

5000

4000

3000

2000

1000

1990    1995    2000    2005    2010    2015
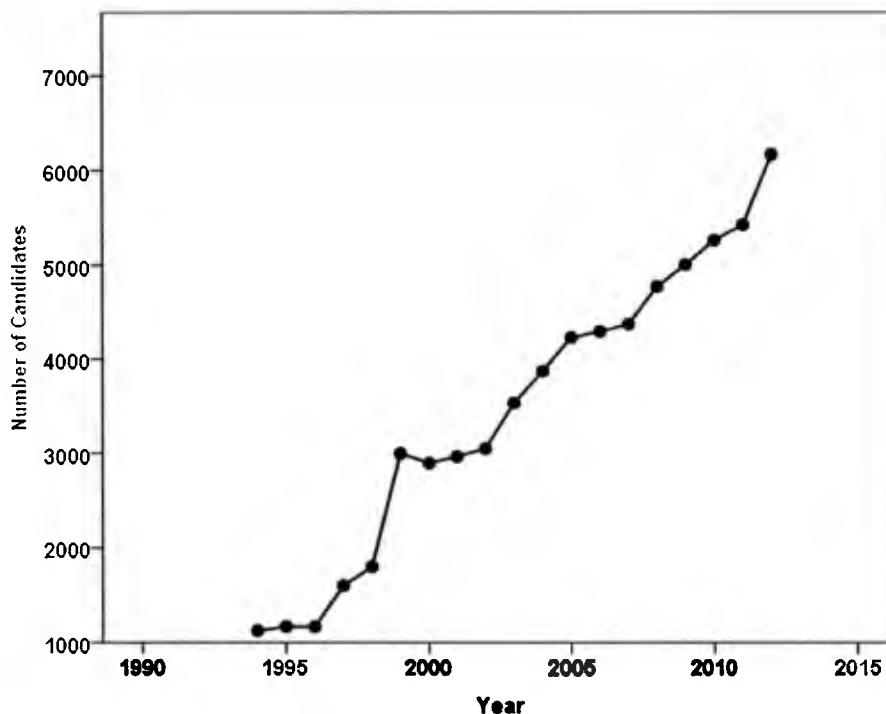
Year

**Figure 4.2.** Candidates for Leaving Certificate Music over two three year periods (1994-1996, old course); (1997-1999, new course) and most recently 2012

Notwithstanding the surge in second-level student participation, criticisms abounded about perceived problems of radical alterations to the curriculum at second level and these manifested most prominently in the Music Education National Debate (MEND).

*MEND and the Leaving Certificate Debate*

A lack of statutory music education provision which had concerned practising musicians, music educators, and musicologists in Ireland for many years, gave rise to an international forum on music education entitled the Music Education National Debate (MEND). Convened at the College of Music, Dublin Institute of Technology, over three stages between 1995 and 1996, the proceedings were collated and summarised in a subsequent report by Frank Heneghan (2001). The quest for establishing 'a universal philosophy' in the remit of the forum highlights an inherent ideological assumption that an overarching philosophy would pave the way for music education in Ireland. For example, O'Flynn (2005, 198) criticised the editing of the proceedings emphasising that its narrative was '. . . hierarchised by a classically oriented conception of musicality'. Thus in attempting to arrive at a coherent and comprehensive philosophy as basis rationale, MEND could be best described as a watershed

event in the ways in which contested ideologies of musical value were brought to bear within the lengthy discussions.

The timing of the proceedings coincided with the newly published Leaving Certificate Syllabus in 1996. Describing the new syllabus as the 'bête noire' during MEND discussions, Heneghan (2001) highlighted what he regarded as the unchallenging nature or 'easiness' of the revised programme and its overemphasis on performing stating: 'not all students are performers or want to give it the time' (Heneghan, 2001, p. 253). The concept of music as process, according to Heneghan (2001, p.254), had the potential to give rise to '... a disincentive to the crucial high-fliers who are most likely to enter the profession (and therefore to be critical to the well-being of music as a school subject in the future)'.

Barra Boydell, then Lecturer of Music at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, also raised concerns about the new syllabus and implications for those teaching in higher education the same year MEND was published. He echoed Heneghan's (2001) concerns about the new syllabus and implications for those teaching in higher education thus:

> The new syllabus may encourage musical self-expression and creativity, but in a manner that does not demand more than the most basic ability to read or write music. This ability (i.e. musical literacy) may be largely irrelevant to popular music, which is aurally based, but to what extent should the demands of a state-sponsored musical education be determined by the least challenging forms of music? Should not such a syllabus challenge and expand the minds of students, providing them with the means for a deeper appreciation of the wealth of musics that both the past and the present offer us? (Boydell 2001, p.22)

One could surmise that Boydell's description of popular music as 'the least challenging forms of music' refers to the minimal necessity for literacy skills and its apparent lack of structural and harmonic complexity. As I will argue further in Chapter Five, such ideological iterations of musical value so intimately tied to a hierarchy of musical knowledge and skills (see also Johnson 2002) reflect a Eurocentric view of music education. An opposing viewpoint to that of Boydell emerged in a reply article by Irish jazz musician and teacher, Ronan Guilfoyle who stated:

> The new Leaving Certificate has shown just how inadequate the range of options for students of music at third level really is. The third-level institutions in Ireland allow only one music form to be studied - this is not only an outdated philosophy, but also one that makes no sense on economic grounds for someone wishing to have a career in music. (Guilfoyle 2001, p. 24)

Such contrasting statements highlight the ways in which ideologies of musical value have been contested in the Irish context. On one hand, students' unpreparedness for the study of music in higher education is attributed to the changed content and assessment of the Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus. On the other hand, it can be argued that the hegemonic position of Western classical music in higher education, reflects the limitations of music lecturers' ability to teach students from diverse musical backgrounds as well as curtailing students' potential career pathways.

**Unequal Opportunity in Performing?**

As mentioned earlier, the most significant change to music syllabi at second level was the introduction of a compulsory performing element for all students. The philosophical basis of including performing for all is to be lauded, after all in the absence of performance, music, as a conduit of human expression would be meaningless. That secondary school students might be attracted to a syllabus in which active music-making lies at its core, makes the idea of performance all the more accessible and exciting. Indeed, it may account for the surge in candidates opting for the subject in 1999 and beyond. Yet critics questioned who was responsible for preparing students for a performing examination element (Heneghan, 2001). How, and by whom was it to be funded? Would instruments be provided, or was it entirely the remit of the music teacher to provide the performing components? When asked about the unrealistic dimensions to implementing a performing component to a curriculum without infrastructure for concurrent instrumental tuition, MacLiam (1995) stated:

> We cannot, and are not attempting, to measure the standards of groups by the standards of those individually-taught pupils, nor do I think that the state has the resources to provide the equity of free individual tuition for all Music students, although I would be more than delighted to be proved wrong in this regard sometime in the future. At present, however, the syllabus and its assessment have got to be pitched to the achievement level of those being taught fully in non-specialist classroom situations. (MacLiam, 1995, Document 113, MEND)

Thus it was assumed that the music teacher would endeavour to ensure that all students be competent performers. In this way, equal expectations of privately taught pupils could not be measured in examinations against those taught in classrooms. As a former secondary music teacher, I know first-hand the demands made on music teachers to conduct after-school group and choir practices in order to achieve a competent performance. However, I also

acknowledge the flexibility that group and solo performance opportunities can provide in order to achieve meaningful engagement with musical performance, albeit often rushed to meet the examination deadline.

In interviews, I asked students their experiences of the Leaving Certificate Syllabus and examination. Sadhbh, a first year student in a college of education, explained how the system seemed to operate in practice for students who did not have access to private music tuition:

> *Sadhbh (1ˢᵗ Year, Classical Music Background)*
> It becomes a very elitist subject because people go, I don't play anything, so I'm no good at it... like I would say I don't think you could get an A in your Leaving Cert had you not had private lessons. I'd say it would be even difficult to get a B because they do very little of it in school... and then much of the other stuff you're just taught enough to get through so yeah, I found that it was kind of elitist... it was easy for me and the other people who had had lessons since they were younger...they did well in music...

Similar findings were reported by Wright (2002) who found that pupils felt at a disadvantage on a GCSE music course without extra-curricular instrumental tuition. Moreover, in her survey of GCSE pupils, the aspirations of a syllabus for all students regardless of background was paradoxically found to be serving only a few. Congruent with the findings of this study, were prevailing perceptions of the subject as both elitist and insufficiently academically challenging. Consequently, one has to question the aspiration of offering a syllabus that in theory gives perceived choice and inclusivity, but in practice fails the students coming to school without cultural capital, or what the school expects but 'does not give' (Bourdieu, 1977, p.494).

Despite the lack of infrastructure and state financial support for instrumental tuition in secondary schools, numbers of students presenting with a 50% performance major in the Leaving Certificate examination has increased. In 1999, 2,543 students took the higher level music option and of this number, 2,097 chose performing as their elective. This trend is consistent and since 2003, over 95% of Higher Level candidates have opted for the elective in performing.

The popularity of performing would seem to contradict the view of Heneghan who in the MEND Report stated: 'Not all students are performers, or rather want to give it the time' (Heneghan 2001, p.253). Heneghan's conceptualisation of a performer is unclear but he would seem to imply that in order to become a performer, one must give it considerable time, and by this, one might assume intense practice over a long period akin to the disciplined practice of Western classical musicians. I would argue however that it is possible to agree

with his assertion that 'not all *are* performers' (my emphasis), or that not all will feel comfortable performing in an examination situation. Nor should it be presupposed that in order to be musical, one must be an excellent performer. Nonetheless, given the data from the State Examinations Commission presented earlier, it would seem that 95% of students *are choosing* to perform, and as data will shortly show, 95% of students' performances merit grades from C upwards.

Considering the increase in student numbers opting for Leaving Certificate, how ought a music teacher facilitate preparation for an examination in performing, in addition to other syllabus demands such as listening and composing? Presuming a proportion of students in the class will be lucky enough to avail of private instrumental/vocal tuition, it could be argued that in attempting to be inclusive, more disadvantage than advantage, and more inequality than equality is being created. To stress performance while not being in a position to provide for it adequately within the context of the music timetable - which most commonly comprises two periods per week - is but one challenge for both student and teacher. More significantly however, is that this lacuna highlights the lack of foresight on the part of policy-makers to provide adequate infrastructure for instrumental provision. Of course it is important to acknowledge the informal learning practices of second-level students and the inherent possibilities in facilitating such learning at second level so successfully applied by Green (2008b). However, when it comes to examination, one has to question the outcomes inherent in aspirations of an equal playing field.

The notion of elitism in music was frequently raised by students during interviews with regard primarily to gaining access to performing opportunities, and not related to music literacy as one might assume, though it could be said that in many cases both go hand-in-hand. However, it begs the following question. Is it elitist, for example, to demand high standards and insist on the development of music literacy skills as well as participation in choral/instrumental programmes, or is it simply that the elitist tag appears whenever it is evident that the system favours those with the ability to pay? The notion that music *itself* is elitist proves false when positive outcomes in outreach music projects in disadvantaged areas (see for example, Kenny and Moore, 2011) serve as an indication of the potential that exists when funds and resources are made available. Thus, elitism as it emerged in the data from this study can be best defined as directly relating to the cultural and economic capital that some families have in accessing private instrumental or theory tuition.

**Students' Perceptions of the 'Easiness' of the Leaving Certificate Syllabus**

In order to pursue the charge of the 'easiness' of the revised Leaving Certificate Syllabus made by White (1998), Heneghan (2001) and Boydell (2001), I investigated this further in the survey and in interviews with students. On the questionnaire, students were asked to rank their level of ease with the study of music at Leaving Certificate level. Over half of the sample described the subject as easy, a minority (10%) found it difficult and just under a third of students described it as 'neither easy nor difficult'. Although not directly related to the central argument in the study, I digress for a moment to mention an interesting associated factor with the level of ease reported with the Leaving Certificate. Curiously, as Figure 4.2 illustrates, a positive association following chi-square test (p<.000) was revealed between the level of ease with music at Leaving Certificate and male students. Here we see that more males than females find the course 'easy' and not one of the 36% of male students in the survey ticked the 'difficult' option. However, as Figure 4.3 shows, this association was not as prominent in experiences of the higher music education courses.
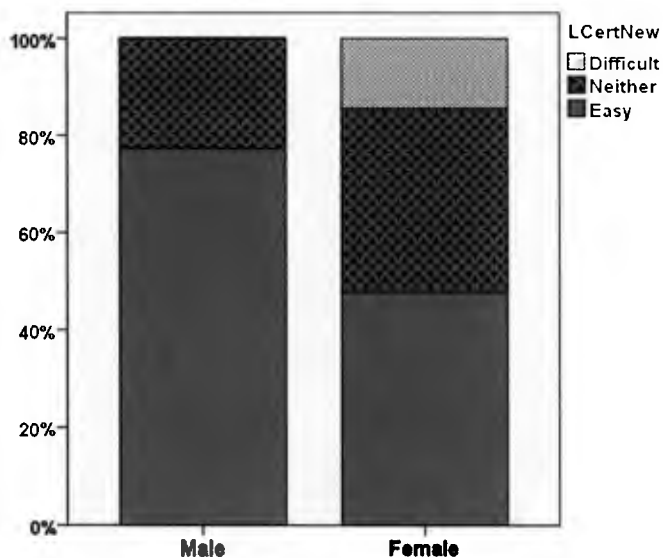


**Figure 4.3** Positive association between Level of Ease with the Leaving Certificate and Gender

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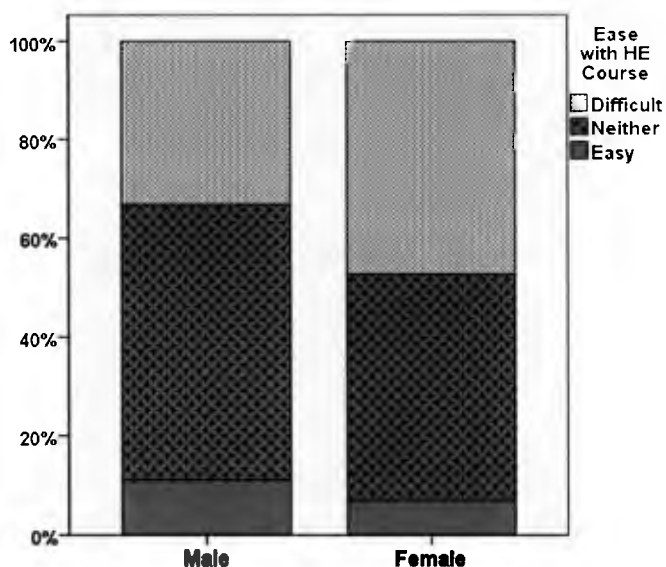
**Figure 4.4** Less association between Level of Ease with the HE Course and Gender

What do both results suggest? It would seem that the standardised content and assessment of the Leaving Certificate Examination would point to more validity in the association between level of ease and gender. Certainly, the level of ease with the higher music education courses will depend on the type of course and the curriculum encountered. Therefore, the results in Figure 4.3 are more subjective, and will most likely depend on a number of different variables. Perhaps the finding in Figure 4.2 might allude to enjoyment and confidence in learning Leaving Certificate Music among more males than females. While the results in Figures 4.2 and 4.3 are of interest, they were not directly related to the aims of this study. Therefore, they were not further probed or investigated. Further research might investigate the relationship between gender and experiences of second-level music.

When asked to provide a reason(s) for their answer to the question to the level of ease with music at Leaving Certificate level, students referred in some cases specifically to the content of the syllabus, their extra-curricular music education, pedagogy and specific teachers, and preparing for the examination. In interrogating the data from those who described the Leaving Certificate Music as 'easy', just over half of this sub-sample referred to the 50% of marks allocated to the performing component of the examination, while a third mentioned rote learning as a factor.

Qualitative comments described the content in terms of its easiness in differing ways, for example some students referred to the memorisation of course content, while others

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mentioned the advantage of having extra-curricular music education. The minority of students who found it difficult alluded to the amount of content they needed to catch up on or cover in a short period of time (two years) having had no prior music education and what they described as 'bad' teaching:

Table 4.1 Qualitative Comments on Leaving Certificate

| Difficult | Easy |
| --- | --- |
| 'Bad' teaching (18 mentions) | Private Tuition (86 mentions) |
| Insufficient theory (15 mentions) | Practical worth 50% (48 mentions) |
| Late starters (7 mentions) | Basic knowledge required (45 mentions) |
|  | Enjoyable (25 mentions) |

It would seem then, that those who found the course 'easy', specified issues pertaining to knowledge that concerned those at the MEND debate as well as the elitist privilege of accessing private tuition. Ironically, this was the same charge that was cast at the older music syllabus. The advantage of private tuition would seem to make the course easier for those who wish to perform for 50% of the assessment. Unsurprisingly, students who found music difficult were those who started music study later in their teens and who found music theory difficult to grasp. Mentioned on eighteen different surveys, the issue of 'bad' teaching was not always qualified with a reason and those that did, stated that the teacher was unable to differentiate for mixed abilities or that the teacher's music theory knowledge was insufficient. Important however to acknowledge, is the unenviable role of the secondary music teacher attempting to cater for experienced students, newcomers, and of course, ensuring that time be allocated to rehearsing the performance component of the examination in class. It is also uncertain as to whether the increased pressure exerted on music teachers to include time for performance rehearsals in class has had an effect on other aspects of the curriculum. Nonetheless the themes of rote learning, lack of creativity, limited content, the ability to waffle, and a lack of comprehension emerged from the student survey comments, a snapshot of which are presented here:

S109:  It's not challenging, way too easy to predict compared to schools/GCSE's/A-levels in UK it's embarrassingly easy to get a B1 or A2.

S111:   It is plagued with people who take it because it is easy and most of them aren't musicians. The course doesn't give an overview as to what music is, it's like watered down music lessons where there's no real learning curve.

Increasing pressure would seem to be exerted from schools, parents, and pupils to ensure that all content is covered so that students can attempt to achieve high grades. The following comment illustrates how meaningless rote-learning of facts as a consequence of the assessment, can deny students access to the comprehension of such musical knowledge:

S138:   There was no actual comprehension of anything musical needed for the course. The teacher showed us what we had to learn to regurgitate on the day of the examination. No one needed to know why a *tierce de picardie* was used at the cadence or even what it was.

Data from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions provided more indepth narrative on the students' views. In terms of how music compared to other subjects, Áine says:

> *Áine (1ˢᵗ Year, Bimusical background)*
> I think music isn't looked upon as the same value as another subject such as biology or physics or whatever but at least if you do physics class in secondary school, you'll know what you're going into in college, it's just like a step up whereas, this is a mile ahead do you know that kind of way?...lots of the class were just not prepared, its miles apart...

Lecturers were asked their opinion, if any, on the content and assessment of the syllabus and whether they thought students expected the same content in higher education. Similar to the students' comments and interview excerpts, many iterations of rote learning appeared along with a perceived lack of music theory and aural skills at Leaving Certificate level. The narrow approach to music history and analysis was criticised by many lecturers for the resultant disparate knowledge with which students seemed to emerge. In general, reservations that were expressed in the MEND report regarding the revised syllabus over a decade ago, were mirrored in the data from lecturers. These included: the easiness of the subject and the imbalance of high grades leading to unrealistic expectations in higher education; the lack of continuum from primary through to Higher Education; and shortcomings in basic music literacy and aural skills.

L23: It has been dumbed down to such an extent that students are no longer equipped to tackle a third level music degree programme without remedial classes on for example, very basic music theory (such as major/minor scales, key and time signatures, triads). In the area of performance the general standard required is much lower than it was 20+ years ago. In the academic area of music history students are neither equipped to deal with this in an acceptable academic manner (subjectivity appears to have taken over from objectivity)...

In contrast, the following lecturer welcomes students who wish to pursue music after their positive encounter with secondary school and the Leaving Certificate. Moreover, he embraces the idea of teaching students 'from scratch', thus while acknowledging that this takes more time for students, it is implicit in this comment that the lecturer is happy to accommodate diversity and factors this in his pedagogy:

L28: I like the fact that so many students wish to study music based perhaps on good LC results and an apparent emphasis on performance. This we are happy to build on. The musical techniques more or less need to begin from scratch but this is largely not a problem (it's our job!). Similarly, it takes a good while for students to transition from 'prescribed' formulaic musicology essays to independent critical and reflective approaches. But this is to be expected.

On encountering numerous iterations of high grades and easiness in the data along with anecdotal evidence of the proliferation of high grades, I set about examining the most recent figures and grades awarded to students in the Leaving Certificate (Higher Level) in 2012 as issued by the State Examination's Commission. In comparing data across subjects, I collated data from three subjects (Art, Physics, Music) that shared similar numbers of candidates and that most likely would have been encountered for the first time formally in secondary school. Table 4.2 shows that music surpasses art by 14% and physics by 21% in the percentage of A-C grades awarded. Indeed, a tiny minority were awarded a D grade in music and a mere twenty-two students out of 5,427 failed the subject.

**Table 4.2** Number of Candidates and Aggregate Grades in Art, Physics, Music (Higher Level) in 2012

| | Art | | Physics | | Music | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **No. of Candidates** | 7,857 | | 4,753 | | 5,427 | |
| **Grades** | | | | | | |
| A | 5% | Cumulative A-C grades **80%** | 19.8% | Cumulative A-C grades **73%** | 15.7% | Cumulative A-C grades **94%** |
| B | 33% | | 29% | | 52.5% | |
| C | 41% | | 25% | | 26% | |
| D | 16% | | 18% | | 4.9% | |
| E/F/NG | 1.6% | | 8.1% | | .4% | |
| | **n=125** | | **n=385** | | **n=22** | |

**Points: A1=100; A2=90; B1=85; B2=80; B3=75; C1=70; C2=65; C3=60; D1=55; D2=50; D3=45**

At the bottom Table 4.2 is the allocation of points per grade, and as explained in Chapter One, the cumulative number of points collated from each subject mark as deciders for higher education course entry. It would seem that if a student wished to gain more points at Leaving Certificate level (as suggested by a student above) without risk of failure or a low grade, music would be a safe bet.

In the MEND report, Heneghan (2001) recorded the dissenting voices who cautioned at radical changes to the Leaving Certificate Curriculum because of the possibility that students would take the subject, not because they really wanted to, but because it might assist in the collection of points towards courses unrelated to music. That the perceived 'easiness' of the subject would lead to unsatisfactory teaching circumstances at second level and a mismatch of expectations on entry to higher education was also recorded. In student interviews, I wished to ascertain how the Leaving Certificate Music course might compare to other subjects in terms of preparing students for higher music education. In an interview with Thomas, a mature student with a degree in mathematics and five music diplomas (in piano teaching and performance, organ, accompaniment, and harmony and counterpoint), he explained how it compared with his mathematics degree:

> *Thomas (3$^{rd}$ Year, Classical MusicBackground)*
> ... it's certainly not useful for if you wanted to go do music in college which is the probably the biggest issue I'd have with it...like my degree was maths so doing honours maths really does set you up to start college...I don't think the Leaving Cert music course really helps you in any way...the fact that you never do any theory like...it should be grade five theory standard.

Thomas' views were unsurprising given his extensive musical background. Therefore, it was necessary to probe this issue with a very different type of music student. Simon, another mature student, was unable to access music in his secondary school as being an all boys' school, it was simply not offered. As a self-taught guitarist who began playing in his teenage years, he used redundancy money to pay for music theory and classical guitar prior to beginning college in order to have the requisite knowledge and skills. He referred specifically to his own expectations of knowledge and how he seemed more prepared than the students from secondary schools:

> *Simon (2nd Year, Pop/rock Background now Classical)*
> It was quite an eye opener 'cos I walked into the college going oh my god I'm going to be absolutely destroyed in this college... you know that kind of way? All these people are going to be incredible and then I was sitting in a composition class going is this it?...whether it was the curriculum in secondary school or whatever they didn't seem prepared for what was going on.

In the case of Thomas and Simon, their very different musical backgrounds find commonality in their views on the Leaving Certificate Syllabus. Although both had differing levels of access to formal music education at second level, both interview excerpts demonstrate that they shared similar expectations with regard to the knowledge and skills required in the pursuit of higher education degree.

**Choosing Music in Higher Education**

Discourse in the MEND report had cautioned the possibility of prospective students' unrealistic expectations on entry to higher education and that students would simply choose music as part of an arts degree because they had achieved a high grade at Leaving Certificate level. One of the questions I posed on the survey, was to give a reason for choosing music as a subject in higher education. Of the 80% who answered this question, a range of reasons were given from ones which might be expected, to some quite bizarre. Following an analysis of the reasons given, Table 4.3 illustrates eight recurring themes and the number of mentions:

Table 4.3 Students' reasons for choosing music in higher education

| Reasons for choosing music in higher education | Number of Mentions |
|---|---|
| Passion and Love for Music | 137 |
| Interest in Music; for Enjoyment | 135 |
| Career and Money Prospects | 67 |
| Expand Knowledge and Skills | 41 |
| By Accident/Default/no Idea | 21 |
| Easy Subject in School | 18 |
| Musical Background – Predordained Destiny | 15 |
| Influenced by Teacher | 5 |

While I expected the top four reasons for studying music, some of the other reasons took me by surprise. Given the suggestion by one lecturer that students might be choosing music because it was perceived as a 'nice easy pastime', I investigated the comments that referred specifically to the subject as 'easy' and those that didn't know why they chose it at all:

S82:    I thought that it'd be a nice subject.

S143:   It was an easy way to get a good grade in a LC subject as well as going on to develop my music education

S279:   I'm not really sure. It was my highest mark in my leaving cert and I wanted to pursue it while I was young.

Students who referred to expanding their knowledge and skills mentioned improving on what they had acquired in childhood or in secondary school. For example, some students specified a desire to improve particular skills or musicological and historical knowledge. Others stated that they chose music because they wanted to learn how to read music. While these comments were in the minority, they were nonetheless unexpected in light of the perceptions of what the study of music in higher education ought to entail, and how it might differ from studying a different subject, for example, physics for the first time. They also pointed to a lack of theoretical knowledge that students without private instrumental/theory tuition seemed to have. Other students mentioned the jump to higher education from the Leaving Certificate:

S34:    I feel that not having done music theory in secondary school has affected me a lot and caused me to fall behind in theory classes.

S91:  I had no music theory coming into this course and had to be treated accordingly which made me very stressed and lost. I think music theory should have been a requirement.

S227:  I couldn't follow university level music based on secondary school education alone. I am mostly using knowledge from my piano lessons.

S280:  The difference between learning music in second and third level is huge; college music seems to focus on the aesthetic effects of music while in second focuses on getting good results. However, the music I studied outside of school has benefited me for this course.

The last two comments illustrate how private music education has given the students an advantage, such that state music education appears to be failing the first two students. The undemanding nature of the Leaving Certificate Syllabus as predicted by Heneghan and others in the MEND discussions, resonated in student comments in relation to the standard of theory required on entry to the course. Evident in these comments is the mismatch between secondary school music theoretical content and expectations in higher education, but also the implicit privileging of those with more relevant cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

The mismatch echoes the views of Boydell (2001) and Heneghan (2001) on the reduced emphasis on theoretical knowledge at Leaving Certificate level. And although conservative, such ideological assumptions of Western classical values, shed light on the crux of the problem, which as I see it, is disjunctive on two levels.

First, the more inclusive, praxial focus at second-level music education would seem to have contributed to lacunae in the teaching of notation and theory. Moreover, the current configuration and assessment of music at Leaving Certificate level provides students with less cultural capital on entry to the field or music department than their peers who have had conservatoire training. Second, students' contrasting experiences of ease with theory, doubt in regard to their musicality, and self-esteem would seem to be constructed in the context of self and lecturer expectations, curriculum content, peers and in the context of the values of the music department.

**Conclusion**

From the student and lecturer views, it could be suggested that the assessment of music learning at Leaving Certificate not only drives the way in which it is taught, but also the ways in which knowledge and skills become compartmentalised with many students lacking a basic

understanding of music theory and history on entry to higher education. Coupled with the perception that music is 'easy' in comparison to other subjects and seems infamous for the high level of A grades awarded, it could be suggested that the status of music as a subject has become devalued. In addition, the students who had the opportunity to study instrumental music and music theory privately, described their 'boredom' with the syllabus and the advantage this gave them on entry to music in higher education. Thus, in attempts to make the subject more accessible and inclusive for second level students by devising a new syllabus, the gap between accessibility at second and higher education levels is consequently even wider. For a greater chasm now exists between second-level music education and that expected on entry to higher education music courses, thus posing many challenges for teaching and learning.

# CHAPTER FIVE
# MUSICAL VALUE, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

## Introduction

What counts as knowledge and knowing in music education has been contested among music educators for many years. Music education philosophy has questioned musical knowledge and the idea of curriculum (Reimer, 1970, 1989, 2003; Elliott, 1995; Swanwick, 1999), while cognitive psychologists (Gardner, 1983, 1999; Hallam, 2001, 2010), have examined cognitive music processes and their implications for music education. Those concerned with the social construction of what we conceive as reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1971) address issues such as the mutually dependent primary and secondary socialisation of individuals in the acquisition of role-specific knowledge and vocabularies. Different conclusions are often drawn when we address what counts as knowledge in higher education (Barnett and Coate, 2005) and this debate is perhaps even more contested when we ask what ought to count as knowledge in an undergraduate music degree.

In Chapter Two, I examined how traditional conceptions of music education promoted the idea of music as autonomous product and the music education as aesthetic education philosophy. As documented in Chapters Three and Four, students' and lecturers' diverse musical pathways give rise to challenges to the teaching and learning of music in higher music education. In this chapter, I examine ideologies of musical value and knowledge in light of the data from student and lecturer surveys, interviews and focus group discussions. In addition, students' and lecturers' attitudes to, and values of musical knowledge and skills are probed.

Although I have already briefly explored ideological assumptions of Western classical music and Irish traditional music within the Irish historical context, I have not yet included where popular music, jazz, and world music feature in the students' and lecturers' opinions. It is important to reiterate that while many studies have explored assumptions of musical value in other areas of formal music education, very few have investigated the arena of higher education in this regard. This constitutes a very different field, as it is believed that someone embarking on higher education qualification will emerge at the end of their journey with an academic qualification in music.

The journey may end at this point or it may continue to postgraduate level but either way it is presupposed that the graduate will be equipped for further intellectual, musical or personal endeavour. In this chapter, I highlight student and lecturer perspectives on musical value and consider these implications not only for the current context of Irish higher music education, which will be the focus of Chapter Seven, but also for the value of music as a discipline. To begin, I explore Green's (1988; 2008a) theory of musical meaning and value and how theories of musical knowledge relate to issues of access and opportunity in higher education. I then examine students' and lecturers' beliefs about musical value, knowledge, and skills with particular reference to the emphasis given and importance placed on these in course content.

**Musical Meaning and Value**

Green (1988; 2008a) theorises that musical experience operates in a dialectic of inherent and delineated musical meaning. She defines inherent musical meaning as the organised interrelationships between the sounds of music which are perceived and recognised by the listener. There is a relationship between the sounds and form of those sounds, and a relationship between the listener's musical experience and their ability to recognise or conceive some inherent meanings. Green (1988; 2008a) explains that while the *inherent* aspect of musical meaning enables us to distinguish music from sounds, it is also inextricably bound to the social context in which it was created and in which it is received. Thus, she suggests a second aspect of musical meaning to which she ascribes the term *delineated*. The extra-musical connotations that music carries, for example memories from our past, our education, family, and taste, can be described as delineated. Most pertinently, '...music delineates along with its other meanings, diverse and often mutually exclusive social groups of listeners, their social class and their status' (2008a, p.48). Therefore, we have positive and negative responses to inherent or delineated meanings.

When we are unfamiliar with the music's syntax and style, we can have a negative response to the music's inherent meanings and if we cannot relate to the music, we can have a negative response to delineations of the music, and the social groups we associate with the music, for example the perceived misogynistic tendencies of rap. Green argues that as the delineations of much popular music were associated with teenage rebellion and drugs, they were slow to be included on any music curriculum. More critically, the ways in which school music based on such ideologies of musical value tended to resonate with pupils from social

class backgrounds that 'equipped them with commensurate practices and values regarding classical music' (Green, 2005, p.85). Students coming from working class backgrounds and who felt alienated from classical music, were assumed to lack interest and ability when this was often not the case. In fact, many were already involved in informal music learning outside of the music classroom.

In Green's (2002a) research on how popular musicians learn and the application of informal learning practices to classroom pedagogy (Green, 2008b), she posits that the inherent meanings associated with the Western classical tradition are distinct to that of vernacular musics. We cannot analyse the form and syntax of both musics in the same manner as inevitably, one will appear much more simple and repetitive. Moreover, in teaching popular music in this way, we only serve to attribute negative delineations towards musics with which pupils easily identify.

Concerning autonomy and music, Green (2005) suggests that if we focus our attention on the informal learning process '...we allow an engagement with musical inherent meanings as a theoretical aspect of virtual musical autonomy from social musical contexts' (p.19). In other words, when engaging in aural informal learning of the musical materials for example, the rhythmical changes or melodic contour, pupils' attention is virtually freed from the social context. In this way, pupils have some ownership of bringing the music into being and can therefore, delineate their own content. While Green's view is that both inherent and delineated meanings correspond and that neither can exist without the other (1988; 1999), she also argues that in experiencing inherent meaning, our presuppositions concerning delineation can change (Green, 2005, p.5). Even though music relies on society for its existence, it is precisely the objective properties of music, that evoke various responses in us. While not directly relevant at this point, I expand on this argument in Chapter Seven.


**Students and Lecturers Beliefs about Musical Value**

Stemming from Green's research, I wanted to ascertain whether students' and lecturers' beliefs about musical value related to their conceptions of musical knowledge and skills (the inherent meaning) and the wider social perceptions of music genres (delineated meaning). In this section, I present data from the student and lecturer surveys in which I asked two questions related to musical genre and musical knowledge and skills within the higher music education curriculum. The first question asked students and lecturers to choose the emphasis that most closely resembled that of the current curricular emphasis on each musical genre

(most, some, least) and the level of emphasis that should be given to each genre within higher music education in general (see Appendix A). Emphasis was defined as the amount of time, credits, or modules allocated to each genre within the curriculum. They were also invited to give a reason for their answers. In subsequent student and lecturer interviews, I probed the findings further to see why they thought particular genres were given more or less emphasis than others.

*Western Classical Music*

When the data were inputted onto SPSS, it became apparent that the majority of students and lecturers ticked Western classical music as given 'most emphasis' on the courses on which they study/teach (see Figure 5.1). Four students who were studying a degree in Irish traditional music thought it was 'not applicable' and a further 7% (25) ticked that it was given the 'least emphasis' on the course. No lecturer ticked 'not applicable', moreover 91% chose the most emphasis box. When asked what emphasis they thought ought to be on the course, the results did not differ significantly between students and lecturers. The majority of both groups were of the view that Western classical music ought to be given 'most emphasis'. The percentage of students who had ticked the 'least emphasis' box in the first part of the question, reduced from 7% to 2% in the second part of the question, implying that some students were of the view that more emphasis ought to be given to this genre in higher education.
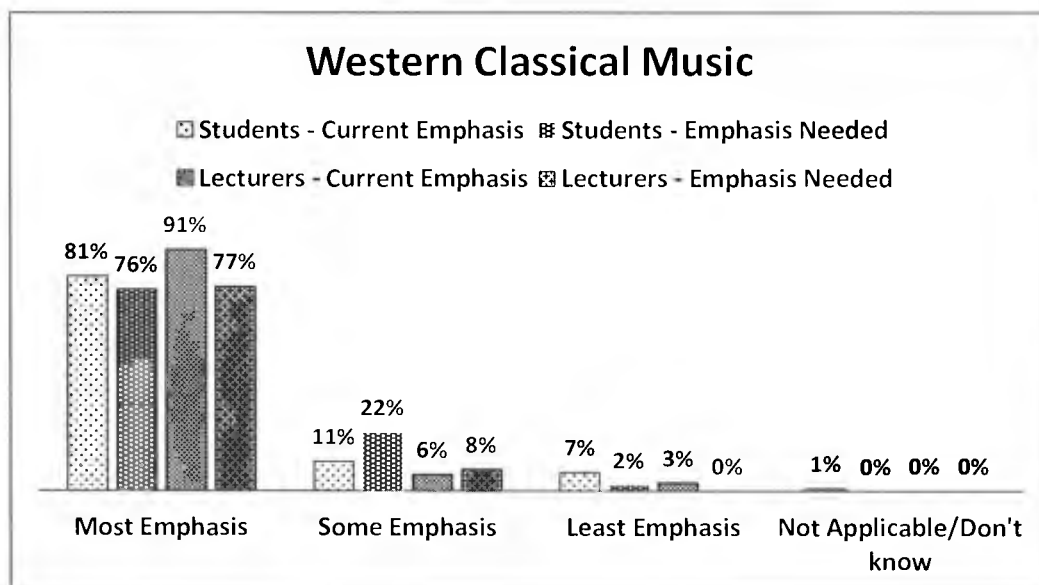


**Figure 5.1** Emphasis that is currently given and should be given to Western classical music

Many of the student and lecturer surveys included iterations of classical music as the 'foundation' of all musics from which all other musical genres could be better understood. A minority of students stated the contrary; that folk music influenced classical. Other lecturer surveys mentioned restrictions with regard to modularisation and reduced time thus, having to prioritise certain genres such as Western classical over others.

*Student Survey*

S21:   Western art music is the greatest music written in history.

S205:  I find classical music ideal as a platform for understanding all musics, therefore I think most emphasis should be placed on it while moderate emphasis is placed on exploring individual aspects of other music.

*Lecturer Survey*

L6:    I believe Western classical is the best foundation and makes learning all the other listed styles easier. Musical skills relevant to all facets of music can be learned through Western classical. Electroacoustic, jazz, pop all important. Irish music should be central I believe though it doesn't need as much time as classical.

When analysing the quantitative tick boxes and qualitative comments from student and lecturer surveys I noticed some contradictory aspects in their views. For example, Western classical music was deemed worthy of *most emphasis* yet when I collated the qualitative data, such views were in the minority. To illustrate this in more detail: 70% of students mentioned that more genres *ought* to be included on the curriculum in higher education and just 14% gave answers to the contrary, yet their quantitative answers prioritised Western classical. Similarly, in the lecturer surveys over half of the sample stated the need for a broadening of genres, yet classical ranked highest in terms of the emphasis it ought to be given. It would seem that students and lecturers see the need for a broader curriculum in terms of genre, but still want to retain a predominant focus on Western classical music.

*Irish Traditional Music*

From the analysis of Figure 5.2, it is clear that both students and lecturers agree that Irish traditional music should have more emphasis than is currently the case. Just under half of the students and over a third of lecturers think that is currently given the least emphasis. The fact

that Irish traditional music is currently 'not-applicable' can be explained by it simply not applying to the study of classical music at conservatoires and one university.
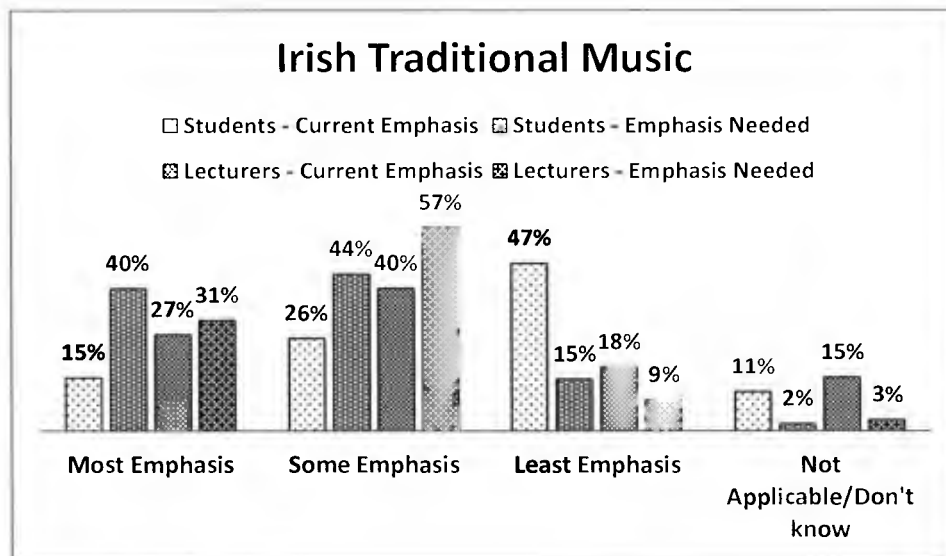


**Figure 5.2** Emphasis that is currently given and should be given to Irish Traditional Music

In the qualitative comments, references were made specifically to the Irish sense of identity and a sense of ownership and nationalist identity. What we can ascertain from this data is that Irish traditional music is seen to be of more cultural value than popular music. The following survey comments illustrate this further:

*Student Survey*

S208:   Our native music is Irish traditional and so far it hasn't been mentioned in any one of my lectures!

S286:   Being an Irish university I think we should at least have one module in Irish trad, but we don't which is disappointing as I play trad myself.

*Popular Music*

In terms of perceptions, students and lecturers believe that popular music gets short shrift in higher education where almost half of both samples said that it is currently given the least emphasis, and only 8% of students giving it most emphasis. From the lecturers' perspectives, popular is currently given more emphasis than students think. This is represented by a difference of 15% in the current 'most emphasis' category.
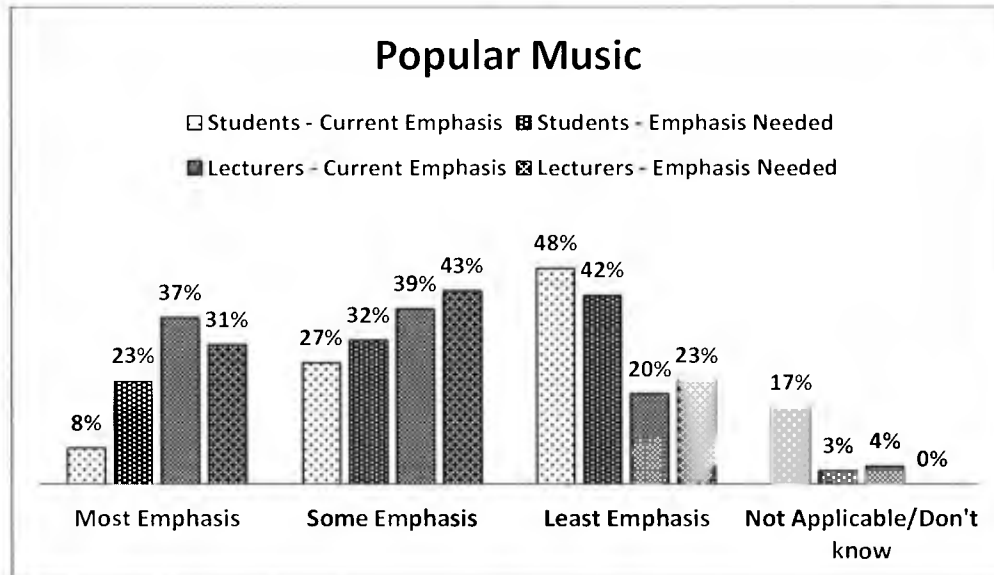
**Figure 5.3** Emphasis that is currently given and should be given to popular music

This could point to the use of popular music by lecturers from pedagogical perspectives in explaining harmonic progressions for example, but from a student's perspective it may not be given as much time in its own right. From the student and lecturer responses, it would seem that popular music is not as deserving as Irish traditional music in terms of emphasis. Moreover, a similar proportion of students (20%) and lecturers (23%) think it should be given the least emphasis. Most of the comments relating to this referred to the limited amount of knowledge and skills needed to perform popular music, as well as the limited potential knowledge one could gain from studying popular music at undergraduate level. This echoes O'Flynn's (2009) postulation that popular music rarely features in educational discourse and Green's (2002b) study on second-level teachers' attitudes to popular music. The following comments highlight some of the prevailing assumptions regarding popular music:

*Lecturer Survey*

L19:    Popular is not going to test our musical ability.

*Student Survey*

S186:    If you have a strong background in classical music, the transition to other forms is relatively easy. I completely oppose the study of popular/modern music (or an overemphasis on it) otherwise we could end up like [Institution C].

S226: I don't think there should be massive emphasis on popular because we listen to it so much ourselves anyway on a day to day basis.

*The Treatment of Popular music*

In a study by Green (2002b) of secondary music teachers' views on diverse musics carried out in 1982 and again in 1998, she found significant changes in the views of teachers in their evaluations and uses of many different styles of music, including popular and world music. Using a survey method, results showed that the teachers' attitudes towards diverse musical styles had changes considerably over the sixteen-year period. Results from the survey in 1982 showed the supremacy of classical music in teachers' choice of importance and world music was not even mentioned. By 1998, popular music ranked highest in importance followed by world music.

However, the manner in which popular music was taught and consequently appraised focused on either the inherent materials of the music such as the instrumentation, melodic contour for example, and/or the extra-musical or delineated aspects of the music such as the social function of the music, the clothes and culture associated with the music. According to Green (2003, p.15), such assumptions were problematic in the classroom because there was '...a tendency to assume that the music's value rested fundamentally on the very same claims as those upon which the value of classical music rested'. Moreover, such treatment of popular music was contradictory and ideological. On the one hand, popular music was theoretically valued in the same way as classical to obtain characteristics such as universality, complexity, and autonomy but in practice, this claim was ultimately thwarted when compared alongside classical music. Thus, Western classical music was legitimated as 'the only music really worthy of study' (Green 2003. p.16).

Some of the lecturers and students in this research referred specifically to the socio-cultural context of popular music as the focus of engagement when popular music was included as an elective or during the course of a series of lectures. In one interview, a student mentioned how one particular lecturer used popular music to explain harmonic structures such as a ground bass and he regularly performs ABBA hit songs as well as other popular music examples in class to explain various musical and harmonic features. In another course, an elective in death metal was offered to students in third year of their BMus course. When I asked whether the students had taken the elective, curiously neither of them had. However,

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when I asked why they thought there was a focus on death metal, music student Alan explained that one of the lecturers had an interest in it from a socio-cultural perspective:

*Alan (1ˢᵗ year, jazz background now classical)*
Obviously there's not really much of precedent for these kind of things but I mean the argument with it is...there is a particular idiom that people conform with and that they are pushing out and you know what happens when it strays into other genres and it seems to have gone down quite well by the by...

Annemarie, whose background was in rock and punk music didn't opt for this elective either because she had already experienced what we might interpret as boys' fetishisation of the genre at parties in her youth:

*Annemarie (Mature Student, 4ᵗʰ Year, Pop/Rock Background)*
...there's no ethno-musicology module unless you count something like death metal which again is a very Western form of music and very predictable. They didn't really do the music either it was a lot of more socio-political background of it and to be honest being in bands and all that, I've listened to boys at parties going through all that stuff before. I kind of know that stuff already so I didn't want to take that 'class' again (laughs)...

However, what appears to be the case from the excerpts above, is that death metal as a musical genre seems to have been taught from a socio-political/socio-cultural perspective. Moreover, the reason why popular music is not included on one of the conservatoires curriculum was justified in terms of the institution's identity. Dr Peter Enright admitted that he thought that perhaps they could give little more attention to dealing with Irish traditional music from an academic perspective, in regard to popular music his belief was that this could only be considered from a socio-cultural, historical perspective:

*Dr Peter Enright (Classical Music Background)*
I could only possibly see it (pop) as an elective module in year three and four but only from an academic or historical point of view, students would just simply not be allowed to perform that repertoire in a recital...
...I think some students can get confused and we make it very clear on our side that we don't cater for pop or rock but we do cater for classical and traditional and so again we try and help students by steering them away...

That new popular courses had come on stream in the last two years was a welcome relief for him because of the difficulty surrounding the demand for places and the unsuitability of many applicants presenting for audition at the conservatoire. Thus, popular music was perceived as beneficial from sociocultural perspectives but not in terms of its inherent qualities.

During the course of the research, students and lecturers shared diverse views on the value of music and the over-emphasis or exclusion of certain genres on the curriculum. According to Fionn, the reason that the majority of the course he is studying focuses on Western art music, lies in its complexity in comparison to popular music:

> *Fionn (4<sup>th</sup> Year, Bimusical Background, now Classical)*
>
> G:  Why do you think that there's more of a focus on Western art music then?
>
> F:  (silence) Well, it does make it up the majority of music that we do but I suppose there's quite an open mind around towards contemporary music. I think a lot of universities might feel you know, let's not do that you know? Let's we'll stick to this we don't need to look at that.
>
> G:  And why do you think then that they sort of avoid it then?
>
> F:  I suppose it might be viewed as a bit simple 'cos it's sort of well it's (silence), it's not, you could say it's not as harmonically and rhythmically complex as a big German sonata, which we've analysed a lot of... I'd say probably there is more worth from my point of view in analysing a Beethoven sonata than some Katy Perry... it might be perfectly complex but it's (pause) well, it's pop! (laughs) I personally think it's good to have an emphasis on the Western classical tradition...

Although Fionn hesitated on a few occasions during the course of his answer to my question, he would appear to be content with the current emphasis on the Western classical tradition.

*Jazz*

Results in the category of jazz mostly reflected the students' and lecturers' views regarding popular music, whereby both groups think that it should be given more emphasis than is currently the case. However, there was a difference of approx 10% in the lecturers' views between popular and jazz i.e. 15% believed it should be given least emphasis in comparison to popular (23%). Jazz appeared to be the genre/style in which students and lecturers referred specifically to the knowledge and skills benefits it could bring e.g. improvisation, skills, harmony etc.
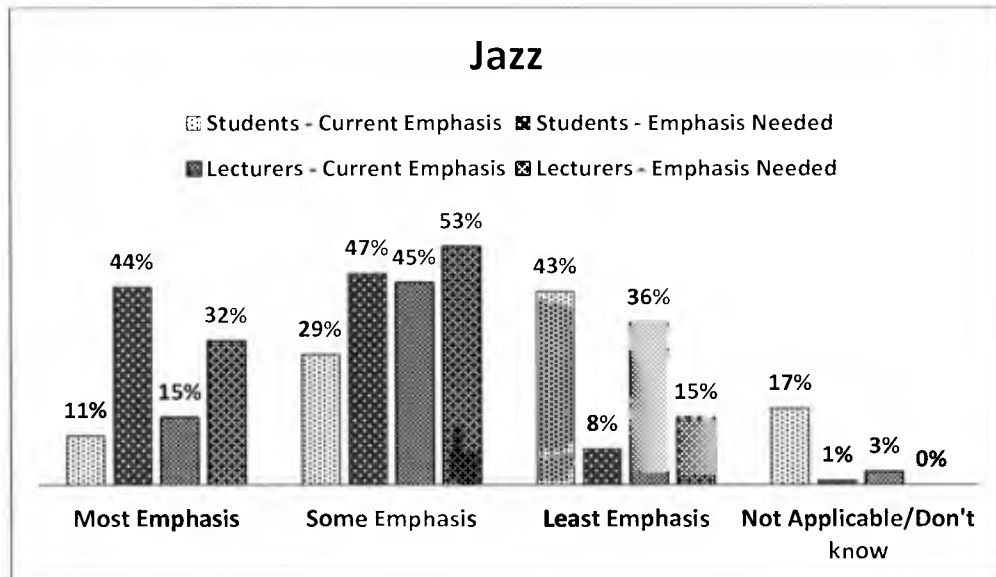
**Figure 5.4** Emphasis that is currently given and should be given to jazz

*Lecturer Survey*

L1:    We would give more weight to Jazz when the instrumental availability is there and this changes from year to year.

L9:    More emphasis in jazz needed — complexities of different kinds of art music often overlooked or reduced to association with blues/popular music.

*Student Survey*

S74:   I have a particular interest in jazz and improvisation there are high level skills but on the course I feel a connection is ignored.

S112:  There should be more of an emphasis on jazz as it develops many musical skills like ear training and theory as does trad as many pieces are picked up by ear.

Matt, the mature student who has a strong background in jazz expressed his frustration at the assumption that jazz was perceived as inferior to classical as well as the limitations of classical theory and keyboard skills. He went on to explain how he perceived this assumption as misguided:

> *Matt (Mature Student, 4<sup>th</sup> Year, Jazz Background)*
> ...it really hacks me off as a as a jazz musician when people say, 'sure you're only playing jazz, so you play what you want!' It always boils down to this: from a classical pianist point of view, major harmonic and melodic minor that's where your scales start and stop... that's only the starting point for a jazz musicians then you start on modes, then you start on pentatonic and blues scales, so you're only starting

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where the classical musicians left off... ok so maybe we make our music up as it goes along but there's only so much you can do especially on an instrument like the piano, there's only so much interpretation.. sticking to what's on the page etc so it's a very restrictive discipline...

*World Music*

In terms of the emphasis on world music in Irish higher education, both students (44%) and lecturers (38%) ticked that it is currently given 'least emphasis'. Moreover, approximately 20% of both groups allocated it to the 'not applicable' category. Thus, when this is compared to the other genres, it emerges as the least covered genre. Indeed, only three comments from the student and lecturer survey mentioned it specifically.
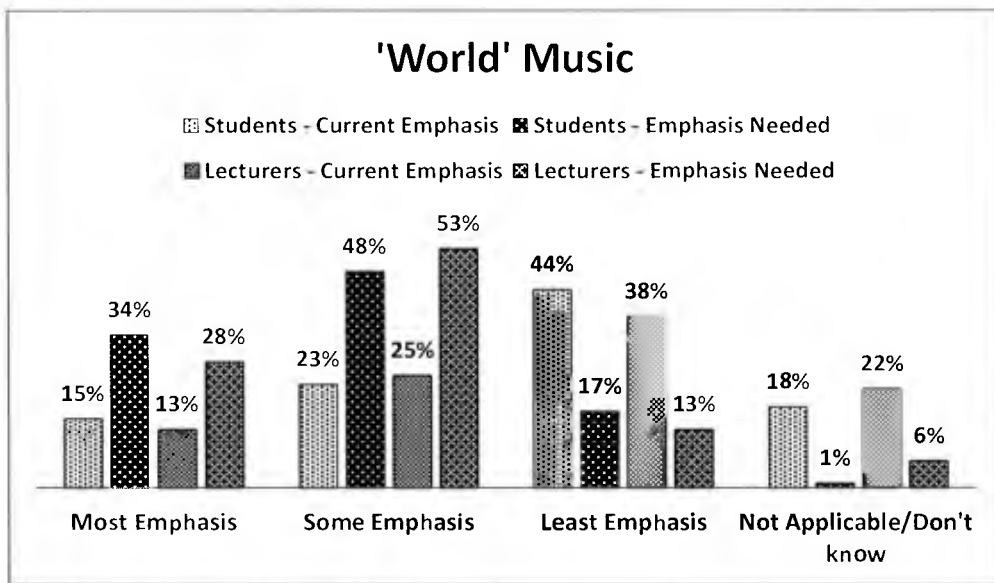


**Figure 5.5** Emphasis that is currently given and should be given to world music

In a study I conducted on multicultural music in the secondary classroom (Moore, 2011) results showed that music teachers felt unequipped to incorporate musics of the world's cultures in their practice. Teachers alluded to not having sufficient knowledge from their university experiences so the data presented here comes as no surprise. When the topic of multicultural music education was raised at the MEND debate, discussions revolved around which musics to include and how to go about incorporating them. According to Heneghan (2001), the idea was 'fulsome' because in his view biculturalism was already underdeveloped. Therefore, it would seem that with the preoccupation between Western classical music and Irish traditional music in education, world music along with popular and jazz have gotten lost in the mire. It is important to stress however, that many music courses

have electives in world music most commonly in years three or four of the degree. Moreover, it is also common knowledge that the music department at University College Cork have been pioneers in their incorporation of gamelan into the curriculum in the 1980s as well as other music departments who have gone to great lengths to source diverse instruments as well as inviting guest workshops and lectures in other musical cultures. Thus, it would be disingenuous on the basis of the quantitative data above to presume that world music is totally neglected; rather, it seems that it simply does not feature as prominently as Irish traditional or popular music in the participants' responses.

In general, the majority of students and lecturers were of the view that more musical genres could be included in the degree they were studying. The exceptions to this included students who had chosen to specialise in a conservatoire training or Irish traditional music and dance. Out of 24 completed lecturer responses giving reasons for their choices, 18 mentioned the need to broaden genres, and a minority (3) maintained that it was simply not possible to cover all genres in a limited time. In their views, Western classical music provides the best foundation from which to start. Other comments included challenges related to the expertise and availability of academic staff, for example, 'You can't really say some types are better than others it depends on what lecturers are available' (L:19), as well as other resource issues. One useful suggestion from a lecturer concerned the possibility of approaching music holistically from over-arching categories:

L9: It depends on the staff/personnel. It's hard to want to privilege or over-emphasise one type or style over another per se. I think it would be easier/more beneficial to perhaps consider more over-arching or cross-cutting categories such as approach, methodology, critical models etc.


## A Hierarchy of Musical Knowledge(s)?

Through the valorisation of the cognitive domains of knowledge, what counts as valid knowledge for access and opportunity in higher education is judged according to 'academic taxonomies' (Bourdieu, 1996, pp 17-19). Such taxonomies are organised according to the hierarchy of attributes that the dominant group possesses. As discussed in previous chapters, a Eurocentric conception of music education has dominated many conservatoires and universities with implicit values of superiority in regard to other musics. Through the transmission of a particular cultural tradition in the educational system, e.g. Western classical

music, other cultures and musical practices can be consciously excluded from music education. Thus, the music of certain individuals and groups are ignored within a culture and society.

M.F.D. Young's seminal work *Knowledge and Control* (1971) examined the vast social and political nature of education. In this work, Young posited that educational institutions such as schools, colleges, universities perpetuated the definition of 'what counts as knowledge' through the inclusion and exclusion of particular content *vis-à-vis* syllabi and curricula. As a social construct, the curriculum was perpetuated by dominant social groups who held assumptions about what counts as valued knowledge. Principles of high status knowledge included: 'literacy'; 'individualism'; 'abstractedness'; and 'unrelatedness' (Young, 1971). Although Young (2008) has arrived at a very different theory of knowledge which is examined in further detail in Chapter Seven, it is necessary to discuss how his earlier theory has been applied to higher music education.

In the application of Young's (1971) theory to the knowledge displayed by students of formal classical music education, Feichas (2010) found that the emphasis on music 'literacy'; solitary instrumental practice/'individualism'; and components such as history of music, and harmony were 'abstracted' and 'unrelated' to students' daily lives. Through an ethnographic study of informal learning practices in higher education (Feichas, 2010) found that students of classical music, popular music and mixed groups (by genre) held prejudices about other musics and their value. She concluded that reflective engagement in informal learning practices can create space for students to re-evaluate the learning process. Through self-assessment and respect for others' skills and knowledge, the Eurocentric conception of music education had diminished.

As data in this chapter will show, classical music is more often associated with formal knowledge about music (for example knowledge of compositional techniques and harmony) while Irish traditional and popular music are associated with informal learning practices, for example learning by ear or being able to improvise and write a song. Traditionally, Western classical music practices have reproduced a hierarchy of knowledge and skills whereby notational skills must precede musical analysis and compositional techniques. This practice has neglected certain musical practices and musical knowing in favour of a formal conception of musical knowledge (Small, 1977; Elliott, 1995). However, as Green (2008) points out, all music whether approached through notation, playing by ear or improvising requires objectification. That is, all music-making processes involve 'mediating with the processes and materials of music as they pass in time' (Green, 2008, p.241). As this chapter unfolds, it

will become apparent that some music-making processes, for example, reading notation, are perceived to be of superior intellectual engagement than playing by ear. Moreover, the dominant emphasis on the Western classical tradition is legitimised and sustained, not only because of its perceived superior intellectual properties, but also because the 'field' of higher music education symbolises one of the highest level of musical attainment.

## Knowledge and Skills in Higher Music Education: Access and Opportunity

The majority of lecturers surveyed and interviewed stressed the importance of being musically literate before one can engage meaningfully in analytical and musicological practices in higher education. This finding was unsurprising since the idea of a taxonomy of musical knowledge has proliferated formal music education pedagogies in the Western world with an emphasis on procedural knowledge transmission (Swanwick, 1999). Thus music students have traditionally learnt to how to read music first where they decode 'notation to realise the products that make up the Western musical canon' (Boyce-Tillman, 2004, p.118). Believed to be of less value, musical processes such as improvising or playing by ear have been ignored and discouraged in Western classical music education and practice (Small, 1998).

As well as prose survey responses, students and lecturers were asked to rate a diverse range of musical skills/knowledge in terms of a) their current level of importance on the course they were studying/teaching, and b) what level of importance *ought* to be on such skills/knowledge in higher music education. A three point scale (Important to Unimportant) was used to compare a range of musical skills across responses from student and lecturer surveys. In recognising that each institution would inevitably have differing emphases on particular skills, I also included a 'Not applicable' option. For example, students and lecturers involved in a course primarily focused on Irish traditional music would most likely rate 'ensemble playing' as important, but 'ability to sight-read' on their instruments might not necessarily be applicable to the genre. In addition, I was mindful that students in their first year of college, or lecturers with particular specialisms, might not actually know what levels of importance were placed on the course as a whole. Thus, a 'Don't know' option was also included. For a comprehensive overview of the results from each category, please see Appendix F.

In designing this aspect of the questionnaire, I wished to ascertain how musical skills associated with formal musical knowledge usually associated with the Western classical

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tradition (knowledge of music theory/notation; being able to follow a musical score; dictation skills; sight-reading, keyboard skills; being able to compose four-part harmony (SATB) and being able to compose instrumental music), would compare with musical skills associated with more informal musical skills (being able to improvise; being able to play by ear; being able to write a song). In addition, some musical skills would inevitably cross genres and practices for example, being a proficient solo performer; performing as part of an ensemble; and knowledge of music history.

Bearing in mind the changing landscape of higher music education in Ireland, I anticipated multifarious possible responses to this question. Moreover, I anticipated binary oppositions in terms of the lecturer and student responses. While there were some instances where one might expect more traditional views of what matters in terms of musical skills, in many instances there was commonality between students' and lecturers' attitudes to skills they deemed important for negotiating music at higher education level. In the analysis that follows, I refer to statistical frequencies and percentages among students and lecturers as well as the prose they inserted into the additional comment boxes under these questions in the survey.

**Formal Musical Skills/Knowledge**

In general, a notable disparity was found between the importance of skills associated with the Western classical tradition (notation, score-reading, dictation) and skills more commonly associated with Irish traditional music/popular music (playing by ear, improvising, songwriting). Overall, there were more commonalities between the levels of importance rated by students and lecturers than differences.

*Notation and Music Theory*
In terms of formal musical skills/ knowledge, there was a mere 3% difference between the importance placed on having notation/music theory skills among students and lecturers. Little variance was to be found between the importance currently placed on music notation and theory knowledge and what students and lecturers felt was actually needed, whereby two thirds of students and lecturers rate notation/music theory currently important (Figure 5.1). The difference expands to 8% (whereby 80% of students and 88% of lecturers) believe that notation/music theory *should* be important in higher music education. Noteworthy, is the

'unimportant' classification of notation in one lecturer's institution and clearly he/she thinks that such skills should be given more importance.
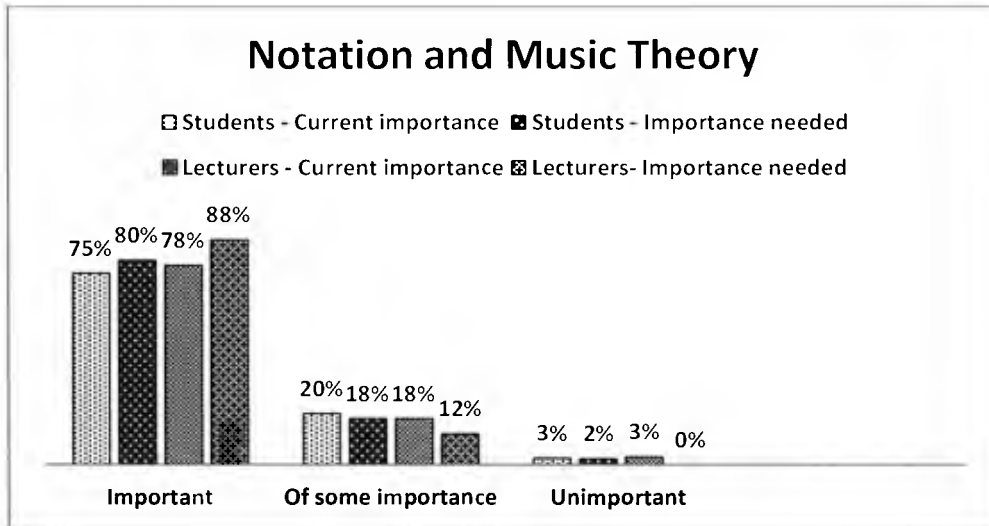


**Figure 5.6** Importance of notation and theory

L23: Without a strong foundation in music theory and musicianship skills students are restricted in every area they might pursue - performance/composition/academia, so I think it is very important. Upon graduating from a degree programme, I think a well-rounded musician should be presented with the ability and confidence to pursue their interests – or at least have had the opportunity to do so.

*Score-reading and Sight-reading skills*

Similarly, being able to follow a musical score was rated important by three quarters of students and lecturers (Figure 5.7). An overwhelming majority of lecturers felt however, that students should be able to follow a musical score, representing a 20% increase on what they thought ought to be the case. Students also believed that more importance should be placed on being able to follow a musical score as their percentage also increased from 75% - 80% and there was a considerable drop in its unimportance from 19% to 2%.
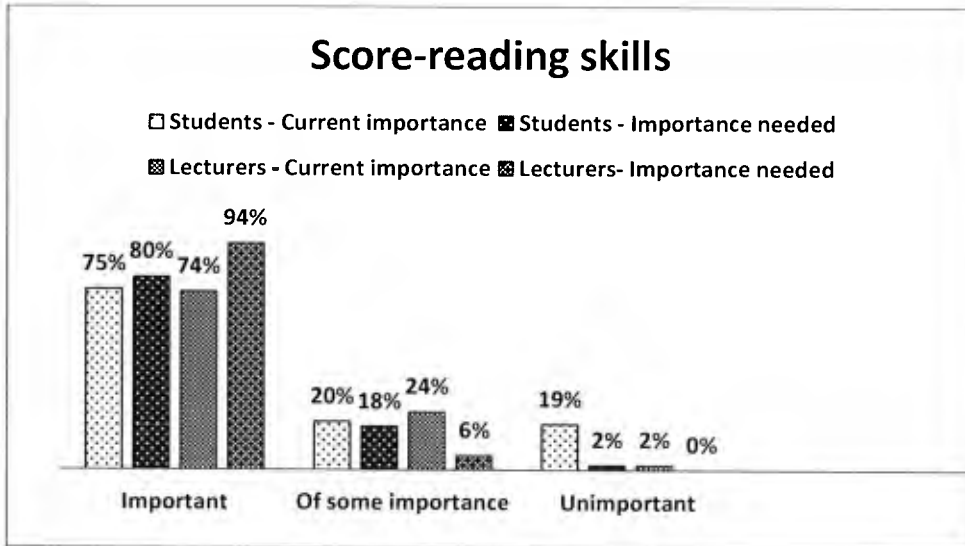
**Figure 5.7** Importance of score-reading skills

Both lecturers and students were of the view that being able to sight-read on their instrument/voice ought to have more importance than it currently does (74% of students and 80% of lecturers). This was coupled by a decrease in those rating it 'of some importance' and 'unimportant'.
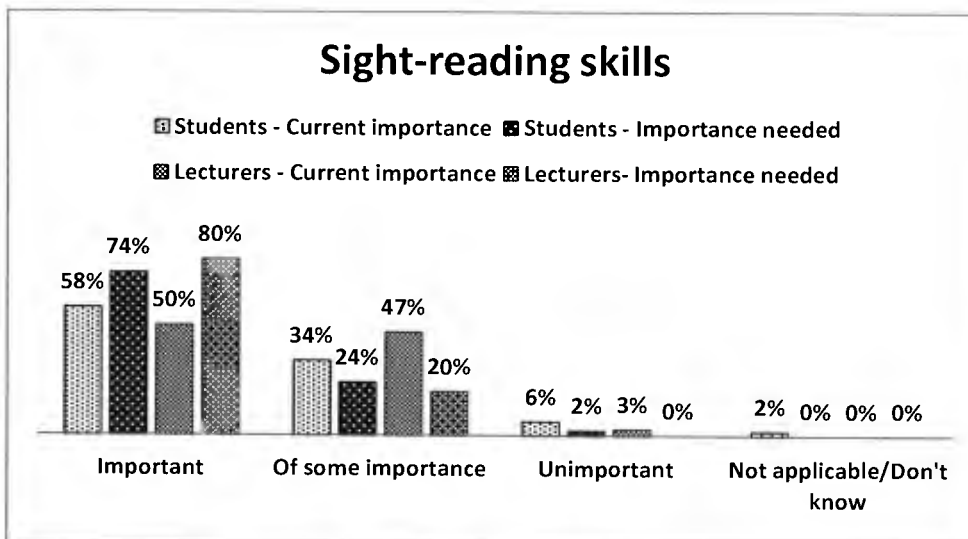


**Figure 5.8** Importance of sight-reading skills

*Dictation skills*

In terms of the importance of dictation skills in higher education, students ratings were consistent in terms of the importance currently given and what ought to be the case. Conversely, lecturers clearly indicated that dictation skills ought to be given more importance in higher education. This is represented by a jump of 27% from 58% -85% in the important category and a decrease from 30% - 9% in the 'of some importance' category. In this example, students and lecturers views were clearly at variance.
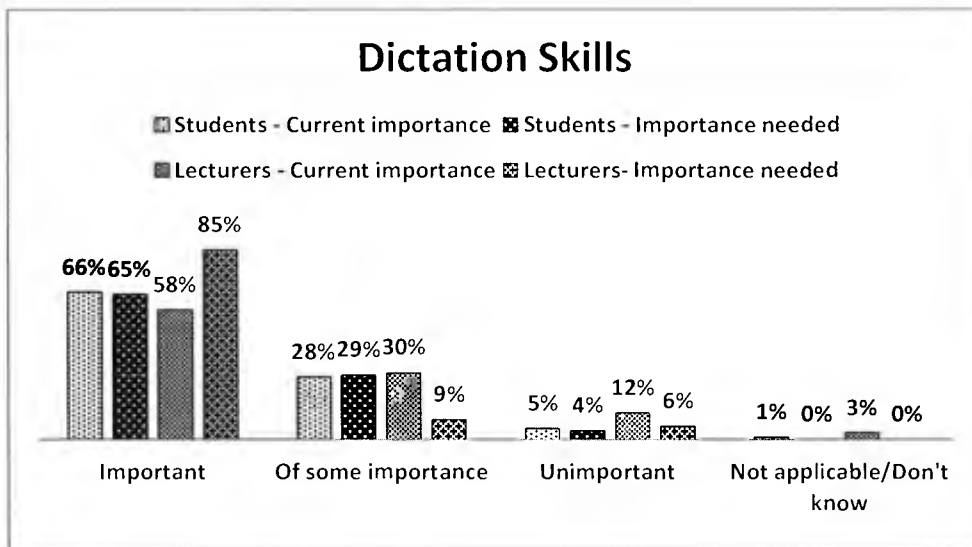


**Figure 5.9** Importance of dictation skills

*Keyboard Skills*

Much music theory knowledge is more easily understood from a keyboard in terms of its visual representation of tones and semi-tones, intervals, scales, triads and chord formations. As someone who began as a pianist and later gave this up to pursue guitar, I can understand how music students who have not played piano/keyboard might find composing techniques such as harmony and counterpoint, trio sonatas, string quartets, and fugues difficult. Being able to play through a composition inevitably makes the process easier for those who are pianists. That is not to say however, that they will make better composers but the process will consume less of their time, thereby freeing up more time to play with and expand on ideas. The predominance of the piano/keyboard in terms of composition and accompaniment output in the Western classical tradition is notable. It is not surprising therefore, that pastiche composition in the Western classical tradition would configure mostly from the keyboard and

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that such techniques find their way onto higher music education degree curricula is unsurprising.
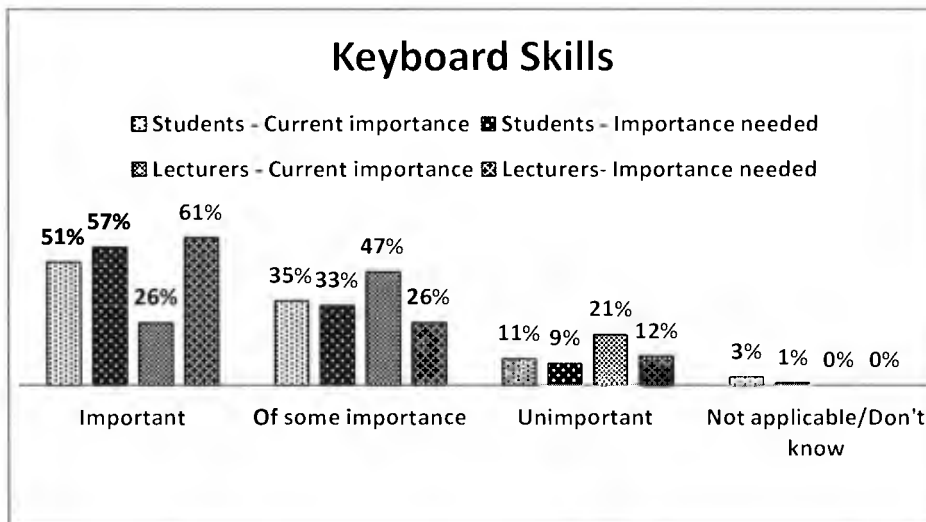


**Figure 5.10** Importance of keyboard skills

One lecturer survey referred to this specifically:

L27: I teach mainly composition Composers must have exceptional reading/notational skills and a well-trained ear. In addition, they should be proficient keyboard players. I did not always believe in this last requirement but I do now.

In terms of the lecturers' first instruments, 54% list piano as their main instrument and 46% classify it as a second instrument. A minority (3) of lecturers in the sample do not play a keyboard instrument. This prevalence of piano/keyboard as a first instrument is not as strongly replicated in the student survey with 29.4% students specifying piano as their first/main instrument and 25% listing it in 'other' instruments that they can play. Thus, the keyboard skills experience of students and lecturers was markedly different.

**Informal Musical Knowledge and Skills**

Lecturers' views on the skills less commonly associated with the Western classical tradition were rather striking. As highlighted in Figures 5.11 and 5.12, lecturers clearly indicated that being able to play by ear and improvising skills were not important yet, the data shows that they think such skills should be more important than they currently are. This is evidenced by

47% of lecturers who rated improvising as currently unimportant, decreasing to a mere 3% who still hold the view that this should be the case. This shift is also balanced by a tenfold increase (6% to 61%) of lecturers who think importance *should* be placed on these skills in higher education.
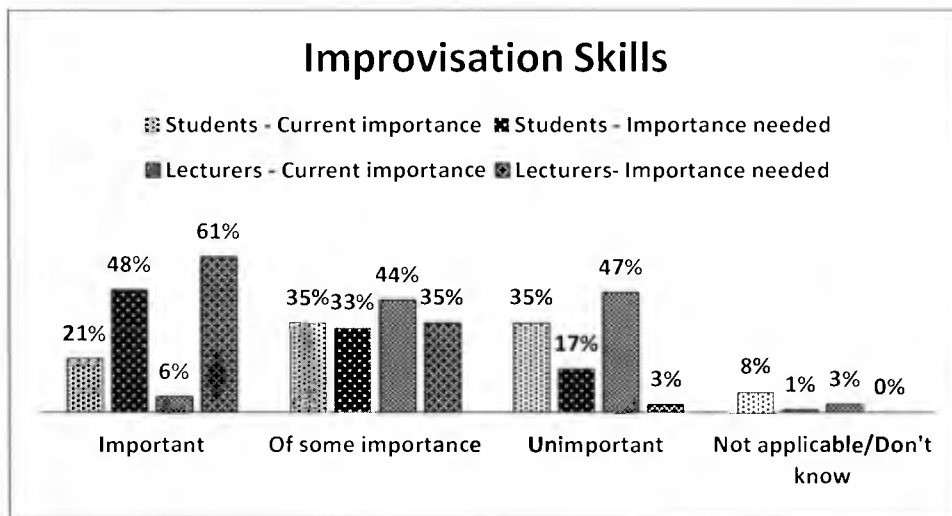


**Figure 5.11** Importance of improvisation skills

L17: At my university far too much emphasis is placed on reading about music while having none of the basic skills to read music, perform, compose in original ways.

L32: It is essential that students have the skills to explore and understand a wide range of musics and take part in a meaningful way in music. Singing and listening (thus playing by ear) are fundamental. Composition, music history and theory can be developed after.

Similarly, with regard to being able to play by ear, lecturers' views jumped down in the unimportant category from 44% - 3%; coupled by an increase from 15% - 56% in the important category. This would seem to indicate that lecturers acknowledge that skills associated with musics other than Western classical are currently given insufficient emphasis. Yet, if we compare the importance lecturers gave to notation (94%) and playing by ear (44%), for example, it is fair to say that despite the aforementioned jump in percentages, the skills more prevalent in the Western classical tradition far outweighed those associated with Irish traditional or popular music.
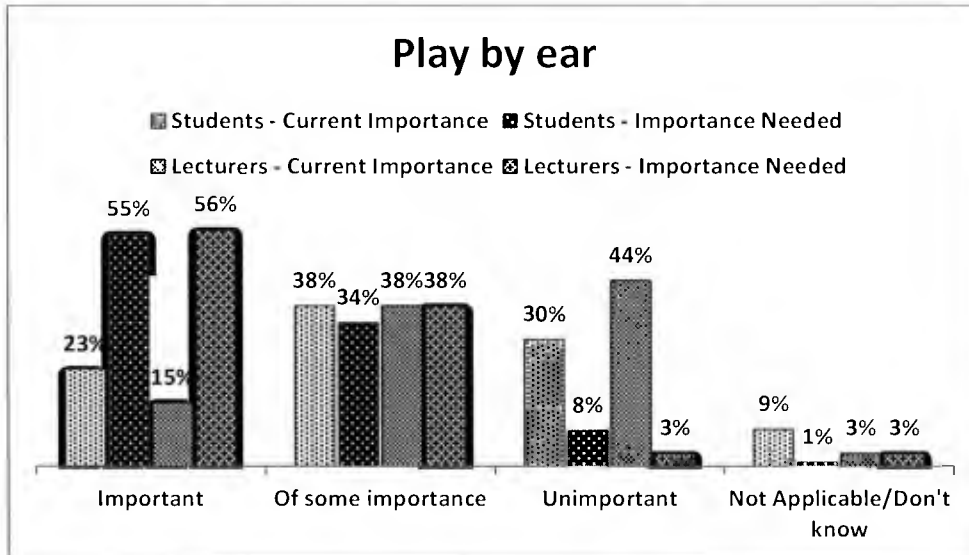
## Play by ear



**Figure 5.12** Importance of being able to play by ear

Twelve lecturers referred to diverse musical backgrounds as something positive and enriching both for them as teachers and for the students. Many mentioned the openness of students and their enthusiasm for learning as illustrated in the examples below:

L4:     Fabulous aural skills among students, also very talented improvisers. Not limited or closed to new opportunities, new ways of looking at things. They're exciting to teach!

L12:    Many of my students are trad/jazz musicians – their aural skills are fantastic because they have learned much of their music' by ear'.

### '64 Black and White Squares'

In the interview with Professor Harry White, he raised a contentious issue that has bothered him, in regard to the value of music in terms of its complexity or simplicity. This has its roots in the aesthetic tradition which I have covered already. However it raises serious issues in regard to what musics are included for academic study on the basis of the potential study of the musical materials themselves, and the requisite knowledge and skills required. If one focuses on the socio-historical or socio-cultural aspects of the music, different topics will come under focus, however, from a strictly analytical perspective, it sheds light on the pervasiveness of the Western classical canon. Professor White describes the 'disenchantment with art music' as directly related to the hegemony of traditional and popular culture in the wider public sphere. Moreover, in his view limited engagement with tonality,

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orchestral/ensemble scope as well as length of musical works can lead to a curtailed engagement with music's many possibilities:

*Professor Harry White (Chair of Music, Classical Music Background)*

> I think that very seriously you see that the disappearance of music theory and analysis from third level programmes is itself a reflection first of all of a disenchantment with art music and the fact that traditional music proclaims itself as being an aural culture... I mean if you have a sort of monophonic approach... you're never going to go outside of more than two sharps and two flats and you have...elementary notation that's enough for traditional music. So therefore, why would we need anything more? If you're driving that model of saying well, we're going to teach people about the music that is most popular then that's true...the result is that whatever else is going to happen no students are going to want to take on you know, the second act of Rheingold or something because they're never going to be able to understand what's going on...

He continued to compare simple versus complex musics to learning how to play draughts and chess saying:

> *Prof White:* If you insist that both of the games are the same on the basis that they're both being played on 64 black and white squares, you are simply suppressing a fundamental truth about the difference between chess and draughts. Whatever else it is, it's not complicated.

Critiquing the difference between aesthetic intellectual engagement with music and music's purpose as entertainment, he used an analogy of St. Paul's Cathedral:

> *Prof. White:* It will be like saying you know the difference between a tarpaulin tent and St Paul's cathedral is immaterial given that the most important thing is that they both keep the rain out, you know? You can find the lowest common denominator of 64 squares of providing shelter from the elements whatever way you want, but if you keep doing that, then you end up with a music programme that'll say as much as you need to move around on the 64 squares, or play the right hand of Hey Jude and once you drop the rest, you'll never be able to understand the rules of chess....

As we can ascertain from Professor White's use of language, he refers specifically to the inherent meaning of the music and the benefit of engaging with music in an intellectual way. However, his earlier comparison to Irish traditional music and to 'Hey Jude' above is sure to irk those whose personal and musical identities revolve around such musics. McCarthy (1997) refers to the Irish context in this regard, describing the importance of identity in

relation to music. Where music education is culture-specific and requires students to deny the value of a particular music of their culture, there is a simultaneous denial of musical opportunity. She explains the importance of a '…symbiotic relationship between what students experience in school contexts and what they experience in the sociocultural contexts that frames their identity' (McCarthy, 1997: 15).

We could extend this idea to the context of higher education and Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) theory of 'pedagogic action' or enculturation and education, defined as the 'imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power' (p.5) or symbolic violence. When meanings that are imposed (Wagner is superior to The Beatles), and made to seem legitimate (because Wagner is more intellectually challenging than The Beatles), power relations at the core of the meanings are concealed. In other words, the music that we value will form part of the curriculum because it is legitimate, *ergo* we exclude The Beatles on the basis of their illegitimacy in higher music education. In acknowledging that Prof. White is not deliberately superimposing symbolic violence on the students, rather the knowledge assumed as legitimate is *misrecognised* (Bourdieu and Passseron, 1990). In other words, reified knowledge remains concealed and thus, legitimated within ideological assumptions of valued knowledge within the field of higher music education.

From a different perspective, Professor White's concern can also be seen as relating to a denial of musical opportunity with Western classical music. Denying students at all levels of education the possibility of engagement with complex art forms assumes their potential disinterest and further disempowers them musically:

> *Prof. White:* somebody who knows nothing about music hearing a symphony orchestra playing a symphony from Beethoven would know it was impressive noise but that's as far as you're going to get unless you know your way around the geography of that piece and you can't unless you learn what the rules are. I'm not asking anybody to write a Beethoven symphony I just ask them to know enough music theory that they can listen to the bloody thing…let's say I didn't know any chess for a second that'd be it you'd know you made some fantastically intelligent strategic move but you wouldn't know how…

After I interviewed Professor White, I wanted to interview someone in an equally powerful position who might propose an alternative perspective. I invited Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin who established the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick to participate in the final interview for this research. I explored the metaphor of chess and draughts with him:

*Prof Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin (Bimusical Background)*

G:    What do you think of the concept of 64 black and white squares like you know classical music is like a game of chess or and folk or pop music is like a game of draughts?

M:    Well that's all very interesting because it's founded on a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of music... it's based on the notion of a canon, based on the notion of a product or a piece, based on the notion that the creative process as being in the hands of the composer rather than in the hands of the performer... I'd have to be dishonest if I said that a 14 year old finding a diminished 7th for the first time was of lesser significance than finding out what a diminished 7th was before they could play it, whereas on the contrary, I think that the 14 year old who finds that shape has done something that is fundamentally of greater importance than the other person...music education in the past has been telling you what a diminished 7th is, and then piece by piece you learn what the sound is. For me it was the opposite, it was just naming something I already knew, so somehow the taxonomy, or the naming of things comes from experience.

Moreover Professor Ó Suilleabháin goes on to echo what McCarthy (1999) said in regard to musical identity:

> ...like what can you say if you don't respect someone else's music, there's a whole part of the person then that you don't respect and that is when it becomes problematic. If you do respect and fall in love with somebody's music, it can be so powerful that it can actually overcome difficulties... so there's a sense that it is a sonic representation of the person themselves...

According to Professor Ó Suilleabháin, the basis of such a worldview revolves around a misguided cultural error. One cannot compare Western classical music with Irish traditional music or popular music because the style, the transmission, the cultures are entirely different:

> ...so you know the notion of Irish traditional music as draughts, if you were to ask the question well what opus was this? There's no answer. Who composed this? There's no answer. Where is it written down? There's no answer. So, all of these questions are wrong for start off. They're based fundamentally on a cultural error you know and that's the end of it... a worldview which is based on musical literacy as an essential ingredient to musical worth...

Similarly, in another music department, Dr Anthony Morrissey described his view of musical hierarchies and complexities thus:

Well, as I go through life I'm certainly revising of my aspects or my understandings of different musics and simplicity and complexity, sometimes something can be simple, but not easy. I mean the inflections and the subtly that trad players can engender and produce in their playing can rival that of any classical musician... a good fiddle or a good trad flute in the hands of very experienced player can weave a spell over the listener in a way that a very dull ploddy rendition of a Mozart sonata movement can completely shatter my musical confidence in the player.

In reference to the quotations above, it is important to acknowledge that the divergent assumptions of musical value are framed from different perspectives of musicing (Small, 1998). For example, Professor White's contention refers specifically to musical understanding of structures/devices founded in the canon of Western classical music. In order to engage in purposive intellectual listening in higher education, one has to have a modicum of musical knowledge first, albeit from the basis of music literacy.

In Professor Ó Súilleabháin's view, this is fundamentally flawed because of the superimposed criteria of Western analysis on a diverse musical culture. Clearly as a primarily aural tradition, Irish traditional music is a different way of musical knowing to that of Western classical so the premise of the draughts and chess analogy is flawed in the first place. Finally, Dr. Morrissey expresses his view from the perspective of performer and listener, whereby he suggests that just because something 'sounds' simple in terms of harmonic structure does not necessarily mean it is 'easy' to engage with or perform. Such divergent views shed light on the many different ways in which we conceive ideological assumptions of musical value for in each case above, divergent perspectives reflect the ways in which ideologies of musical value continue to be contested.

**Conclusion**

This chapter explored the ways in which ideological assumptions of musical value and knowledge were expressed in student and lecturer surveys and interviews. Both students and lecturers are open to the notion of broadening the curriculum in terms of genre and in the quantitative questions addressed acknowledged that Irish traditional, popular, jazz and world music ought to have at least 'some emphasis' whereby it was perceived that this was lacking. The assumption that popular music was not needed because it was 'easy to grasp', echoes the findings of Green's (1998) first stage of her study on different musics in the classroom in 1982. Though they were in the minority, strongly held views pertaining to music's worth vis-

à-vis its complexity were present in some of the lecturers' responses as well as that of Prof Harry White. His concerns manifested most prominently in an organised symposium on musicology which brought many issues to bear on the changing context of higher music education. In the chapter that follows, I attempt to shed light on such prevailing concerns as well as broader results from the effect of musical backgrounds and music education on one's experience in higher music education.

# CHAPTER SIX
## CONCEPTIONS OF CURRICULUM: HIGHER EDUCATION

### Introduction

In Chapter Two, I examined the ways in which colonial and nationalist ideologies influenced Irish music education curriculum design at primary level and in higher education In Chapter Four, I investigated the extent to which the move away from a traditional conservatoire conception of music education in the old Leaving Certificate to the more praxial curriculum in the new Leaving Certificate has impacted on students' expectations and experiences of learning in higher education In this chapter, I explore the curriculum in higher education from a number of perspectives. First, the interplay between ideology, musical value and the curriculum as structures that both students and lecturers co-construct and negotiate is explored. Second, I examine theories of higher education curricula along with Bernstein's (1971) theory of classification and framing of knowledge to contextualise the diversity of curricula within the Irish context. Following an analysis of four distinct higher music curricula in terms of content and as well as data from student interviews, I then proceed to explore the ways in which the hidden curriculum facilitates the reproduction of musical values.

### Conceptions of Curriculum: Traditional and Instrumental

#### Curriculum as Mediated

A curriculum can be defined in many ways: as a written document, as a process, what is taught, or what is actually experienced and learnt by the students (Jorgensen, 2002). In this thesis, the term curriculum is defined as a multi-faceted concept that mediates institutional and departmental conceptions of valued knowledge to learners but it can also be seen as *mediated* by external and internal influences. For example, the design and content of institutional documents, the interpretation of these documents by student and lecturer, and the teaching and learning experiences implicit in the hidden curriculum *mediate* conceptions of valued knowledge. At a macro-level, higher education policy agendas have mediated curriculum design in the form of the Bologna declaration and in modular credits. Micro-level

departmental curricular decisions are often mediated by policies such as widening participation, increasing student numbers and financial cutbacks.

Curriculum innovation has to a great extent been influenced by 'relevance' and employability agendas. Consequently, the growth in provision of applied, industry related courses has risen (Clegg, 2011). The lack of debate on the types of knowledge inferred by applied curricula is problematic because it presupposes the usefulness of knowledge without considering the truth claims of such types of knowledge outside of particular contexts (Moore, 2000; Moore and Young, 2001; Young, 2008). Barnett and Coate (2005) argue for change in curricula and pedagogy in order to ensure that students are adequately prepared to function optimally in what Barnett (2000) terms a world of *supercomplexity*. Whereas complexity denotes a situation in which one has to cope with burgeoning information and more tasks than are manageable, supercomplexity denotes a situation in which:

> ...the very frameworks by which we orient ourselves to the world are themselves contested. Supercomplexity denotes a fragile world but it is a fragility brought on not merely by social and technological change; it is a fragility in the way we understand ourselves and in the ways in which we feel secure about acting in the world. (Barnett 2000, p. 257)

Thus, 'a higher education curriculum [should] foster human beings that are able to flourish amid uncertainty and incessant change' (Barnett, 2001, p.164). In examining the curriculum in higher education, Barnett and Coate (2005) put forth a pattern or schema of higher education curricula that encompasses three dimensions, namely, those of knowing, acting, and being. The knowing domain refers to discipline-specific competences, which is the kind of knowledge required to become discipline specialists. By the action domain, they refer to competencies that are developed through doing; we can apply this to music in the sense of praxis whether performing, composing or listening. Finally, the domain of being refers to the identity that students develop in higher education through 'self-drive and self-critique' (p.113) that leads to a sense of the authentic self, a level of autonomy and engagement.

Despite such innovative curricular conceptions, dilemmas persist on whether 'the curriculum is a given or... is entirely the result of power struggles between groups with competing claims for including and legitimising their knowledge and excluding others' (Moore and Young, 2001, p. 453). Thus, power struggles revolve around the curriculum as a structure (the subjective) within the social field of higher education (the objective). This is

largely due to the hierarchical nature of the field in which agents in dominant and subordinate positions participate in power struggles (Bourdieu, 1988).

*Structure and Agency*

Structure and agency as concepts in higher music education curricula raise significant questions regarding the extent to which students or lecturers have a modicum of freedom within curriculum and pedagogy. Ashwin (2008) argues that very little attention has been paid to the issue of structure and agency in literature and research on teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education. He questions the extent to which individuals are inevitably constrained by particular social settings, and whether institutions can actually be changed by the actions of individuals in a micro-context or whether this depends on a macro-societal level. In order to affect change, Ashwin (2008) proposes that we need to make the social interaction between individuals and wider social structure in higher education more explicit by interrogating the structure/agency dialectic in higher education He states:

> The separation of the perceptions or social practices of academics from those of students can also have the effect of over emphasising the degree of agency that they have in determining their action, because it takes attention away from the degree to which the roles of students and academics are structured by the expectations of the other, and the institutional and cultural norms associated with these roles. (Ashwin 2008 p. 155)

Therefore, the degree to which it has been claimed that students or academics have agency is in danger of being overemphasised, particularly when studies are confined to one perspective only i.e. that of teacher *or* learner.

Music as a social activity requires practical understanding and many musical forms and genres require theoretical understanding as well as practical understanding (see Barnett 1990, p.33). The curriculum can be seen as a *structure* that is often representative of ideological and cultural traditions and values, but it can also be seen as *structured* by wider forces such as limited department resources and lecturer expertise. In terms of progression, students may need requisite knowledge and skills to negotiate both the core curriculum content and in many cases, electives that require the successful progression from prerequisite modules.

For Bourdieu (1977b) structures relate to logical principles. As a consequence, we can understand that when knowledge and by extension, the curriculum are constructed within the higher education field, they appear both logical and practical. As we shall see later, the curriculum is often designed around the logical and practical expertise of the faculty but it

also becomes modified when external agents superimpose changes in resources or increase student numbers. Thus, changes to curriculum structure can emerge from the internal dynamic of the music department on one hand, and through increasing external forces within and beyond higher education policy on the other.

As evidenced in Chapter Five, students need requisite knowledge and skills as well as motivation and determination necessary to successfully negotiate the curriculum. The curriculum can also be seen as a structure in the ways it determines modes of assessment as well as entry requirements for each music course. In some cases, the curriculum is designed around the expertise of the lecturers, and if lecturers do not have the relevant expertise in particular genres they can be excluded, for example the absence of Irish traditional music in the curriculum at TCD. Depending on the hierarchical structures within each university/college, Heads of Departments may be in a position to design curricula autonomously as they see fit, or they may feel obliged to honour past traditions and practices within the institution.

Within the state sponsored higher education system, some institutions have had the prestige and resources to position themselves favourably within the 'market' without changing their 'discourse or its organisation to maintain their power and position' (Bernstein 2000, p. 69) and they have been able to attract enough students to maintain their predominantly introjected academic projects. By contrast, (and as we shall see in Chapter Seven), other music departments have come under increasing financial pressure from competitive forces in the higher education market whereby institutional hierarchies override any autonomy they previously enjoyed by forcing curriculum change in the interests of increasing student numbers. Thus, not all curricular decisions are made by Heads of Music Departments and the lecturers. Often, decisions are made by authorities outside of the Music Department as a result of budgetary constraints, thereby limiting the agency of *lecturers* in these contexts.

In the data that permeates this chapter, I consider the curriculum as structure and agency in three ways. First, I examine the context of core and elective modules within music curricula and how these represent ideological assumptions of musical value in the framework of the traditionalist and technical instrumentalist paradigms. Second, I consider the diverse musical backgrounds that students and lecturers have as structure and agency in negotiating the curriculum and in making meaning from their experiences of teaching and learning. Third, and following on from Chapter Five, I explore the extent to which knowledge and

knowing as structure and agency limits or assists in giving students access to a higher music education.

*Curriculum Paradigms*

Moore and Young (2001) suggest two distinct curriculum paradigms, the *neo-conservative traditionalist* and *technical instrumentalist* paradigms. In the former, requisite knowledge is assumed whereby canons of knowledge are paramount and changes to the curriculum are resisted. In this paradigm, immersion in a sound knowledge base lies at the heart of a discipline. Moreover, reverence to the bodies of knowledge are created in the discipline where a 'respect for authority and protects traditional values' (p.447) is created. The changing social context as well as the idea of knowledge as situated is ignored in preference for beliefs in the actual existence of knowledge that is tangible and real. According to Moore and Young (2001), these worldviews give rise to changes in the curriculum that seem 'invariably *ad hoc* and pragmatic' (p.450). This is described by Barnett and Coate's (2005) as the conceptualisation of 'curriculum as culture'.

In contrast to the neo-conservative traditionalist paradigm is that of the *technical instrumentalist*. From this perspective, the traditionalist curriculum is seen as elitist and outdated. Thus, arguments in meeting the demands of the market including the recruitment of students and ensuring their future employability are asserted, while knowledge and learning become means to an end. Contrasting starkly with the traditionalist curriculum which has a liberal educational aim at its core, the ideals of technical-instrumentalism aims to promote flexibility and relevance for the knowledge society (Young and Moore 2001, p.448).

**The Classification and Framing of Knowledge**

Before presenting an analysis of four contrasting curriculum outlines from four separate institutions included in this study, in which I draw from the work of Basil Bernstein (1971), I wish to inquire into his theories of pedagogy and how these relate to the curriculum. Underpinning Bernstein's theories (1971; 2000; 2003) is the examination and explication of the way power and control function within pedagogic settings and relations. He uses his theory to analyse the structure of what he calls three message systems, namely: the curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. The curriculum planning context such as the music department can constitute a site for ideological assumptions of knowledge value and a struggle for control. Within this context, we can see curriculum planning as a process where

'organisational, discursive and transmission' practices about a disciplinary field such as music and its curriculum practices are negotiated (Bernstein 2003, p.3). Therefore, the curriculum planning context is a site for the play of ideology and particularly the site for the struggle of control. In what Bernstein calls his theory of educational codes, he introduces the principles that influence the nature of pedagogic relations and curriculum, and later his theory of knowledge. Thus, for Bernstein, power relations influence the way knowledge is generated, legitimised, and reproduced within a pedagogic context. Moreover, control relations define the legitimate forms of communication within these categories. These relationships of power and control are expressed through the concepts of classification and framing.

*Classification* refers to the degree to which boundaries between categories such as agencies, agents, structures or practices are maintained, while *framing* refers to the context in which knowledge is transmitted or received (Bernstein, 1971, p. 205). Classification and framing can be weak or strong. If we consider the university context where boundaries between disciplines maintain distinction, classification is strong. A clear division can be found between the content of disciplines in which the disciplines are strongly insulated for example, a BA in Irish Traditional Music. Strong classification between categories creates, not only divisions between the content of the discipline but also divisions between those who participate in the various disciplinary contexts. Thus, strong classification creates a strong sense of identity and belonging for agents. When agents have been socialized into particular disciplines, their identity is strongly tied to those disciplines. Where there are attempts to weaken the boundaries between categories, be they knowledge, disciplinary, or even status categories, this may create resistance since it can threaten identities. In summary, classification relates to power and to relations between categories. In the data discussed shortly, classification refers to the curriculum, while framing refers to pedagogy.

Swanwick (1988) explores the dialectic of strong and weak framing through the terms instruction and encounter and while he acknowledges that both are important in formal education, it is not possible to guarantee encounter within the curriculum. Rather, music educationalists can 'bring about a state of readiness, so that encounters become more likely and more significant' (Swanwick 1988, p.138). However, it could be argued that weak framing or music as encounter can provide the impetus for further learning and make instruction more easily digestible. Since Swanwick's position in 1988, there have been numerous studies on the successful implementation of informal learning approaches and their application to formal education settings (Finnegan, 1989; Green, 2008).

The acquisition of meaningful knowledge according to motivation and needs without systematic instruction can be found in situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Moreover, when education supports the dominant value system or ideology and the more that it is standardised, the greater the possibility of undermining other value systems of perceived minority groups. In reference to music education, a Eurocentric conception of music education dominates many conservatoires and universities with implicit values of superiority in regard to other musics (Vulliamy and Shepherd, 1984; Small, 1998; Nettl, 1995, Green 2002; 2003; Boyce-Tillman 2004). By contrast, Western classical music in education and in the wider public sphere is under threat from the hegemonic position of popular culture (I will expand on this shortly).

## An Analysis of Four Distinct Music Curricula

Drawing from Moore's paradigms and Bernstein's theory of classification, I present a comparison of four music curricula from four distinct institutions offering music at undergraduate level (see Table 6.1). Institution A and B comprise universities offering BA and BMus programmes and institutions C and D comprise a conservatoire and institute specialising in music performance

In the case of Institution A, the classification of the music curriculum appears to be strong in the way modules in the theory of Western classical music are prioritised. This closely reflects the traditionalist paradigm as explained earlier. Indeed, it could be argued that the titles alone are helpful for the prospective student in specifying what is included or excluded in terms of genre. In terms of the electives, there are substantially more options in the realm of history and analysis before and after 1750, than there are in world music and area studies. Moreover, the division of electives into the era staples of Western classical music (e.g. the high baroque, the symphony from Beethoven to Mahler), is explicit. The performance component offers two modes of engagement namely choral singing and orchestral performance. Absent from the core performance modules are Irish traditional ensembles, guitar ensembles or jazz ensembles, for example. While popular music may be referred to pedagogically throughout the programme, and would seem implicit in the world music elective, it is not clear whether this is actually included. Thus, the music and practices of the Western classical tradition are given pride of place in the curriculum.

In contrast, Institution B makes two modules on Listening and Literacy mandatory and the rest comprises a suite of electives from which students choose throughout their degree at

various time-points. No prerequisites are required to access any of the modules thus ensuring that the entire programme is inclusive. However, after an analysis of the module outlines, what is evident and distinct from Institution A, is the weak classification of the discipline in terms of genre. For example, modules such as 'music and ideas' and 'music and culture' could apply to any genre as does the performance studies option. From a student's perspective, this presents as a very open and broad curriculum which may not require prerequisite knowledge of music theory and notation after the first year. However, on closer investigation of the backgrounds of the academic staff in both institutions, the ways in which both curriculums are designed illustrate not only divisions between the content of the discipline, but also divisions between the music specialisms of those teaching in these various contexts.

As we can see from Table 6.2, the classification of both curricula is stronger in Institution D than in Institution C. The popular music course on offer at Institution D is defined in terms of its relevance to the commercial music business, thus it resembles the *instrumentalist* paradigm of education very strongly. Modules such as business, management, commercial songwriting, and artist development and entrepreneurship, represent the values inherent in vocational training and more specifically, music industry interests. Moreover, from the course outline, the cultural value of non-commodity popular music practices does not seem apparent. As a result, it would appear to serve the commodity-oriented aspects of popular music production. By way of contrast, Institution C while attending to a more vocational type of training in terms of performance, is also strong in terms of classification of genre. Aside from a generic module in creativity, teamwork and innovation, the development of music performance and musicianship skills is presented without a commodity-oriented focus. Although Western art music is at the core of the programme, provision is made for students from Irish traditional and jazz backgrounds to retain this focus, albeit within the framework of a curriculum founded on theories, techniques, histories and repertoire of the Western art tradition. So, how might the two distinct paradigms as represented here impact on the broader higher education agenda?

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Table 6.1 Contrasting Music Curricula in Two Universities

| Institution A    BA BMus (3 yr/4yr) | | Institution B    BA/BMus (3yr/4yr) |
|---|---|---|
| **Core Modules 1ˢᵗ Year**<br>Irish Music and Musicianship<br>Theory and Analysis of Tonality I<br>Theory and Analysis of Tonality II<br>Introduction to Musicology I<br><br>**Core Modules 2ⁿᵈ Year**<br>Theory and Analysis of Tonality III<br>Counterpoint I (Modal and Tonal)<br>Introduction to Musicology II<br>Research Paper<br><br>They also have to take one of the following optional modules:<br>Studies in Irish Music<br>Musics of the World<br><br>**Core Modules 3ʳᵈ Year**<br>Dissertation/Recital | **Performance Studies (throughout)**<br>Philharmonic Choir or<br>Choral Scholars or<br>Symphony Orchestra Electives<br>**History and Analysis of Music before and after 1750**<br>Coming to know Medieval Song<br>The High Baroque<br>Studies in Early Music Notation<br>The Symphony from Beethoven to Mahler<br>Modernism and Avant-garde<br>Techniques of Musical Analysis<br>From Concert Overture to Symphonic Poem<br>**World Music and Area Studies**<br>African-American Religious Music<br>Music and Film Cultures<br>Introduction to Ethnomusicology<br><br>**Seminars**<br>Seminar in Musicology<br>Seminar in Ethnomusicology<br>Seminar in Analysis and Composition | **Compulsory in 1ˢᵗ year only:** Listening and Literacy I and II<br><br>**A Suite of Electives from which students can choose:**<br>Music and Ideas I and II<br>Performance Studies (Individual instrumental or vocal tuition as appropriate, 12 x 1hr Gamelan Ensemble).<br>Special Study<br>Information technology and Musical Scholarship<br>Music and Culture I and II<br>Creating Music<br>Special Interest Option<br>History and Theory of Ethnomusicology<br>Ethnography of Music<br>Research Dissertation<br>Musicology and Text I and II<br>Noise<br>Praxis I and II<br>Agoria<br>Composing with computers<br>Theorising digital arts |

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**Table 6.2** Contrasting Music Curricula in Music Performance Degrees

| Institution C BMus (4yr) | | Institution D BA (4yr) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Core Modules Throughout**<br>Core Instrumental Studies<br>Core Musicianship Skills<br>Repertory Engagement<br><br>**Core Modules 1st Year**<br>Music History: Perspectives<br>Creativity, Innovation and Teamwork<br>Performing Traditions<br>Music and Technology<br><br>**Core Modules 2nd Year**<br>17th and 18th Century Music<br>19th – 21st Century Music<br><br>**Core Modules 3rd/4th Year**<br>Dissertation/Recital | **Electives (beginning in 2nd Year)**<br>Introduction to Music Education<br>Community Music/Music Therapy<br>Music and Technology<br>Introduction to Orchestration<br>Concerto I, II<br>Recital I, II, III<br>Chamber Music I, II<br>Vocal Accompaniment<br>Conducting and Orchestration I, II<br>Counterpoint I, II, III<br>Composition Project I, II, III<br>Music History 1890-1945<br>Women in Music<br>Advanced Studies in Irish Trad<br>Instrumental Folk Tradition<br>Class Teaching I, II, III, IV<br>Community Project I, II<br>European Music to 1600<br>Opera Studies | **Core Modules 1st Year**<br>Artist Development and Entrepreneurship<br>Music Business and Study Skills<br>**Options 1st year**<br>Arrangement Analysis<br>Essential Styles<br>Live Performance workshop<br>Music theory and arrangement<br>Music theory and notation<br>Pre-production and live performance workshop<br>Songwriting techniques<br><br>**Core Modules 2nd Year**<br>Applied Music Business and Study Skills<br>Music in context<br>**Options 2nd year**<br>Cultural Perspective<br>Research methods<br>Theory and Transcription<br>Commercial Band Management<br>Music publishing<br>Professional Musicianship<br>Session skills<br>Studio recording<br>The songwriter/producer |
| | | **Core Modules 3rd year**<br>Cultural Perspective<br>Research methods<br>Theory and Transcription<br><br>**Options 3rd year**<br>Commercial Band Management<br>Music publishing<br>Professional Musicianship<br>Session skills<br>Studio recording<br>The songwriter/producer<br><br>**Core Modules 4th year**<br>Analytical Perspectives<br>Personal and Business Development<br>Professional Project<br>**Options 4th year**<br>Commerical Songwriting<br>Ensemble performance<br>Music Business Studies<br>Music Teaching Practice<br>Solo Performance |

In terms of student numbers, Institutions A and B enrol approximately 60+ students on their initial BA programme and in the case of Institution A, a smaller number of 10 on their BMus programme. Institution C offers places to approximately 30 students while Institution D which established the popular music course in 2011 currently has five times more students (160 students in second year) and almost seven times more students (200 in first year) than Institution C. The demand for this course, which it could be argued is long overdue in Ireland, has had an impact on the number of points that students need to achieve in the Leaving Certificate and I examine this in further detail in Chapter Seven. At this juncture however, I wish to return to the idea of structure and agency as well as how classification of the curriculum impacts on students' and lecturers' musical backgrounds and experiences of learning and teaching in higher education

Consider the appointment of lecturers to posts in higher music education for a moment. It would seem from the curriculum and the websites that they are appointed on the basis of their expertise in particular areas of music or musical techniques. For example, in modules on counterpoint, music of the baroque era may comprise a strong focus within a module as well as an understanding of figured bass and continuo playing. This calls for expertise in keyboard skills as well as an indepth knowledge of stylistic features. Academic appointments may be made on the basis of the module needs within the cultural and historical tradition of the music department. Thus, the curriculum can be seen as structured and classified by the expertise and backgrounds of the faculty.

*Classification and Framing*

Having explained how curricula and subjects appear to be classified, I should like to return now to consider Bernstein's (1971) concept of framing. *Framing* refers to the way in which the pedagogical context is controlled. It concerns who makes decisions about the selection, sequencing, pacing, and criteria for assessment of the content. As with classification, framing can be strong or weak. Where framing is strong, the teacher is in control over the various aspects of pedagogy. Where framing is weak, learners have some control over some or all aspects of pedagogy. Or where it is strong, such as within a curriculum development process, Heads of Music Departments may have more control over what constitutes appropriate curriculum content.

*Strong Classification, Strong Framing:*

Maria was in her third year of a BMus at a university and explained her frustration at the way in which the curriculum limited her pathway as a performer. She has not practiced her main instrument piano regularly since first year because of the design of the course. It seems that if she wished to continue piano lessons, she would have had to continue this privately outside of the college timetable and at her own expense. Moreover, she would not be assessed on this activity until fourth year where a recital option is offered:

> *Maria (3<sup>rd</sup> year, Classical Music Background)*
> G: So are you going to major in performance next year or is it research focused?
> M: Well like that's the really terrible thing, I would love to do performance but like, it's presupposed that you'd be keeping up your piano lessons outside of college you know with like, a renowned teacher. So, like it's really only for the avid performer who is already doing recitals is going to choose that particular option. So, like it's elitist then, you know, the supposition that someone will just be preparing for that in their spare time from first year onwards, like I don't have that much spare time you know, I have a part-time job.

The options Maria has in lieu of performance are that she specialises in either composition or musicology, neither of which appealed to her. In this example, strong classification in curriculum design has limited her choices. These are of particular concern because she perceives what could be best described as a liberal education serving her poorly in terms of employment prospects. Moreover, she describes how the strong framing in musicology class has left her disenchanted with music and musicology:

> G: So you're not going to choose that option, what else is on offer then?
> M: I'm doing musicology, just the theory of music which I used to like but have really grown to detest it… like we spend a two hour music history class on a 14 bar piece, I'm like what is the point in that? (laughs) I just I don't see the point and I know like I would sit beside some friends and we're just going, it's not the bloody cure for cancer you know?... like (laughs) nobody cares if I know every note that's in Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (laughs)...


*Weak Classification, Weak Framing*

In the following focus group excerpt, students express disdain at the way the curriculum appears to be designed around the interests of lecturers and not the students as well as the weak framing of content in terms of the assessment:

*Focus Group no 1:*

S1: Like we all know there's such an academic kind of bullshit to the contemporary music stuff you know, like I know we had to create a piece and most people just created something random and then talked backwards around it you know kind of bullshit and then they excelled in it! ...like it loses all credibility as far as I am concerned with what they're teaching. I was failed for that and I put proper theory behind it. I would have been better off throwing rice in the air and dancing on it like some people did!

G: So do you not think that kind of free composition is a good thing?

S2: Well I personally think it's all well and good having a taste of that, but we seem to get lots of it because of what the lecturers are interested in. It all seems to revolve around them.

It could be argued that elective options such as the example of sonic art exploration above provide a sense of freedom and scope for teachers and learners. However, if the selection/choice of elective or content is made by the teacher, then what is worth teaching and learning is strongly classified and framed thus serving as a reminder of power and control of the selection and transmission of knowledge. In the example above, the classification and framing of music as a subject has in the opinion of one of the students limited his further study and career opportunities because of an emphasis on breadth over depth.

*Weak Classification, Strong Framing*

In another university, lecturer Dr Ian O'Brien told me that he ended up lecturing in popular music and culture because of his ethnomusicological background and because of his own research interests at the time:

> *Dr Ian O'Brien (Bimusical/Ethnomusicology Background)*
> ...this was brought in because of my interest in it and... I felt it was beneficial for my research at the time... I was researching a particular area that I used a lot of concepts from popular musicology...

He described how he engaged the students in analysis but when the module became extremely popular the numbers in class precluded him from engaging meaningfully in class. He had to revert to a lecture format and discuss more socio-cultural aspects of the music instead. Therefore, in this instance his pedagogical style was curtailed due to the demand for the module and consequent large student numbers.

> *Dr Ian O'Brien (Bimusical/Ethnomusicology Background)*
> We looked at some sociological aspects, the analysis of popular music, the identity, possibly authenticity that whole thing, which worked fine up to a point...it started off

with a small class which was quite discussion led and had quite a lot of input from students but because of change in structure here a couple of years ago, it suddenly went from being a 30 or 40 size class to being a 120 or 130, and the topic didn't. work for a larger number...so I took a major decision last year to change it. It still retains some of that approach but it's now going to be more it's now more of a chronological, historical approach...

*Strong Classification, Weak Framing (curtailed):*

In the following interview excerpt, a student explains how an innovative pedagogy by one particular lecturer was curtailed because it was frowned upon by other lecturers at this institution:

*Sarah (2nd year, Classical Music Background)*

S:    When we were doing musicianship, the theory lecturer related a lot of what we were doing to like contemporary music, like we were listening to songs on the radio and then when we had other lecturers I was like why are we not still doing that? But there's a position in the teacher's heads here you know, that that shouldn't be done and this teacher is the only one who does it, he's almost put down for it, like teachers don't like it. I mean that's because they're so used to learning the old-fashioned way, it is kind of closed off a bit. Like when he took the choir, he tried to do some modern repertoire with us you know, and then it stopped all of a sudden and you could see the irritation in him because he's been told what pieces to do.

G:    And how do you know this?

S:    Well, I know because [x] said to me 'when he comes in here telling me all about this new repertoire, I don't want to hear anything about it'.

G:    Why do you think that is then?

S:    It's an elitist, a snobbish attitude you know? If it's not classical, it's inferior But like the irony is when we're doing teaching methods we're told to relate stuff to what someone already knows which is exactly what he was doing in the first place.

## Music Education Curricula: Reproduction of Musical Values

Historical perspectives are also important to consider at this point because curriculum content is often borne out of historical and cultural assumptions of knowledge deemed to be valuable as well as efforts to preserve tradition and ethos within a university. This becomes problematic when perspectives go unquestioned, thereby affording ideological assumptions about valued knowledge as natural and given. Furthermore, the complexity of curriculum formation and integration can be found in the reproduction of value-laden assumptions at

policy level and in the classroom. Green (2003) asserts that schooling and more specifically the music classroom enable the perpetuation of ideologies, not least ideologies about musical value.

As outlined in Chapters One and Two, history reveals that for over half of the twentieth century and beyond, music in schools was dominated by the Western classical tradition (Campbell, 1991; Volk, 1998). This hierarchical conception of music education was questioned in the 1970s by a minority of music educators who began to argue that popular music should be included in music curricula and that resulted in the comparable validation of both popular and classical music in pitting one against the other (Green, 2003). And although some qualities were shared between both musics, teachers often neglected the differing practices, for example, informal learning, and taught popular music from a Western classical perspective. Thus, much of what music educators have taught in the past and continue to teach reflects an ideology grounded in the conservatoire or university, of paradigms, standards of 'good' music and aesthetic terms of musical value. And it is in the hidden curriculum that the reproduction of such values occurs.

## The 'Hidden' Curriculum

The term 'hidden curriculum' refers to the invisible rules of the game that students face when encountering the curriculum. While I examined the course outlines earlier and their respective institutional faculties, what is not explicit is how students negotiate the curriculum. As we shall see, this often depends on their musical backgrounds or *habitus* and prior music education whereby students with cultural capital are perceived by lecturers to be particularly talented and motivated while those with less relevant cultural capital (in this case knowledge and skills) are seen as a burden on an already widening student population. Coupled with the notion that students bring different (musical) skills and knowledge with them to higher education, the other side to the hidden curriculum can be seen as a structure which affords opportunity and success to some, while acting as a deliberate form of gatekeeping by excluding other students (Barnett and Coate, 2005).

In a study by Pitts (2003) on the presence of the hidden curriculum within a university music department and the shaping of students' experiences, issues of student-staff relationships, expectations of learning, and values communicated within the department and how these related to students' sense of self-worth and affirmation were explored. Her findings showed how 'Learning, personality and opportunity thus become entwined in

students' experience of a music degree, and these aspects of the 'hidden curriculum' assume a powerful role' (Pitts, 2003, p.282).

In this study a number of themes emerged that illustrated the power of the hidden curriculum in students' experiences and encounter with lecturers, the music department and their peers. John, a mature student who commutes to college over forty miles each day, explained how the different levels of musical knowledge and skills that he and a few peers have inhibited their engagement and learning style in class. This was because there was an expectation among lecturers and peers that students ought to have this knowledge already. According to John, musical knowledge and skills within the Western art tradition are assumed without due recognition of the musical backgrounds of everyone in class:

*Expected Knowledge and Skills in Class*

> *John (Mature Student, 2nd Year, Jazz Background)*
> Like there's a there's an element of elitism and an element of kind of snobbery that runs through the thing, say...in the musicianships skills subject... we're working from a book called Aural Matters...well it's funny the book has like world music, it has jazz music but we always seem to end up with Haydn or Mozart you know? So it's (laughs)...like you're kind of expected to understand what a ritornello is, to understand what sonata form and like in fairness, you might have studied what sonata form is...that's fine you understand it, but to play through a minuet trio and then you're asked where the ritornello is? Like that needs to be pointed out if you haven't a background in that...

I went on to ask him if he would ask for an explanation in class. In his reply, he expressed feeling embarrassed as a result of the class atmosphere

> *G:* Would you not just ask in class if you didn't know?
> *J:* Well, I would but the atmosphere is very, you know, like I'd be sort of looked at as if you know, gosh, he doesn't even know what this means, and you know that wouldn't necessarily just be the lecturer (laughs) but the weird thing is, I wouldn't be alone there either.
> *G:* So, are there others who would feel the same in that situation then?
> *J:* Just two or three of us really, you know we'd all maybe experience the same you know kind of, you really should know this already...
> *G:* And would they have strong music theory backgrounds then?
> *J:* Well, no of course not. They would be like me you know more jazz and trad, you know really good players now, but not great in terms of music history or theory.

It would seem that a minority of students in the class feel the same way and in this instance, he pointed out commonalities between their musical backgrounds and prior music theory

tuition. This was also experienced by Sadhbh who even with her strong musical background found the pace very fast and emphasises how if she finds this difficult, then others must be 'falling out of the boat':

> *Sadhbh (1ˢᵗ Year, Classical Music Background)*
> S:    ...like at the minute it's still very hard we're learning things that we've never heard of it all before...we're expected to just know it... I feel if we ask a question we're looked at as if we've ten heads, that we can't pick it up as quick and you would say well I must be advantaged because I'm almost at grade eight now, so like, it's explained once and then we come in the next day we're just told to you know, do it, and we'll all be looking around going what is it? Like we've only done it for an hour the day before!
> G:    Ok, and have other people said the same thing as you have?
> S:    Yeah, I think it is kind of the general feeling... it's hard to pick it up as easily as they want us to pick it up... like I've done. a lot of music outside of school so I would have thought when I came in I'd have that advantage but everyone's in the same boat. There are people who have done their grade eight in theory and still finding it hard and then there's people who haven't done anything other than Leaving Cert Music and they're falling out of the boat (laughs), you know it's very hard...

According to Alan, a Welsh student from an informal jazz background, his encounter with a lecturer in class initially intimidated him but he now feels that it has been beneficial. Moreover, he emphasises the importance of challenging the lecturer by asking questions. It is possible to see this incident as a form of agency for his future learning:

> *Alan (1ˢᵗ year, Guitar, Jazz background):*
> A:    Possibly the most important thing I think is not being too afraid to speak up, like I remember the first thing I ever said in an analysis lecture was, that's a sequence and I was completely and utterly just destroyed (laughs) by the lecturer who I was slightly afraid of for the next couple of weeks, but he's all right now he's nice...
> G:    Did that did that deter you from speaking up again?
> A:    Only for a while I think, I was deterred for a small amount of time though I think I realized, I learned then that just because 'cos it has that tiny difference, it's not a sequence, so I probably would have gone the rest of the year thinking, oh well that's a sequence if I hadn't spoken out...
> G:    And how did your peers react, did they think the same as you then, you know that it's better to find out?
> A:    Oh God no, there was a lot of everyone looking down at the ground you know (laughs), everyone just looking down.

I also followed this up in the second focus group discussion to see how different expectations and experiences might be expressed. In this example, the students refer to the importance of

acquired knowledge and skills from extra-curricular tuition or from particular musical backgrounds:

> *Focus Group No 3:*
>
> S7: People sort of forget you can have music though and not have all that theoretical stuff before you get here but first year doesn't really allow for that, you're kind of just zoned in on catching up with the theory and if you think you're not good at that particular part of music it's well, give up then isn't it?
>
> G: So, do you think that's a talent an ability to be able to do the theory or what is it?
>
> S3: The history and stuff you just learn it off but things like the dictation and stuff obviously you need some sort of musical ability to do that.
>
> G: Yeah but can it be learned? Do you know what I mean could it actually be acquired during first year and after first year as opposed to assuming you can do it from the get go?
>
> S4: Well they wouldn't teach you in college like, you'd have to do it yourself if you want to acquire the skills to do that.
>
> S2: I don't think something like dictation could be kind of learned you know well that late on in it needs to be something that's kind of built in from a young age...

## Social Reproduction and Musical Experience: Musicality and Talent

Students' musical preferences are often at odds with those on the curriculum, however if music educators label their tastes as un-aesthetic and by implication their abilities as unmusical, there is a consequence of demusicalization; students are taught that they are unmusical (Small, 1998). Although Small attributes school as just one of a number of factors in the demusicalization process, he locates a covert chain of school music practice: 1) The music we teach is the only real music; 2) You do not like this music or you are not competent in our music; 3) ergo, you are not musical. He relates specifically to the American band music tradition but this can also be applied to the higher education context under focus here.

During interviews with students it became apparent that other students had dropped out of the course because they found it too difficult as well as those who had contemplated exiting because they felt that they didn't 'fit in'. I now present two examples: One from a student whose friend had considered leaving the course and another from John, who describes what we might call a critical incident that made him feel like he is overcompensating for his lack of a formal musical background.

Hannah described how the pedagogical style of one of the vocal tutors had affected her friend's experience who it seems had very different expectations of the course. Coming from

an informal popular music background, her friend was told that she was singing incorrectly all along despite the fact that she was offered a place after an audition:

> *Hannah (2<sup>nd</sup> Year, Classical Music Background)*
> There's a girl in our year who has been gigging around the place for years and she's someone who did not realize what she signed up for and so when she started singing the yellow Aria book she was kind of shocked. Like she got into the course and then they told her, you've been singing all wrong, so she feels now that she's at a disadvantage to the rest of us.

Because of this student's interest and engagement with popular music outside of the course itself, Hannah explains how this prompted a vocal tutor to interrogate her about her rationale for studying 'here'. This has impacted on her friend's experience so much so that she has contemplated exiting the course:

> Anyway, she went away with a band for three weeks to the states, which was a big deal really, so she went to tell the Head, and it did not go down well. She was basically asked why are you *here*? Why are you studying here then? Like I can see where they're coming from but I think in second year there should be more support because now she hates the course, she doesn't want to be here at all.

While we could understand the concern expressed at this student's three week absence to pursue a musical engagement abroad, it begs the question that had the student been offered a deputy role in an opera for that time, would it have spurned the same queries? That the student may have needed to take on this work for financial reasons moreover, may not even have been considered in the exchange between student and vocal tutor. Although this is an interpretation of the events from both the student, her friend and me as researcher, it does highlight the extent to which the hidden curriculum within the conservatoire has altered the student's experience and enjoyment of the course so much so that she has considered leaving.

## Case Studies of Conservatoire Students

Students John and Thomas were both mature conservatoire students in the second and third year of course respectively when I interviewed them. Both had acquired significant experience as musicians before coming to college; John as a session jazz saxophonist and Thomas as an accompanist for musicals and soloist at classical recitals. Their musical backgrounds and their experiences of the curriculum contrasted starkly during the course of the interviews – both in terms of how they felt equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills to negotiate the curriculum and in the way they describe the extent of their success – so

much so, that I feel it necessary to delve into their stories in depth. They are therefore, presented as two minor case studies in the context of the overarching focus of the curriculum in this chapter as well as considering the way in which pedagogy or framing has impacted on their experiences.

'John' developed an interest in music during his teenage years and like many boys at this age began to teach himself the guitar. He then went for some formal tuition in a school of music but decided then to leave guitar playing in favour of the saxophone at the age of seventeen. He moved to Dublin at the age of twenty and decided to pursue a career as a session musician while getting lessons in jazz performance. During this period, he suffered from financial problems and decided to embark on a different course of study in hotel management in order to 'get a livelihood or to get a proper job', however realised that he really wanted to study music so pursued that instead. Before applying to the conservatoire, he undertook an intensive course in music rudiments and theory to be equipped for the entrance test and audition. In his opinion, the audition 'must have got me in 'cos I was completely thrown by the entrance test'. Even with the extra lessons in music theory, he still finds musicianship aspects of the course particularly difficult. However, having sacrificed much to pursue the course, he explained that he ended up failing a module in first year:

> *John, (Mature Student, Jazz Background, Grade 8 Saxophone)*
> ...so over the course of time when I would come across a problem I would kind of hit the nail on the head, you know... where I actually went and said look I'm kind of having a bit of trouble with this you know? Anyway, I had failed two subjects in the same module, so I'd failed harmony and musicianship right so I went to see the musicianship teacher when I came back...

It emerged that the mode of assessment was continuous assessment so he went to speak to the lecturer about his participation in class as well as the result he had been awarded. He explained:

> J:   So she said 'well I think you've a problem with pitch'. I said 'like in what regard?' and she said 'well you know you're singing isn't great, you're quite flat or sharp sometimes' and I said 'that's a problem with singing, not a problem with pitch. I play a pitched instrument that can vary wildly with the pitches if I don't play in tune'. I went home that day and I was frustrated you know? I was pissed off you know, I'm fucking trying as hard as I can. I can't try any harder and like I was really upset over it because I thought I am making the effort you know?

Singing in tune and playing an instrument in tune are different aspects of musicality and musicianship. I experienced this first-hand with a peer in my university who was an

accomplished violinist who found it really hard to pitch notes when she was singing. It turned out that she had very little singing experience as a child. However, when I probed this issue further, it emerged that John's difficulty was actually with dictation and not with recognising pitches or intervals:

> J: Like, every time that I have gone to her she has always presented me with a failing...she'd say I think you've a problem with rhythm, I think you've a problem with pulse. I'm like, I don't have a problem with rhythm you know like I'm a decent fucking musician excuse my language... like you don't have a problem with rhythm if you get a first in performance!
>
> G: So, what do you think she was referring to then?
>
> J: Dictation. That and sightreading. She showed me the exercises and where I'd gone wrong but like, to tell me I have a problem with pitch - that was just insulting.

It would seem that the importance placed on notational skills such as dictation can leave an inexperienced musician feeling inadequate despite the fact that they know they are competent. In this case, John's informal knowledge and skills did not afford him the agency with which to negotiate the curriculum as it has been constructed from a Western classical perspective. Indeed, his perception of the music lecturer's pedagogy was critical in light of his background; something that perhaps a younger student might not challenge. More importantly, he goes on to admit that he feels alienated as a jazz musician in a classical conservatoire. He says:

> J: I think it's assumed you wouldn't be able to do it (the dictation)...it's actually been said to me you know that as a jazz musician in here... like you're going to have to achieve better than everybody else... you're the token black in a way...and you know, being honest about it, only for I'd made so many sacrifices... like I gave up a job you know six months before I came here, like if was 18, I would have dropped out by now...

In contrast to John's case above, Thomas presents the other end of the spectrum in terms of agency. Because of Thomas' musical accomplishments in Western classical music, he was afforded the opportunity to join the course at the beginning of year three. His background is similar in some respects to John, in that neither of his parents are musicians, however they encouraged him to start formal music training at the age of eight with a local teacher and a few years later, he enrolled in a school of music and took mandatory theory lessons. He holds no less than five music diplomas as well as grade eight theory and a degree in mathematics and computer programming. He says that he finds the course demanding but is enjoying the challenge. In his view:

*Thomas (Mature Student, 3rd Year, Maths Degree, 5 Classical Music Diplomas)*

> ...the opportunities here are outstanding really, there's so much we get to do and just to get a really good comprehensive musical training and in all the sorts of fields like even in the technology and all that kind of thing we get to do here so eh, I'm really enjoying it, it's great.

When I asked him whether he thought that success and enjoyment of the course might be related to someone's prior accomplishments in formal music education, he said:

> *T:*   I think you do get taught a lot anyway, so I don't know exactly what the theory expectation is. I think it's around grade six or seven so like I think you should have at least that, but I know people have beyond that as well (sighs) ... I think you should be grade eight on your instrument coming in and then a good theory background and then everything else is catered for then from there quite comprehensively...

Therefore, in Thomas' opinion, incoming students ought to have a high standard of performance achieved and a good background in music theory. He did not seem to be aware of the advantage he had in terms of his musical background and private music education from a young age as he saw himself among peers who 'have beyond that as well'. When I asked him if any of his friends or peers had experienced difficulties with the course content, he said that he hadn't really noticed but that help is available from the beginning if it's needed. He noted the advantage that a classical grounding provides:

> *T:*   Well, I think it's like becoming a singer you need very good classical training first and then you go into musical theatre or something...to just start with pop well people do, but you know they won't be very good, so I think people do need a very thorough classical grounding first and then they can go into their jazz or their whatever... I think be classical first and then dabble in those other kind of things if you are going to be in a place like this, so like if they're struggling with theory then like that's their fault really...

In this excerpt Thomas illustrates an historical prevailing assumption among classical musicians that classical music should provide the foundation and after that one can 'dabble' in other musical genres. Moreover, there is an assumption that 'they' — popular singers/musicians - won't be very good and that if theory causes difficulties, it really is down to the fact that they ought to know what they are letting themselves in for. From another perspective, we can see the reproduction of musical value at play in this excerpt.

Thomas and John present as contrasting cases within the same institution but with varying levels of success and enjoyment. Thomas' extensive music education and experience as an accompanist have given him an advantage over John who appears to be struggling to

prove his musical ability in this context. Nonetheless, John managed to gain access to the course according to himself 'by virtue of my playing' from his experience as a session musician and because he happened to be taking formal lessons in saxophone at the conservatoire prior to his audition. What then of students who have limited prior music education or those who have just had access to state music education? How might social reproduction manifest in accessing music degree courses?

**Access, Opportunity and Social Reproduction**

Green (2003) illustrates the process of social reproduction with reference to class reproduction. She describes how education assists in engendering expectations and in imbuing similar roles and occupations on children as those of their parents. She states that children from lower classes are excluded from music education by their lack of cultural and economic capital '...the implicit prerequisites of music education are both culturally and economically relatively removed from them' (p.18). This resonates strongly with this study as the majority of institutions offering music to degree level in Ireland have criteria for access onto their music programmes and it only makes sense that this favours those who have had private instrumental and theoretical tuition and are financially and culturally supported at home and in school. Furthermore, Rose (2000) questions the problem of access to higher education music courses when she posits 'within music teacher education we need only to look at the required audition process in schools of music to understand the importance of who gets to be a music educator in the first place' (Rose, 2000, p.100). She goes on to suggest that action is needed to examine teacher education in terms of who and how it 'excludes, affirms, or disaffirms' (p.100).

Burt-Perkins and Mills (2009) studied selection procedures within conservatoire performance degrees. They note that although recent policy in the UK has focused on widening participation in higher education through set targets, access to music performance courses is not as clear-cut in the conservatoire. They state: 'the need for applicants to be highly accomplished performers typically requires them to have previously taken instrumental lessons... these lessons are expensive as are the musical instruments...' (Burt-Perkins and Mills, 2009, p.821). Combining quantitative data on students' longitudinal achievement and two case studies of students that did not fit the norms suggested in the results, their research reveals that musical background, A–level music grades, and audition scores were not predictors of high achievement.

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'Helen' began her instrumental lessons later than most at age 11 and did not score particularly high at audition (although she had an A grade in A-level music). However, throughout the programme, she scored consistently higher than 'Sarah' who began her studies earlier and was a scholarship student; consequently, Helen graduated with a first class degree. More significantly, in Helen's narrative account of her experience in higher education, she suffered from much performance anxiety and feelings of inadequacy; sustained by the institutional system, also a recurring theme in other studies (Kingsbury, 1988; Pitts, 2003; Burt and Mills, 2006; Burland and Mills, 2007). In their discussion of the findings, Burt-Perkins and Mills (2009) question the depth of selection criteria at conservatoires suggesting that musical expertise should consider breadth and depth in the audition process. The relevance of this article and the focus of this particular study lie in the continued debate within Irish music education on the suitability of candidates for music degree courses. Using the criteria exemplified in Burt-Perkins and Mills (2009), auditions are also used in the selection process of candidates for consideration in music degrees in Ireland.

In contrast to the conservatoire emphasis on performing skills, a study by Burland and Pitts (2007, p.299) found that while students beginning a music degree also had anxieties around performing and felt a little intimidated by the 'level of some of the other players', their abilities were also being defined by their academic skills rather than performing ability. The authors highlight the need for lecturers to be aware and trained in induction practices for students who find the outset of higher education music courses challenging and intimidating.

In one of the focus groups, I posed a question around access to the course and how the students had realised success in this regard. In this context, the students had to complete an application form within the context of a BA programme and then had to sit an entrance examination. There were fifty places available and one hundred and fifty students had applied. Prior to the application process, students were invited to peruse various subject areas and ask questions to the academic staff:

> *Focus Group No 2:*
> S1: I didn't want to do anything else but music because I got on well in it in the Leaving Cert...but then when we were initially going to all the different tables deciding what to pick and the music lecturers were there, I was like, I'm definitely not doing music they seem horrible (group agree), they were so cold, like they were like 'oh yeah you shouldn't do it really', you know they were just they were really dismissive and stuff, I was like ok, I think I will anyway just to annoy you!
> S2: They give a really bad attitude to the music department.

S1:   That's true, they were very kind of you know, interested in people who they would say you know, really want to do it. Like if you went to a certain school of music or well-known teacher, they would like all of a sudden, completely change to being really nice.

G:    And would that be the general consensus did you get that vibe across the board?

      (All say yeah)

S7:   There were people who didn't go to just even the written exam because of the reception they got.. They just found it was kind of elitist, you know, like, if you're just a trad player, they were like, you'll be really lost unless you've got your theory.

At a different university, Lorcan, a final year music student with a classical music background explains what knowledge he thinks is needed and expected at entry:

*Lorcan (4th Year, Classical Music Background)*

L:    Well the first step is whether you get in and I can't speak for other places. I know other colleges do it differently but certainly here, to get in you have to have a modicum of music knowledge of the type that you are more likely to get through classical education, you know? Like people can do it through other ways as evidenced by the fact that they got in at all but that certainly gives you a leg up and once you get in, if they see that you have this background that you have this knowledge already, you'll be pushed harder.

G:    Harder than those who don't?

L:    Well, everyone is pushed the same amount so that everyone's brought up to the same minimum but if you're at that minimum already, you might be pushed much higher so the more you know going in already, the more extent of a background you have in classical music, or like music that is conscious of its own theory, the easier you'll find it…

What Lorcan insinuates in this excerpt is the extent to which differentiation can take place for the student who already has knowledge and skills relevant to the curriculum they will encounter. Moreover, what he insinuates is that if one has more of a background in classical music, they will be encouraged more so than a student from a non-classical background. This is of course reminiscent of Bourdieu's recognition that the school (or in this case the university) privileges or pushes 'much higher' the student who possesses the preferred habitus and cultural capital, while concomitantly ignoring the habitus and less relevant cultural capital of other students. Furthermore, it would seem that Lorcan's assumption that classical music 'is conscious of its own theory', echoing the arguments made by musicologists of music's autonomy is being socially reproduced in this context.

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*Deviation from Genres Norms*

In the interviews and focus group discussions, one issue related to the hidden curriculum that emerged was how students felt restricted to overt performing of 'other' musical styles such as popular and rock music. In an interview, Dr Jane Strong noted another lecturer's intolerance when students appeared to be practicing or spontaneously performing popular music in the practice rooms:

> *Dr Jane Strong (Classical Music Background)*
>
> J:    Well...he tells our students to stop playing popular music in the practice rooms and I'm like they're playing something come on...
>
> G:    And are the students aware then if they are rehearsing something and it's like what are you playing in here? Have you seen some of their reactions?
>
> J:    Yeah, I think it's surprising, 'cos they'll be playing or whatever and the door will open and then they'll be asked to stop playing what they are playing...I mean it should be for serious practice but it's more of the kind of judgement about what it is that they are playing because sometimes actually even something like Eric Satie will set him off you know?
>
> G:    It's too popular classical?
>
> J:    It's yeah, (laughs) it does sort of shock the students occasionally but I mean that's a personality thing more than anything else.

I followed this thread in a subsequent number of interviews with students in conservatoire contexts. Sarah, the conservatoire student explained that students are 'afraid' to practice popular songs in practice rooms:

> *Sarah (2ⁿᵈ Year, Bimusical Background)*
>
> G:    Would you ever come across students trying out pop music in practice rooms, on their own or in groups?
>
> S:    Well, I would have messed around with some friends in 1ˢᵗ year just playing songs but we soon copped on so definitely not this year.
>
> G:    What do you mean by that?
>
> S:    Like people would be afraid to do it. There's a group of boys and they sort of started a barbershop quartet and were really enjoying it and then one of the singing teachers overheard them in the practice room and said I'll give you pieces to do, but like, he's sort of taken over, you know controlling what they do and like one piece he gave them was actually a hymn (laughs) so like they're going along with it but they do feel restricted.

From the data in this section, it has been shown that the hidden curriculum revealed hidden mechanisms at play in the social reproduction of musical value and valued knowledge and skills. In some cases, students' efforts at speaking out or admitting their different musical backgrounds, were welcomed while in others they were criticised for their Eurocentric

assumptions. In some institutions, attempts by students to perform music in popular genres were implicitly prohibited. Thus, what was valued in the music department was implicitly and explicitly communicated to students via the curriculum and the hidden curriculum.

**Conclusion**

The curriculum can be viewed as a bipartite structure, informed on the one hand by valued knowledge, and shaped on the other hand by the changing student population and demand for college places. Restricted modes of entry to higher music education courses have led to the necessity for applicants to pass an entrance test or audition. In many cases, such processes are indicative of the curriculum as it will be encountered by students so as to inform the applicants of the type of learning and knowledge that is required, as well as assisting the institutions in selecting students deemed suitable for a higher education music degree. In sum, the ways in which valued knowledge associated with the history and tradition of institutions, as well as the valued knowledge of those in positions of power affect both student and lecturer as agents of and for change.

# CHAPTER SEVEN
## HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION AT A CROSSROADS?

**Introduction**

In Chapter Five, I explored the ways in which ideological assumptions of musical value seem to perpetuate the perception of music's worth as synonymous with the privileging of the musical 'product' over the musical 'process'. In this chapter I revisit Bourdieu's concepts of 'capital, 'habitus' and 'field' through a critical examination of the impact of students' musical backgrounds and prior music education on their experiences in higher education. Assumptions of musical value often diverge within the field of higher education as well as the broader public sphere, and it is in this regard that I consider how higher education policy would seem to be both indicative and prescriptive of music's perceived value at university. I begin by presenting data from a symposium on musicology in which pertinent issues were raised about the position of music and musicology in higher education. This event occurred after all previous data had been collected and analysed and so it presented a fortuitous opportunity to observe and listen to multifarious views on the topic as well as triangulate the data further. Moreover, this event represented a pertinent moment within my research for two reasons.

First, the discussions arising during and after the symposium reinforced the relevance of my research topic for music teaching and learning as they had emerged in the data concerning the macro-context of Irish higher education in general, and the micro-context of the music department. Second, changes occurring within general music education and the wider public sphere would seem to be forcing a reconsideration of philosophical concerns within music departments. Thus, the data from student and lecturer interviews on the many local and broader musical concerns also brought ideological assumptions of musical value and knowledge to bear at the symposium. This encapsulated a timely need in the field of music education research to not only document these issues and triangulate the data from multiple sources, but to consider examining the field holistically, and to probe the recurring theme of challenges in higher music education.

After an overview of the issues raised within the symposium itself, I present resonant issues from student and lecturer interviews such as policies of widening access, increasing student numbers and the increasingly changing profiles of music students. From there, I

question the extent to which macro higher education policy agendas and the emergence of popular culture have affected music's value in the academy. In addition, the themes of potential career pathways and the conflict between the idea of liberal education and 'relevance' agendas is discussed. Finally, the data **are** then framed in light of the relationship between students' musical backgrounds, prior music education and their experiences of higher music education in order to further consider the implications of such macro policy agendas.

### 'Pulling at the Fabric of an Entire Worldview'

Earlier in Chapter Two, I traced the development of Irish music degree programmes from historical and sociological perspectives arguing that Western classical music appeared to be the dominant focus within courses. In Chapter Five, it was clear from the student and lecturer views that while more genres would be welcomed in higher music education, there was minimal desire to alter the current emphasis on Western classical music. What role then does musicology play in the perceived dominance of Western classical music? According to Nicholas Cook:

> Musicology (etymologically 'music-word' or 'words about music') is all about the knowledge that underlies the enjoyment of music. When you study the music of other times and places, you need to reconstruct the knowledge that its original composers, performers, or listeners had: how it was made, what kind of social structures supported it, what it meant. In that sense, all music implies its own musicology, for there is no music that does not entail knowledge.
>
> (Cook 1999, p.31)

At first glance, it would seem from Cook's view that in order to enjoy music one must have knowledge about the music. This is clearly disputable given that many people enjoy music and do not have knowledge about the music itself. However, on closer examination, we can interpret Cook's statement differently: in coming to a deeper understanding of music through musical knowledge, one's enjoyment of music is enhanced. While it is not within the scope of this thesis to present an examination of the various branches of musicology, I wish merely to highlight the importance of *knowledge* as pivotal to any discussion on musicology. As investigated in Chapter Five, knowledge and knowing in music are interdependent, yet the importance of musical knowledge comes into sharp focus in the pursuit of an academic qualification in music.

In my role as lecturer in music education and as a council member of the Society for Musicology in Ireland (SMI 2009-2012), I have been privy to many discussions on the topic of students' readiness for the study of music at university. The thrust of such conversations has revolved around the apparent lack of general music knowledge among incoming music students at university, and the consequent attribution of this not only to the second-level music curriculum, but also to the dominance of popular culture in students' lives. The SMI's mission (or object) as outlined in its constitution is to advocate for musicology in all its forms and in the broadest sense of the term:

> The main object for which the body is established is the advancement of education, specifically in the field of musicology, and to promote and foster musical scholarship in all its forms throughout Ireland, North and South...
> 
> (http://www.musicologyirelandcom).

The urge to celebrate musicology and to question the implications of on-going reconfigurations of higher education, and by extension, higher music education, provided the impetus for a special symposium organised by the School of Music at University College Dublin in association with the SMI entitled *Musicology in Ireland: a Symposium*. The reason why I refer to this event in such detail is that many of the issues raised in lecturer and student interviews also came to the fore at this event. In particular, debates discussed in Chapter Two which permeate White's publications (1996; 1998) on the state's complicity in suppressing the historicity of musical experience in exchange for a 'profoundly commodified performance culture' (White, 2012, p.5), raised many questions in regard to the role of music education at this symposium.

*Traditional Musicology?*

The symposium occurred on 4th April 2012 at the Humanities Institute, UCD; a date which coincided with an already scheduled annual guest lecture (the John F. Larchet Memorial Lecture) which was to be given on this occasion by Philip Bohlman, Professor of Music and the Humanities at the University of Chicago. Presentations were made by council members of the SMI, all of whom are lecturers of music in various higher education institutions in Ireland and many contributions and debates ensued throughout the day on the topic of musicology.

Throughout the symposium, a rather dominant representation of traditional musicology prevailed. From a content analysis perspective, the attractive design of the A5 sized glossy black programme cover comprised a photograph of preserved museum scores. Thus, the

representation of traditional musicology in this fashion could be perceived as congruent with the undergraduate music curriculum at it is currently conceived at UCD on the one hand, and the preoccupation with traditional musicology on the other. Second, the language and rhetoric in the introduction clearly articulates musicology as a 'self-standing discipline' and advocates for the promotion of the discipline by enriching the humanities 'in its multiple engagements with history, culture, society and the structural and semantic intelligence of music itself' (White, 2012, p.1). It is the latter half of this statement which caught my attention, for it encapsulates the traditional dominant ideology of music as autonomous art form. As explained in Chapters Two and Five, aesthetic philosophies of music have traditionally separated extrinsic and intrinsic musical values by focusing on the music 'itself' and it would seem that the dominant thrust of the symposium was to reconsider the promotion of this agenda.

The symposium began with an historical overview of musicology in Ireland by Professor of Music at Queen's University Belfast, Jan Smaczny who examined the evolution of musicology within and beyond the island of Ireland. He raised the issue of the closure of music departments in recent years at the University of Exeter in 2002 and at the University of East Anglia in 2011, as well as falling numbers in musicology/ethnomusicology lecturer appointments internationally.

Historically, music in Irish universities has suffered from under-investment and a lack of grant income, leading to what Smaczny described as a 'cynical model' of university music provision. What lecturers and professors appear to be doing in the music department is misunderstood because many departments are geographically separated from main campuses and a perception prevails that people learning music aren't really studying but 'enjoying their hobby'. Thus, as Professor Julian Horton (Head of School, UCD) stated: 'There is a disjoint between freedom of research and a static conception from policy-makers as to what it is we should be doing'. In comparing how this plays out across the humanities, he noted how musicologists tend to be seen as adjunct to performance. He went on to argue that similar charges are not cast at English lecturers in their neglect of Hamlet performances. Moreover, it is the intellectual engagement with the text that is celebrated and legitimated.

White later added that at an assessment exercise for research at his university, the Vice President remarked on the perceived leisurely nature of musical scholarship comparing it with a relaxing hobby. According to White, the perception abounds that musicology is 'time off from the serious business of research'. How and why do such perceptions prevail in and outside of the Academy? White posited that:

> The concept of student demand has materially influenced what we teach and what we research. Music is a primary conduit of popular culture. The challenge which Popular culture poses to musicology is but one. We need to promote the inherent validity in thinking about music.

Other challenges included the perceived indicative nature of a subject's popularity and that higher student intake would then govern what types of courses/modules could be provided. Thus, two prevailing factors would seem to be informing such perceptions about music.

First, the idea that more students ought to be accepted onto college places is a widespread and some would argue laudable, higher education agenda. However, if only a minority of these students have strong musical backgrounds, then it changes the nature of what is included or excluded on the curriculum. And in acknowledging that strong music literacy skills are required for musicology, the focus of the curriculum would have to change to such an extent that it is no longer required. Second, the gap between the axiomatic mode of music and the recreational aspects is reinforced through popular culture. That popular culture and popular music have become ubiquitous phenomena (DeNora, 2000; Green, 2001) would appear to promote what White (1998) describes as the valuing of the recreational prowess of musical experience and the undermining of the value of thinking and writing about music.

In fact, diminishing skills in music literacy emerged as a prevailing issue throughout the symposium in terms of what the study of music ought to entail, its relevance to the study of musicology and the perception of music as a subject in university. White stated, 'The issue of music literacy is one of those worrying things. The cultural imperialism of popular culture is promoting the idea that one generation can decide that it is no longer necessary to study music literacy'. He equated the diminishing emphasis on music literacy to the study of literature and languages by comparing a hypothetical scenario whereby French departments would ask students to merely speak French without having to engage with any French literature.

Thus, it would seem that multifarious perceptions of the study of music in higher education manifest not only in musicological circles, but also in the wider higher education sphere. And reducing the emphasis on music literacy represents an attack on what some believe to be a particularly intellectual engagement with Western musical culture. However, when external structures superimpose their presuppositions on what it is that music students and lecturers actually do, as Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin has argued during his interview, we start to: 'pull at the fabric of an entire worldview'.

While Ó Súilleabháin is correct in describing a worldview based solely on assumptions and beliefs, rather it is through the legitimated discourses surrounding the development of Western classical/art music that were born in the eighteenth century that such worldviews have been constructed. As Bohlman (1992) observes 'musicology's history of disciplining music is inseparable from a history of canon formation and from a persistent dependence on canons' (p.200). Moreover, it is precisely because of the formation of canons that authority in the discipline became established. If we reconsider Bourdieu's concept of 'academic taxonomies', we can begin to understand more clearly how 'pulling at the fabric of an entire worldview' presents numerous threats to the perception of musical scholarship as it is conceived in musicological terms within the context of the broader higher education agenda. Perhaps more importantly, and in regard to the valued knowledge needed for such academic taxonomies, Randel (1992) notes that:

> of all our tools [in the canon of the musicological toolbox], musical notation surely ranks first in importance, and it is central to much of our theory...and has been the basis for the initial sorting of all possible musics... (Randel 1992, p.11)

Within the context of higher education's broader economic and strategic agendas, it became clearer to me why such a dominant ideology prevailed at the symposium. Moreover, I will argue that in contrast to the consternation surrounding the ways in which school music curricula were historically and philosophically driven by aesthetic ideal in higher education, the justification for this type of focus becomes immediately apparent when the subject is in danger of extinction from many universities.

## The 'Place' of Music in the Academy

In his critique of the academy *Homo Academicus*, Bourdieu (1988) identifies academic, intellectual and scientific capital as signifiers of scientific and intellectual authority and power within the Academy. One of the most compelling arguments made by Bourdieu that holds particular relevance to this thesis, is that while we might presuppose that institutions and agents within a common field such as music agree a set of principles, the reverse can actually be the case. Moreover, in consecrating cognitive acts and practice, the academy perpetuates situations whereby agents (such as music lecturers) and institutions (music departments) individually and collectively implement strategies to improve or defend their positions within the field (Bourdieu, 1993). Through the valorisation of the cognitive domains of knowledge, what counts as valid knowledge in higher education is judged

according to 'academic taxonomies' (Bourdieu 1996, pp 17-19). Such taxonomies are organised according to the hierarchy of attributes that the dominant group possesses.

If we consider an example whereby a music department with a majority of music lecturers from Western classical music backgrounds and specialisms and a minority from bimusical backgrounds who cross the musicological/ethnomusicological divide, the dominance of forms and structures of Western art music in such a curriculum would illustrate such 'academic taxonomies'. We can examine Bourdieu's theory further where he argues that within the power structures of higher education, the non-economically driven disciplines and practices need to prove their validity through maximising 'symbolic gain' (Bourdieu, 1993). Thus, in the context of higher music education within the arts and humanities, highlighting primarily cognitive practices of musicology represents a strategy to prove symbolic capital within a context where scientific and academic pursuits are highly valued.

### Higher Education Issues: Challenges

*Access to Musical Knowledge and Skills*

In her exploration of the complexities surrounding widening participation and the reproduction of inequalities in higher education, Clegg (2011) argues for critical inquiry into the notion of a 'lack' of capital and how this relates to institutional habitus and pedagogy. More importantly, she positions curriculum as central to an understanding of the ways in which the widening agenda in higher education has reinforced a hierarchy of institutions. She describes how a broadening of curricula in higher education to encompass more vocational and employability agendas, reinforces divisions between vocational and elite institutions in which valued knowledge and curricula are context-dependent. Furthermore, she calls for a critical realist conception of knowledge in light of a pervasive utilitarian approach to higher education entwined with more 'applied' curricula and courses for students from 'non-elite' backgrounds. In the context of more-elite higher education institutions, students from 'non-elite' backgrounds ought not to be seen as deficient in knowledge, but that significant resources and alternative perspectives can be brought to bear within such contexts. Indeed, it is in attending to voices from non-traditional students in higher education, that dominant ideologies can be critiqued:

...higher education is perfectly compatible with a context-independent view of knowledge. Indeed the reasons outsider groups can mount compelling critiques of dominant modes is because of the knowledge claims they make.

<div align="right">(Clegg 2011, p.104)</div>

However, what happens when incoming students present with diverse musical backgrounds and different levels and types of musical knowledge and skills? How does the changing profile of the undergraduate music student affect the curriculum as structure, and how do the teacher and learner negotiate agency in the process?

*The Changing Profile of the Music Degree Student*

One of the prominent categories that emerged from the interview data was that of the increasingly diverse music student population. This, in turn has had a significant impact on the nature of teaching and learning and the curriculum in higher music education. In this section, I discuss the importance of musical knowledge and skills as articulated by lecturers and students in the qualitative survey comments and in the interviews. Of most significance is the ways in which students themselves describe the importance of music theory and notation skills. Mature students in particular, frame this contextually with their experiences alongside 'traditional' students (aged 18-22). As I go on to show, they stress not only the ways in which one's prior music education impacts on their experience in higher education but also how potential career opportunities *depend* on such knowledge and skills. Lecturers described feeling restricted in what they could teach because of incoming students' limited background knowledge in music theory and notation and that many courses now have induction sessions on notation and music theory where previously such courses would have begun with composition techniques. Dr Louise Parker, a lecturer who tutors on such a course explains how she has tried to adapt in light of the changing student profiles:

> *Dr Louise Parker (Classical Music Background)*
> G:    Have you noticed a change in the knowledge and skills students have?
> H:    Oh yeah, it's awful they don't have grade five theory, they're below that because in first year we had to introduce grade five theory, it's called 'composition' but they can't compose because they actually can't even make chords. So I take them for that and that's why I'm so aware of the difficulty you know? ...we have massive failure rates...it's awful and I mean if they have problems making chords then they just can't do that, so even though we have the streams where they can follow the pop history or the pop improvisation or fretboard skills, they still get caught on the composition, orchestration, or analysis. That catches so

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many students you know, so it's very important for them to be able to pass that or they won't get through...

Dr Jane Strong who is originally from the US described the many curriculum changes that have taken place because of the changing profile of students since her appointment to the university. She particularly welcomes the principle of 'widening access' to higher education but recognises the inherent challenges in teaching a diverse group of students:

> *Dr Jane Strong (Classical Music Background)*
> Everything about it changed before I got here. I think that they were still counting on an older model where they were counting on getting students who had done their exams and their Leaving Cert and now we don't have that. So, we have actually made a lot of changes to the curriculum in the last two years as a result...I mean it's funny because of course it's much easier to teach students who have all the knowledge and the background ahead of time, who you don't have to explain what a C major scale is or something like that, but I really like the fact that you potentially reach musicians who don't have the formal training but who are actually really good musicians.

While all lecturers agreed that music theory knowledge has diminished since the new Leaving Certificate curriculum was introduced, some also point to the prevalence of popular culture in students' and children's lives:

> *Dr Louise Parker (Classical Music Background)*
> I mean, the other students that are coming in definitely don't have the solid grounding in theory that they would have had before...we get these people coming in doing jazz and pop singing and they sort of don't know what it is themselves even, they just sort of pick a song and say oh, this one you know, it's like this idea seems to be out there that I can do a degree in music because I can play a few songs on the guitar do you know? People seem to feel that I'm qualified to do this just because I can sing along to the radio or something...whereas like in our time you would have gone through years of study and doing your exams and doing everything and then you were still worrying you wouldn't get accepted, whereas these days we have people who come to audition and they're like, 'I bought a saxophone in Aldi last month and I can play a song on the saxophone' (laughs) do you know that type of a thing and they seriously feel that they are actually are qualified it's very strange...

Here we can see how Louise's expectations of music degree requirements and prerequisites are based on her own experience of hard work and her prior music education. In

her view, students' expectations of what a music degree might entail have changed dramatically in the last decade, whereby mediocre musical ability and experience would not be tolerated in the past. Perceptions of what music is and what it is for, would seem to have changed from both philosophical perspectives of academics and in the wider sociocultural sphere. Mr Matthew Canning (lecturer at a conservatoire) describes the 'explosion of popular culture' thus:

> Well, the situation is so complex, where do I start? Ok, I have to say there is a horrendous gap between second level and third level what with the complete dumbing down of the Leaving Cert, so many more people encouraged to do music but as well as that you have this explosion of popular culture. How are music colleges supposed to address that? Students cannot follow a score, they have no idea what Sonata form is and what Scherzo means. It seems to be all down to the democratisation of music and society, like we are just trying to deal with too broad a spectrum…

In his view, popular culture is as much to blame as the curriculum at second level and that as a result of 'broad spectrum' or broadened access to music in higher education; students do not have the background in Western classical music theory. He went on to explain how the audition process has started to resemble *X Factor* auditions and that prospective students have a misguided view on what an academic qualification in music is:

> They just sang and strummed a few chords on the guitar and we were both expected to be Simon Cowell (laugh), I mean you see they thought it was going to be like X Factor, and you know this is for an academic qualification! Like we said, 'do you understand what you're letting yourself in for here?'

*The Value of a Music Degree*

While arguments in the literature on the accessibility, and by association, the inaccessibility of music curricula at primary and second level point to disinterest, disengagement and alienation from school music (Green, 1988; Ross, 1995, Wright, 2008), the argument alters when it comes to higher education. This is because in both lecturers and students' views, acquiring an academic qualification in music ought to equip graduates with a strong foundation in musical knowledge and skills, especially if graduates wish to pursue teaching or postgraduate courses. Almost all of the lecturers interviewed said that they thought that music could risk being devalued if a strong foundation in musical knowledge and skills were

not acquired at university level. For students wishing to pursue a career in teaching, music theory was perceived as vital. Some music degree courses feature musicianship classes such as notation and techniques in first year or for the first two years only, and some lecturers as well as students think this is problematic, not least because it privileges the students who have already acquired a high level of music theory while simultaneously failing to provide for students who are deficient in such skills.

In the context of a degree without a strong focus on Western classical music techniques, many students mentioned feeling disadvantaged on exit from higher education. They saw their lack of music theory as limiting their chances in terms of teacher education qualifications and postgraduate opportunities:

> *Focus Group No 1:*
> G:  So do you think there ought to be a certain amount of theory in each year?
> S2:  Yeah, like there should be one module consistently throughout. I would have liked to have been forced to improve a lot of skills in college especially theory. I feel that [this college] puts too much emphasis on the weirder forms of experimental music and "anti-music" which I have heard described as "what art isn't." I am all for opening people's minds but not so much that their brains fall out. People do a music degree to learn music not to make a mockery of it.
> S3:  To do a Master's most places would look at you wondering you can't read this, you can't analyse?
> S1:  Well like I've applied for a HDip[7] and it worries me 'cos I've got zero theory.

The belief that a music graduate ought to be equipped with music literacy skills in order to pursue a career as a secondary school teacher is of genuine concern to student 1 above. His concern is justified however, whereby professional knowledge and skills as well as pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986; Lennon, 2001) have come under increasing focus in pre-service music teacher education (Ballantyne, 2006). In another institution, a lecturer survey stated that approximately 50% of their students become teachers, and that 'rudimentary skills are essential for effective classroom teaching' (L.23).

## The Devaluing of Music within the Humanities

Some lecturers spoke about trying to cope with teaching large amounts of students within the context of an overall Arts degree, while others mentioned falling numbers in some courses

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[7] HDip or Higher Diploma in Education is a postgraduate qualification in education similar to a PGCE in the UK.

that offered a classical stream alongside Irish traditional and popular. Increasing numbers are evident in the new BA in Commercial Modern Music which commenced in 2011 at Dublin Institute of Technology. However, according to Professor White, institutionalising the commodification of music is problematic in terms of musical value:

> ...you know the idea of the garage band is ubiquitous in Western culture? Yes, there are millions of people doing it, my mistake, *tens of thousands* of millions so sure, you will get some people who are very good at it, but you will get an awful lot of people who are simply imagining that they are good at it, and if you institutionalise that in terms of assessing people's musical development, then you're simply making a statement that says, yes this commodified model of commercial music is going to be our yardstick because it's the thing that attracts most people, which it certainly does...

That the entrance points for the above course increased from 343 to 435 in the space of one academic year, as well as the increase in applications whereby 800 students auditioned for 200 eventually-awarded places, is evidence that the BA in Commercial Modern Music is in big demand. The reason for such demand is probably because popular music was not available as a sole undergraduate music degree programme until 2011. Contrast the situation whereby 200 students enrol on the BA in Commercial Modern Music at €2,500 in subsidised fees per annum (€500,000 per annum), with a class of 10 enrolled on a BMus programme at the same cost (25,000). We can begin to understand how the value of a particular course can be directly related to the income that it generates for the institution concerned.

From another perspective, we can see how a smaller, selective number of students would appear to represent the antithesis of the popular demand approach. As iterated at the start of this chapter, the more autonomous the field, the more consecrated it becomes (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Though the field of the university music department might rebuke economic imperatives, ironically, economic capital provides the key to accessing the study of music in the first place.

According to Professor White, external economic values are indicative of the perceived intrinsic value of a subject by external agents. Moreover, in his view the push by institutions for marketing that reflects the perceived desires of prospective entrants, further undermines the value of a subject as it panders to the economic rationale for studying the subject in the first place:

> ...so the perception is, if you've got 300 people doing history, then that's 300 times more important than one person.. to say the number of

people studying your subject equals the inherent approach of what it is you're teaching, now that's really serious... so therefore we have to have 'an anybody can do it' approach, and indeed if you're going to fund it, the more people who are doing it, the more significant it is...in the humanities and particularly a subject like music, the idea is oh well, everybody is interested in music aren't they? Not everybody is interested in organic chemistry or Greek... I think that that's the real difficulty itself - an economic model has been turned into an education policy...

Thus in his view, the economic structures superimposed by universities and colleges represent the wider public perception of the value of subjects in higher education. The consumer demand agenda would seem to dominate in the humanities because other disciplines such as mathematics and sciences are already believed to be of significant value in higher education and in the promotion of the 'knowledge economy' agenda. From another perspective, we can appraise this differently.

In his role as Chair of Music at UCD, Professor White has some autonomy to design the curriculum with other music department members as they see fit, however this is not the case in other music departments. In contexts where the Head/Chair of a School was not sympathetic to musical needs, lecturers reported increasing pressure to change curricula or admit students regardless of their suitability. This seems to be impacting negatively on the perceived value of music, whereby hierarchical decisions are made by those with more power and little musical knowledge. Music lecturer, Dr Louise Parker describes how many days are spent auditioning and examining prospective entrants by faculty and that even when decisions are made; these are often overruled by someone in administration. She explains how this devalues not only the subject music itself but also what the academic staff and students actually do:

> *Dr Louise Parker (Classical Music Background)*
> They have an audition, entrance test a written exam...but what happens us at the moment is that if we fail them, then the registrar's office invites them to come along anyway, so I don't know what the reason is for this, whether it's numbers or whether it's to do with points...but we have a big issue with that.
>
> G: So do they kind of over-ride your decisions then?
> L: Yes absolutely...we've got that happening quite a bit then I know... it's an awful situation because it's very unfair on the student because they just can't keep up, as well as being unfair on those who are being held back...we feel that our course is being totally and utterly devalued...I mean really we feel that we're becoming irrelevant...so it's very hard...

*Curriculum and Resource Restrictions*

Both lecturers and students mentioned the effects of diminishing music department budgets and resources as a consequence of the economic recession. This has in some cases limited curriculum development as 'in-house' expertise is depended upon with no income for guest/part-time lecturers. As discussed in Chapter Six, data have shown that the curriculum is often shaped by the expertise of the lecturers within the music department. What emerged later when I probed this issue was that in most cases, this was due to limited resources. Therefore the contingency of finance on the curriculum would seem to be a significant factor In an interview with Dr Philip Hannon, he expressed his desire to offer more electives to students:

> ...it's always determined by which staff are available, what particular specialities we want to put forward but the menu system we were enjoying around 2007/2008 has gone down, we've suffered cuts and staffing cuts and so on like most institutions...

In another university, Fionn (4th year BMus student) describes the perceived positive bias toward. disciplines such as the sciences when it comes to financial resources:

> ...the modules we can actually choose from in third and fourth year generally are based on what the lecturers specialise in themselves but you know one of the defining features of the three years I've been here, is the fact that the music department has been getting less money every year...the thing about music in (University G) is that I don't think they ever really do have the money because even when there's not a recession, (University G) is biased towards science courses, medicine, engineering, technology yeah pretty much courses where the university feels it will bring them more prestige...what they call the knowledge economy (laughs) and music is never viewed as something that's particularly important in that way...

In this particular university, the music curriculum would be closely described as traditional in that its student handbook openly states that it is grounded in the tradition of Western art music. However, despite its traditional leanings alongside a very healthy progressive compositional unit, it would seem that the funding still remains lower than other departments. Thus, it would seem that the music curriculum whether more 'traditional' or 'progressive' makes little difference in terms of its perceived importance in the Academy.

Other lecturers mentioned going the extra mile to assist students in their learning by providing one-to-one tutorials if possible. In one college, I witnessed a music lecturer teaching four-part harmony to a class of sixty first years, all of whom he was able to name individually. In a lively interactive style, he asked individual students to come up with note

suggestions for each part and chord, thus maintaining their interest and attention. In another college, lecturer Dr Annette Long mentioned that lecturers had provided extra classes as a result of students' needs but had been instructed by management to stop any initiative that occurred outside of the established timetable. Therefore, in this instance we can see how lecturer and student agency were curtailed by hierarchical structures within the field (institution):

> *Dr Long:*    ...we would love to be allowed to give them extra classes and the students come to us requesting more classes in certain things but we're not allowed to offer anything outside of our course schedule... it's extremely limited and totally stripped back...so we're not giving them everything we could give them you know and that's very hard...

In some cases of the curriculum, generic modules or modules completely unrelated to music were provided whereby students would merge with other students from diverse courses. This ranged from generic modules in 'Innovation and Creativity' to two separate modules (Italian and Film Studies) in another particular course. In the views of lecturers and students who had experienced these modules, the only rationales they could see for such courses were cost-saving measures. When I enquired whether film studies denoted film music, this was negatively described as 'just looking at lighting direction, all of that stuff...I'll never use it' (Matt, Mature Jazz Student). This was unfortunate in the views of the students because they had asked for provision of jazz arranging which was not permitted even though a course was designed and ready-to-run.

What we can clearly see in these accounts is the disempowering of academic staff and students as they endeavour to make improvements to the knowledge-base and experience of students but are undoubtedly limited in their capacity to do so. This ultimately has an effect on students who do not have sufficient knowledge at the course entry level as well as those who feel they are out of their depth. Thus, differentiating for diverse students in the context of widening participation agendas is extremely challenging for lecturers. It would seem that in some cases, efforts to provide equal opportunity within music departments is hindered, while in others, there is dismay in even attempting to address the issue because of the sheer volume of students.

**Social Realism: A Challenge to Postmodernism**

As explained in Chapter Two, debates related to the aesthetic appreciation versus the praxial conception of musicking (Reimer 2003; DeNora, 2000; Bowman, 1998; Elliott 1995) have revolved around the inclusion of musics other than those grounded in the Western art tradition in music education curricula. According to Small (1998, p.3) the contradictory phenomenon within the Western classical tradition is that despite the fact that it is assumed to be 'an intellectual and spiritual achievement that is unique in the world's musical cultures', it appeals to a small minority of people. That this lack of appeal or attraction to the music may lay blame to the association of Western classical music with upper-middle classes and the vernacular with working classes no longer holds weight in a culture of omnivorous musical consumption (Horsley, 2007). In her interpretation of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, Horsley (2007) proposes a reconsideration of elite cultural capital as residing with the 'cultural omnivore' (p.177) and advocates 'putting aside beliefs in the supreme value of the Western canon...after all, many societies no longer recognise its superiority' (p.181). However, I would argue that with the pervasiveness of mass media and popular culture, Western classical music is in grave danger of extinction from the imagination of the next generation.

That the charge of elitism and privilege may be uncalled for is questioned by Jorgensen (2003) who queries the marginalisation of Western classical music in general education and in the wider public sphere. She states:

> Where once it held a privileged place, it seems now to have acquired (in some quarters at least) a negative connotation as a bastion of elitism and privilege. Instead, popular musics (with a nod to other musics of other cultures) have pride of place in much elementary and secondary music education and in many university and college offerings designed for students whose principal fields of study lie outside music. (Jorgensen 2003, p.130)

She goes on to suggest that the deprivation of music literacy in education deprives one of an important aspect of musical knowledge that is in her opinion 'racist and classist when it fails to ensure that all people irrespective of their background have the opportunity to be musically literate' (Jorgensen, 2003, p.135). She concludes by recommending that college and university musicians need to ensure that policy enables the promotion of classical traditions. This point is critical as it brings to the fore two issues relevant to this study. The first is that in efforts to include a wide variety of musics worthy of study at various levels of

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education in the US, exponents of Western classical music feel under threat; and the second is that in Ireland, musicologists also fear that such change may endanger Western classical music in higher education. I wish to turn briefly now to two contrasting lecturer assumptions of musical value and knowledge.

> *Dr Philip Hannon (Classical Music Background)*
> ...we regard any kind of music as valid re core status, we've never ever given any impression that we privilege only one kind of music over any other and I know that that's a big difference from other departments... we specialise in various ways and therefore we like to offer options in all those different kinds of things...

In Dr Hannon's view, all musics are equally valid at his university unlike others which privilege certain musics over others. Indeed, it is because of the fact that the lecturers specialise in these various musical forms and genres that this opportunity can be afforded within the curriculum. However, in a focus group for this study, final year music students resented the limitations of leaving college with minimal formal musical knowledge:

> *Focus Group no 1:*
> S1: There's no continuity...regarding the course structure and in what they all say... You'll have one guy saying ok, jazz is complex and let's try this advanced tonality and another one saying tonality is all 'passé'... watching a piece where they throw rice on the ground and someone dances on it!
> G: Is that not music then?
> S2: Well it's sonic art but it's arse actually! (Group laughs). Look it's all fine whatever, but we need to have a foundation first.
> S3: Like one of the best points made is that people here know more about sound fluxes and sound art than they do about Bach or Handel which is where it all started, like I've never seen a Bach score and I'm in 4$^{th}$ year.

They go on to explain their limitations in terms of music theory knowledge as a result of what we might describe as a postmodern curriculum:

> S5: Well...there isn't enough theory like in 1$^{st}$ year it's all really basic major scales and all that, like really secondary school stuff. Like then you can drop it after 1$^{st}$ year but you're limited then in the electives you can take 'cos you're not going to be able to engage with 19$^{th}$ century stuff if you can't follow the scores, so you end up taking the more obscure modules.
> G: So do you think there ought to be a certain amount of theory in each year?
> S2: Yeah, like there should be one module consistently throughout

At this point, I should like to recall the mismatched expectations that students expressed in Chapter Four following their engagement with a predominantly praxial curriculum at second level, and the demands being made on them in terms of musical theory knowledge in higher

education. Furthermore, in investigating the agency that the aforementioned students possess about knowledge and the curriculum in Chapter Six, it is apparent in their accounts, that limited formal musical knowledge has severely hampered their musical identities in college and in the views of some, has limited their future career options.

Barnett (2000, 2004, 2005); Barnett and Coate (2005) and Luckett (2001) identify shifts in the way knowledge is regarded in the 'postmodern' world. Barnett (2005) claims that in the postmodern context the world is radically unknowable and that knowledge is therefore always fragile. Luckett (2001) argues that in subverting the idea of a higher education, postmodernism poses a serious threat to knowledge. She maintains that 'the notion of authoritative knowledge has been permanently undermined, for a postmodernist perspective suggests that all knowledge claims are local, partial and contextually specific' (Luckett 2001, p.52).

In arguing against the use of voice discourses, Moore and Muller (1999), Young (2000) and Moore and Young (2001) argue that the relativist position reduces knowledge to the perspectives of knowers. Moore (2008) argues that the implications for subscribing to such a relativist view of knowledge collapses ontology onto epistemology i.e. there is no basis for legitimating knowledge, save from the standpoint of the knower. In explaining his changed position in regard to his earlier work in the 1970s, Young (2010) explicates his earlier conception of 'knowledge as power', to one that reconsiders 'knowledge of the powerful' (Young, 2010, p.11).

Recent social realist accounts of knowledge (Moore, 2008; Maton and Moore, 2010; Young, 2010) posit that the social character of knowledge does not preclude its objectivity. Yet, theoretical knowledge is socially powerful. In acknowledging personal preferences as well as attending to epistemological and aesthetic forms of knowledge, critical thought may be brought to bear on the changing nature of the discipline. From her study of vocational education, Wheelahan (2010) critiques curricula for their applied and vocational thrust and argues that social inequality is reproduced when access to knowledge is purely social. Thus, the crux of the argument then, is that if students are to have access to knowledge that is 'powerful', then all curricula must include social and epistemic access to knowledge.

In positing a case for recouping music's autonomy, Green (2005) asserts that it is precisely the objective properties that make music distinct from any other practice and in light of ideology stresses, 'Music cannot be whatever people say it is. Any attempt to suggest that it can be, and thus to altogether deny its autonomy, ironically ends up as a position of idealism' (Green, 2005, p.90). Arguing for a retrieval of music's autonomy, Green (2005)

issues a cautious reminder that to deny its autonomy establishes an antithetical ideology of music as anything other than the *object* music:

> To consider the discourse and use surrounding music without taking into account the ways in which the musical text is organized, can altogether miss out the quality of the very object of consideration, so that in the end it could be food or clothes that are under discussion rather than music with its own peculiar properties (Green, 2005, p. 76).

Moreover, if it is presupposed that teenagers will not engage meaningfully in opera because 'they are exclusively and jealously interested in pop music' (p.88), then we run the risk of ignoring the transcendent nature of music; the possibility that it can cross divisions and boundaries.

Let us consider how Green's (2005) argument might apply to the broader agenda of Irish higher music education. For example, if it were assumed that students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds would not want to hear or engage with Western classical music either at second level or in higher education, then one might ignore important aspects of the syllabus in order to 'appeal' to their appreciation of the subject. Moreover, in higher education the agenda of widening participation might consider altering music courses to 'fit' the more vocational needs of the wider student body. Thus, deep engagement with musical discourse and music theory might be sacrificed in the assumption that it may not appeal to certain types of students. Modules that are more generic might be introduced in order to generate a broader set of 'skills' appropriate to the knowledge economy. In so doing, the curriculum design or the classification of the discipline (music) becomes weak.

As explained in Chapter Four, much needed curriculum changes occurred in Ireland in the 1990s that considered the value of skills and knowledge in music in efforts to empathise with students' interests, skills and prior learning. However, as Allsup (2008) and McPhail (2012) argue, just because popular music and the informal modes of learning were severely neglected, it would be foolish to dispense with one in favour of another.

Research on rock graduates' experiences of teaching (McPhail, 2012) found that they needed to improve their formal musical knowledge in order to meet the diverse learning needs of students. Thus, on one hand the overemphasis on formal musical knowledge and skills has concomitantly ignored informal music practices. On the other hand, an experiential, practical approach alone will serve music students poorly. To bridge this divide, McPhail suggests that

...music education's central problem lies in finding an appropriate balance between social and disciplinary knowledge, between the formal and informal, so students are neither disadvantaged by the turn towards the informal nor demotivated by the need to acquire disciplinary concepts which can extend and enhance their understanding of all types of music. (McPhail, 2012, p.4)

## Perceptions of Curriculum, Musical Knowledge and Experiences

Musical knowledge such as terminology, history, understanding of musical form and skills such as notation, music theory and aural skills and dictation, are not necessarily dependent on musical talent, but can in many cases be learned. From personal experience, I vividly remember the first time I was able to recognize and name specific intervals as part of aural tests. I remember familiarity came with practice and being able to relate intervals such as a perfect fifth to the opening of the 'Star Wars' theme and a perfect octave to 'Somewhere over the rainbow'; thus, it was through recognition of the intervals through an already familiar set of sounds, that I developed that sense of aurality.

Following recurring themes of perceived advantage in regard to private tuition and music theory in the qualitative comments and interviews, I decided to revert to the statistical data from SPSS and run some crosstabulations and chi-square analysis to ascertain if there was an association between private tuition and the level of ease with music in higher education. There was no association between instrumental lessons and ease with the course, but there was a significant association (p:<.002) between music theory examinations prior to entry, and the level of ease with the course (Figure 5.13). Just under 20% more students who stated difficulty with the course had not done theory examinations prior to entry, suggesting that students who had prior theory training were encountering less difficulty. Most of the students who ticked the 'neither easy nor difficult' box mentioned that even though they found aspects challenging, they were enjoying the course nonetheless.

Following an examination of students from various musical backgrounds, I have chosen three cases that illustrate the ways in which variables such as students' musical backgrounds ease with the course, and their views on musical knowledge and skills relate to one another. In the case of the first student below (Table 7.1), first-hand knowledge of musical skills from her Western classical music background and choice of tuition has afforded this student's ease with the course and in her opinion, the content is not challenging. Her experience would seem then, to be one of affirmation. In contrast, cases two and three illustrate how their different

musical backgrounds and modes of music learning would seem to be at odds with their encounter of knowledge and skills in higher education.
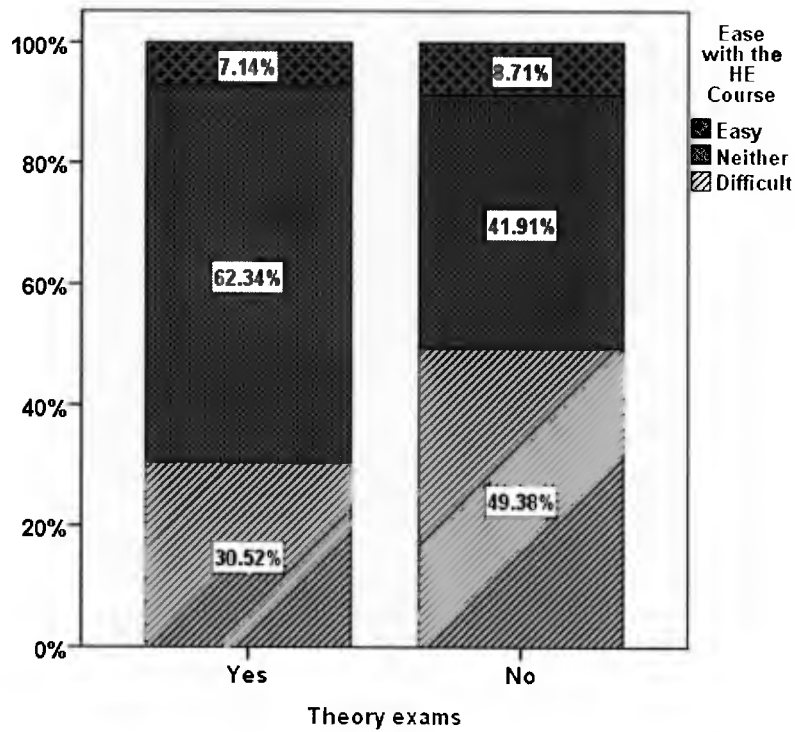


**Figure 7.1** Positive association between level of ease with course and theory exams.

Table 7.1 Cross case analysis of students' beliefs about musical knowledge and skills

| Musical Background (Habitus) | Prior Music Education (Cultural Capital) | Curriculum (Structure) | Musical Knowledge and Skills (Structure/Agency) | Overall experience (Affirmation/Motivation/Alienation) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classical | Grade 8 completed on Piano, and Violin Studied theory in a school of music, completed all theory examinations. | I haven't found any of the course content very challenging so far. | The ability to read music and follow a score is fundamental. Song writing and playing by ear can be self-taught. | I do not find a lot of this course challenging as I have studied a lot of the content before. |
| Irish Traditional | Plays five instruments: tenor banjo, mandolin, guitar, tin whistle, bass guitar. No graded examinations. Music theory in secondary school only. | Coming from Traditional Irish background and having been trained aurally, I am finding it very difficult to improve on music literacy. For a musician who has never sight-read in his life, a lot is expected of me in terms of keyboard skills. | For musicians like me who have not been theoretically trained, methods of learning music notation and theory should be more readily available rather than being thrown in with students already adept at it In the same way, students who have not played by ear should have more methods available to them | Being traditionally trained, my world of music is not very well catered for but the beauty of it is that I have the opportunity to adapt and enhance my knowledge of the way music works...I've gone from being small-minded to broad-minded in terms of musical understanding. |
| Jazz | Grade 8 saxophone. Self-taught theory. No secondary school music experienced. | Difficult. Not having formal music education prior means playing catch-up continuously. | I have difficulty with the narrow constraints of the course. It is very much classical only in terms of how theory and harmony are taught. | As a jazz player I really have to prove myself in a place like this My lack of formal education in this subject has caused difficulties. Support is practically non-existent. |

These students' different habitus and cultural capital vis-à-vis their musical backgrounds and prior music education would seem to be creating challenges for them in terms of the knowledge and skills required but their experiences are expressed differently. Student three describes how both knowledge and skills content and pedagogy are framed from a Western classical perspective and expresses the perceived alienation as a jazz student in a context where Western classical music dominates. Even though student two mentions that much is expected of him in terms of music theory and keyboard skills, he welcomes the broadening of his understanding of music as he reappraises the narrow focus of his own musical background. Because he perceives higher education as an opportunity to 'enhance' his knowledge of music, we might describe this experience as 'motivation'. From a Bourdieuan perspective, this also highlights the fluid nature of the habitus, thus demonstrating that it can change. Moreover, in his later work, Bourdieu (1999) acknowledges the agency that access to knowledge can bring to bear on one's musical background, thereby suggesting that the habitus is transformative:

> ...despite the symbolic action it entails [pedagogic action can] open the possibility of an emancipation founded on awareness and knowledge of the conditionings undergone and on the imposition of new conditionings designed durably to counter their effects. (Bourdieu, 1999, p.340)

## A Conceptual Framework for Irish Higher Music Education

As highlighted in this chapter, the field of higher music education is complex. In attempting to further understand this complexity, I now propose a conceptual model that illustrates connections between and across data categories. In their analysis of race, culture and ethnicity in music education, Butler, Lind and McCoy (2007) suggest that conceptual models can propose theories and serve as tools for researchers in the reconsideration of findings. These can also clarify further understanding of processes at work in music learning and teaching. It is with a desire to promote further inquiry into the relationships between the variables outlined in my research questions, that I have also decided to employ a conceptual model.
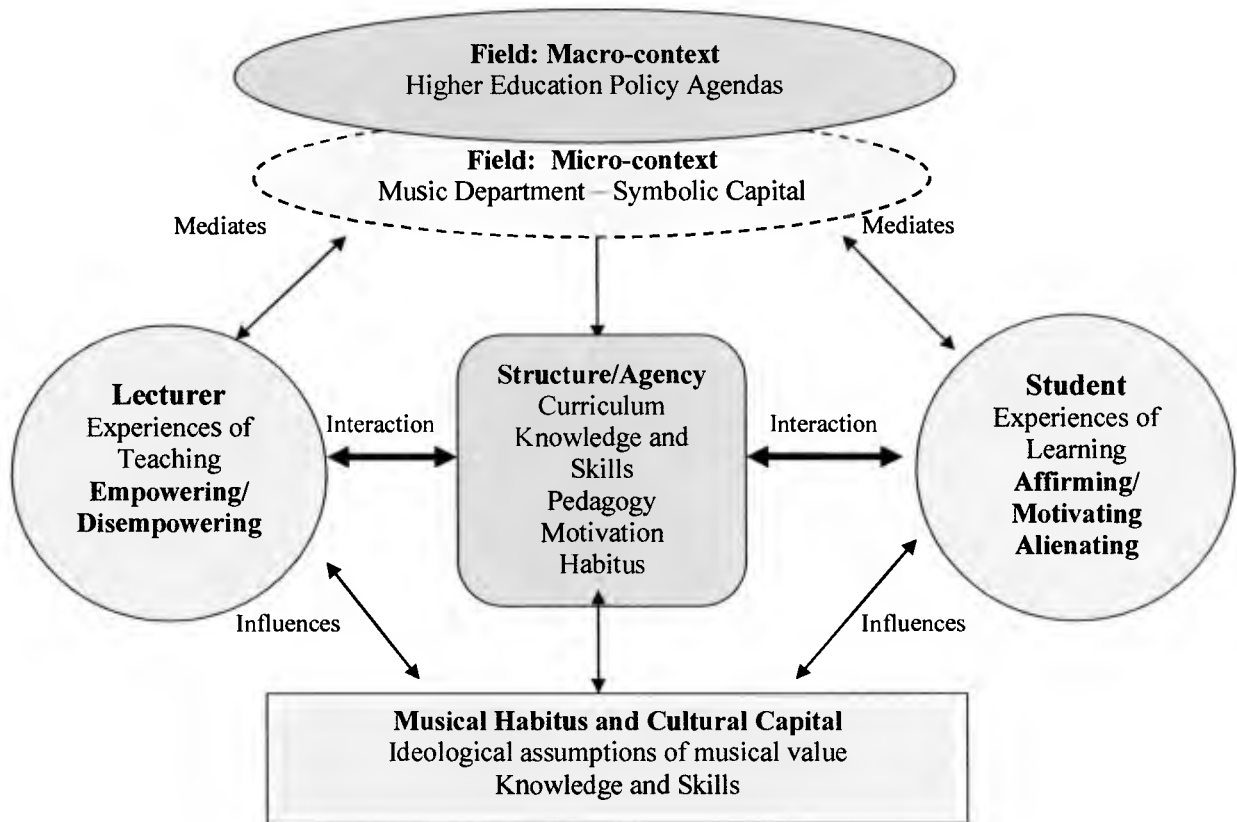
**Figure 7.2** Conceptual Model illustrating application of Bourdieu's concepts

As illustrated in Figure 7.2 the model illustrates three variables that reflect the interrelated facets within higher music education teaching and learning, namely, musical habitus and cultural capital, field and structure/agency. While each variable is pivotal to the context of the study, it is only when all categories interact that the full complexity of the field can be appreciated, understood and explained.

*Musical Habitus and Cultural Capital: Student and Lecturer*

The bottom of the model shows how particular musical values, knowledge and skills as influenced by musical backgrounds and prior music education (*musical habitus and cultural capital*) impact on students' and lecturers' experiences of teaching and learning. Through their mutual interaction, students and lecturers construct and construe their teaching and learning experiences within the *field(s)* of higher education and the music department. However, learning experiences in the field are influenced by the musical values and knowledge and skills associated with their musical habitus and cultural capital. Moreover, students' experiences are mediated by interaction with lecturers and peers. Such experiences,

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in turn influence their assumptions of musical value and knowledge which are inextricably linked with ideologies reproduced vis-à-vis their musical backgrounds and prior music education.


*Field*

At the top of the model is the institutional field of the music department within higher education. The macro-context of higher education and the wider public sphere act as structures within the field which influence the micro-context or field of the music department. Lecturers and students must mediate to and from this field in order to provide/access courses, resources and staff expertise.


*Structure/Agency Dialectic*

In the centre of the model is the idea of a structure and agency dialectic. The curriculum can be seen as both structural and agential depending on how it classifies musical boundaries and frames the learning context through pedagogy. Both curriculum and pedagogy would seem to be pivotal in the agency that lecturers and students perceive they have in higher education. In addition, motivation and an open attitude can act as agents in the teaching and learning experience.

When the curriculum and its associated musical knowledge/skills and pedagogy accords with the students' musical background and prior music education, the experience is *affirming*, however when the converse applies the student can have an *alienating* experience. Agency can be found through support mechanisms and pedagogical innovation within higher education that can provide a springboard to boost students' musical knowledge. Agency also manifests as student motivation and passion for the subject which when accompanied by support transform the experience from alienating to *motivating*.

In this model, the lecturer mediates to and from the structures superimposed by higher education policy and higher education management. He/she also negotiates or participates in the design and reconfiguration of the curriculum and endeavours to modify pedagogy in order to meet student needs. Depending on the particular context and ethos of the institution, curriculum design, content, and pedagogy, are influenced by the macro and micro contexts of the field. Consequently, the experience for lecturers can be *empowering* or *disempowering* depending on the agency they have within the music department.

## Conclusion

This conceptual model allows us to think about a process, consider alternative ideas, and develop further research questions within complex systems like higher music education. Bourdieu's (1977a) tools of habitus, cultural capital and field can be seen then as 'highly charged epistemological matrices brought to sociological and educational issues' (Grenfell and James, 2004, p.518). Thus, contested issues along with future and present challenges for Irish higher music education can be illuminated. In a pragmatic sense, such a model could serve as a catalyst for conversations and further inquiry in the field.

We know that music education in general and in higher education is subject to flux. Given recent trends of more diverse students in second level and in higher education, we can expect that teaching and learning expectations and experiences will be further shaped by education policy and higher education practice. In linking the relationships between data categories in this manner, findings from the research can act as a springboard for further debate on the ways in which ideological assumptions of musical value impact on teaching and learning experiences, as well as issues of access to and opportunity in higher music education.

# CHAPTER EIGHT
## CONCLUSION

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore ideological assumptions of musical value and unequal opportunity with particular reference to the musical backgrounds, prior music education and experiences of students and lecturers in Irish higher music education. Throughout the thesis, the threads of ideology and musical value were situated in the very different arena of higher education whereby a higher educational qualification represents the end-point for some, and a progression point for others. Although ideology and music value have been discussed at length in literature on school music education, this thesis represents a new departure by exploring how these manifest in higher education. More critically, this study considered the ways in which multifarious higher education structures and wider public and political agendas throw ideologies of musical value and knowledge into sharp focus, by forcing us to reconsider what we mean by a 'higher' music education (Barnett, 1990).

### Ideology, Musical Value and Knowledge: Backgrounds, Assumptions and Experiences

The overarching research question asked how ideological assumptions of musical value and knowledge vis-à-vis students' and lecturers' musical backgrounds and prior music education, related to issues of access and opportunity. Through cross-case analyses of the surveys and interviews, the thesis has shown that student and lecturer assumptions of musical value and knowledge as it pertained to the curriculum at second and higher levels, were related in many instances to their musical backgrounds but more pertinently to their prior music education. Student and lecturer values and beliefs about musical knowledge appeared to be shaped by their prior experiences as learners in the school system and in private instrumental education.

The topic of musical enculturation and musical backgrounds was prefaced with an examination and application of Bourdieu's theories of field, habitus and capital. Students from backgrounds whereby music was encouraged and financially supported, reported numerous benefits in early musical engagement with parents, siblings and influential teachers. Conversely, students who did not enjoy such advantage voiced their concern at the lack of provision and their success in higher education on the one hand, while others

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expressed their desire for knowledge as an outcome of their minimal music education on the other.

An investigation of students' social class revealed that music students in this study replicated patterns in wider higher education reports, whereby a higher proportion of students with parents in professional and managerial roles continue to access higher education while those from semi-skilled/unskilled would appear to be minimally represented. More significant however, would seem to be the influence of parental education in higher music education participation, in which the majority of students' parents in this study had Leaving Certificate or a higher education qualification. Again, this mirrored national trends whereby students whose parents had lower secondary or primary education were severely under-represented in higher education. Furthermore, the number of music students' parents who had postgraduate qualifications proportionately exceeded that of the overall population as well as other higher education surveys. Thus, students studying music in this study came from backgrounds where a high level of familial cultural capital or educational attainment was evident.

Ideological assumptions of musical value were both explicit and implicit in students' and lecturers' musical backgrounds, prior music education and their experiences in the field of higher education. Both students and lecturers welcomed the idea of broadening the curriculum in terms of genre even though they were also of the view that Western classical music should have 'most emphasis' in higher education. Data from the quantitative questions revealed that Irish traditional, popular, jazz and world music ought to have at least 'some emphasis', where it was perceived to be lacking. The assumptions that popular music was not needed because it was 'easy to grasp' echoed the findings of Green's (1998) first stage of her study on different musics in the classroom in 1982. Though they were in the minority, strongly held views pertaining to music's worth vis-à-vis its complexity were present in some of the lecturers' responses.

**Ideology, Musical Value and Knowledge: Curriculum, Access and Opportunity**

The ways in which ideological assumptions of musical value reflected in the curriculum (and hidden curriculum), impact on access and opportunity in higher education, uncovered many dimensions to the research problem that were not anticipated at the outset of the research process. During the fieldwork and analysis, I had to acknowledge my own assumptions in interpreting the data. For example, I was inclined to think that the dominance of the Western

classical tradition might be 'the problem' to access and opportunity in higher music education, but in interrogating the data, I discovered that things were not as I had assumed they might be.

What emerged was a rather complex web of values and assumptions influenced by the social reproduction of musical value and knowledge, as well as ideologies within and beyond the macro and micro contexts of higher education. In the centre of this web was a very different dimension to the research problem of access and opportunity. It was in fact, the problem of *accessing* musical knowledge and skills and having legitimate opportunities to capitalise and expand on these that presented in the final stages of analysis. Evidently, student and lecturer experiences of teaching and learning in higher education were also strongly influenced by particular contextual structures *of* the field (macro and micro) and structures *within* the field, for example curriculum and assessment. Embedded in this problem were historical and political ideologies which influenced Irish music curricula at all levels of education.

The historical context of music in Irish education and in wider musicological thought highlighted the ways in which contested assumptions of Western classical music as canon and Irish traditional music as culture (McCarthy, 1999) would seem to have obfuscated the place of popular music in formal Irish music education. Through a historical survey of higher education and a current overview of degree courses, the techniques and theory of the Western classical tradition featured predominantly in course outlines though it was acknowledged that in practice, diverse practices and genres may feature in the framing or pedagogy of course content.

Reservations about changes to the content and assessment of the revised Leaving Certificate curriculum in the 1990s as expressed in the MEND report and in other literature were discussed in light of a number of issues concerning access to higher music education: the praxial focus of performance without adequate infrastructure for this to be realised; mixed-ability teaching and learning; and a perception of the de-valuing of music in comparison to other subjects. The student experiences of the Leaving Certificate and the lecturers' views suggested that the assessment of music learning at Leaving Certificate not only drives the way in which it is taught, but also the ways in which knowledge and skills become compartmentalised. Consequently, many students come to higher education with fragmented knowledge of music theory and history. Thus, in attempts to make the subject more accessible and inclusive for second-level students by devising such a syllabus, the gap between accessibility at second level and third level would seem to be wider than before.

Through examining four discrete higher music curricula, I suggested a dialectical relationship between structure and agency. What emerged from the data was the impact of the underlying philosophy or paradigms implicit within the curriculum *as* structure but also shaped *within* and *from* other structures such as the wider higher education agenda of increasing numbers and widening participation. In such contexts, lecturers and students expressed limited agency in terms of what was enforced from outside of the music department. Other perspectives on structure were evidenced by the restricted modes of entry to higher music education courses which led to the necessity for applicants to pass an entrance test or audition. In many cases, such processes were indicative of the curriculum as it would be encountered by students, to inform the applicants of the type of learning and knowledge required, as well as assisting the institutions in selecting students deemed suitable for a higher education music degree.

In general, Western classical music symbolised relevant and adaptable cultural knowledge to the students and lecturers though students questioned its over-emphasis. Where the curriculum could be described as 'neo-conservative traditionalist', the strong classification of Western classical music symbolised powerful epistemic knowledge. Knowledge associated with the history and tradition of institutions, as well as the valued knowledge of those in positions of power, affected students and lecturers as agents *of* and *for* change.

On the other side of the structure/agency coin, was the agency afforded to students who had opportunities to access support mechanisms within the institution when they encountered difficulties. Moreover, when the curriculum's classification was 'strong', weak-framing encounters enabled more meaningful opportunities for students from Irish traditional and popular backgrounds. Lecturers seemed to have agency in their teaching when innovative pedagogical approaches could be engaged with manageable student numbers. In many instances, it was found that limited resources and superimposed agendas encroached on the agency afforded to meaningful teaching and learning experiences.

Ideological assumptions of musical value were further explored in the complex macro and micro contexts of higher education. Data from a symposium on musicology illustrated pertinent issues concerning the value and status of music, and musicology within the micro-context of higher education. Macro higher education issues such as widening access policy and the impact this has on increasing numbers of students wishing to study music in higher education, as well as the ever-changing profiles of music students, were examined. The prevalence of popular culture in students' lives was then considered in terms of the impact on

music's value within and beyond the academy along with the conflict of 'relevance' agendas and career pathways.

The issue of what counts as musical knowledge and skills was probed in the social realist framework as put forth by Moore (2001) and Young (2008). The ways in which postmodern ideas about education and music education that seem to ignore the very real aspect of knowledge and knowing in music, were critiqued. Through the social realist paradigm, I explored the possibility that while musical knowledge and skills are socially constructed they are also real in terms of what students know and can do in higher music education. This in turn impacts on their experiences and potential success in higher education.

In general, lecturers pointed to the shortcomings in students' music literacy, theory, and historical knowledge, while some expressed their appreciation for the diverse and flexible musical skills that students bring from being able to play by ear and improvise. Where higher music curricula depend on advanced music literacy and analytical skills, students from more diverse musical backgrounds seemed more able to cope with the curriculum demands when parallel modules in rudiments, theory and aural skills were included throughout the programme. Where this was found not to be the case, some students found that they had no choice but to choose elective modules in which music literacy skills were less important and in which they were less likely to fail. Of more pressing concern was the expression by both students and lecturers, that in some cases an accredited undergraduate music degree could be acquired with minimal music literacy and history knowledge, and this was perceived by students as limiting their future career and postgraduate options.

I proposed that Green's (2008a, p.241) consideration of music as 'processual product' reverberates with a social realist perspective on the value of both epistemic and social dimensions of knowledge. The findings in this study therefore suggest that both the curriculum (classification) and pedagogy (framing) present the potential for a symbiosis of structure/agency. This can be explained thus: while we perceive the curriculum as a structure in terms of its content and assessment, it brings agency to bear on those who need scaffolding in their musical pathways.

## Implications

Political and cultural changes of recent times point to an increasing potential for music lecturers to feel adrift amidst a sea of conflicting challenges, needs, and ideals as they contemplate what might, or should, be taught in higher education The lecturers in this study

appeared to be constantly balancing claims for curricular, time and resource space as well as challenges in practice such as differentiating for a diverse student population. Such challenges were also echoed in the students' recollections of their experiences at second level in the context of the revised Leaving Certificate music curriculum, thus I turn briefly now to suggest areas for further consideration in this regard.

First, opportunity and success in higher music education point to a long-term engagement with music, in many cases from a very early age. Musical experiences at home and in education played a central role in the longer-term trajectories of students who expressed ease with the degree they were pursuing. Most notably, the increased take-up of music at Leaving Certificate level and the challenges of students who find themselves 'late-starters' have some parallels in the UK context. For example, engagement in *Musical Futures* has sparked an increase in the take-up of GCSE music. However, musical knowledge is needed in order to realise success at GCSE level (Hallam et al., 2008). Barriers through established systems would seem to be created whereby 'the knowledge gap between compulsory school music, selective exams, and university education becomes ever greater and increasingly reliant on private instrumental tuition out of school' (Pitts 2012, p.171). Thus, barriers remain despite greater participation and engagement in music programmes.

Second, the division between those who have the economic and cultural capital to avail of private instrumental and theory lessons can be described as a structural impediment to equal opportunity in music education. Moreover, as long as opportunities and access are impeded by such structures, one has to question the potential agency of the secondary music classroom and the curriculum vis-à-vis knowledge and skills as provided by the state, alongside musical encounters, in attempting to bridge this gap. For in prescribing a curriculum that attracts pupils by virtue of its performing and experiential appeal, the needs of students who wish to pursue higher music education are clearly disadvantaged when competing with others who have enjoyed a distinct advantage. I would argue moreover, that it is in acknowledging that musical opportunities can and should be equally accessible, as well as appropriately challenging, that we can attempt to ameliorate musical disadvantage.

Both students and lecturers raised the recurring issue of difficulties in coping with mixed-ability learning and teaching at second level and in higher education. Some students who had prior training in music theory acted in a supporting role to their secondary music teacher who was negotiating the curriculum for newcomers in senior cycle of secondary school, as well as enabling challenges for the students who had extensive musical backgrounds. Although it manifests as one cog in the fractured continuum of statutory music

education, it presents as a stumbling-block in the transition from second to higher levels. This incoherence in the relationship between second and higher levels of education requires discussion and reappraisal on both sides of the divide.

Clearly more could be done to ease the transition from Leaving Certificate Music to undergraduate music study. Challenges faced by a diverse student population could be alleviated by wider higher education support structures. While these are gradually finding a place in international contexts as large-group generic seminars such as essay writing and note-taking (Marland, 2003), music requires specialised support mechanisms (Pitts, 2003).

In acknowledging the challenges for both students and lecturers, Burland and Pitts (2007) suggest that with institutional support mechanisms, induction programmes can be of benefit. Where such induction courses were mentioned by lecturers in this study, it was in the form of redesigned core first year modules in basic rudiments which had been incorporated for all students. It became apparent that reshaping the curriculum in this way has had a knock-on effect on overall curriculum design. Where Western classical music dominates course content, certain measures could be taken to reduce anxiety and doubts felt by students whose musical habitus is not primarily classical. To ameliorate such anxieties, suggestions might include: making learning expectations more explicit from the outset (Pitts, 2003); and, identifying more possibilities for differentiation of curriculum content and pedagogy (Burland and Pitts, 2007).

Within the broader society, a relativistic view of music has largely replaced a hitherto emphasis on 'the canon' and categories of high and low culture. Proponents of anti-notation ideology would argue that we ought to dispense with such a restrictive, elitist and cumbersome form (Green, 2008a). While such counter-ideological assumptions were in the minority in this study, their presence in student and lecturer accounts and weakly classified curricula, represented markers of symbolic capital by virtue of distinguishing them from the more 'traditional' higher education institutions.

Unlike the UK or US contexts, the overriding acknowledgement of Irish traditional music's value among students and lecturers in higher education was palpable. The inclusion of Irish traditional music in the forms of discrete courses, modules or pathways within the higher education institutions, are testament to its recently affirmed status. This would also seem to be contributing to the increasing bimusicality among students and lecturers as well as the provision of opportunities for the fusion of genres. However in comparison to Irish traditional music, popular music has only begun to receive attention in undergraduate music programmes in recent years and is still regarded in some universities as contrary to a liberal

higher education. Ideological assumptions related to the classical canon and Irish traditional music, need to be reconsidered to include popular music not only in terms of its sociocultural leanings, but for popular music to be valued 'in and for itself' (Green, 2006, p.101).

The social reproduction of both Western classical and Irish music traditions would seem to have perpetuated ideological assumptions of musical value and knowledge. These assumptions continue to influence curriculum design in higher education and particular pedagogical approaches that are consonant or dissonant with students' musical habituses. For those who felt 'like a fish [out] of water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.127), their musicality and musical abilities did not seem relevant to, or welcome in the field. Where students were exceptionally motivated and supported, their cultural capital (musical knowledge and skills) was expanded upon, thereby adding flexibility to their musical habituses. Thus, agency was afforded to students when the curriculum and pedagogy allowed for the affirmation of existing knowledge and skills and their further development. Students and lecturers felt that diverse musical genres and skills such as improvisation and playing by ear needed to be legitimated in higher education. As Green (2008a) states: '...neither folk nor jazz are as aural as their bourgeois defendents claim...creativity and improvisation have been features of Western classical music-making for centuries...' (pp.240-241). In addition, both students and lecturers expected and valued the place of disciplinary knowledge in an undergraduate music qualification.

## Contribution to Knowledge

Ideological assumptions of musical value were discussed decades ago in relation to school music (Swanwick, 1984; Vulliamy and Shepherd, 1984; Green, 1988; 2008). One of the strengths of this thesis lies in its unique and timely situating of ideological assumptions within the context of higher music education. Moreover, it investigates these assumptions within the context of Ireland's relatively recent post-colonial past. This distinguishes it from previous studies in higher music education which have had specific types of institutions for example, conservatoires as their focus (Burt-Perkins and Mills, 2009; Creech et al, Gaunt, 2010; Perkins, 2013). Studies in the sociology of higher education have compared student experiences across institutions (Reay et al, 2001; 2005; Crozier et al, 2008) yet no published study in the field of higher *music* education has examined both student and lecturer experiences within a national context. Through the employment of many data gathering tools (documents, surveys, interviews), an overview of the prevailing context and a situated

investigation within the context of Irish higher music education has been achieved. In managing to incorporate diverse institutions as well as giving a voice to students and lecturer concerns, this study has included diverse contexts and has revealed a myriad of perspectives.

Drawing from the theories of Bourdieu, this study has suggested new ways in which the conceptual tools of habitus and cultural capital can be applied to reflect students' musical backgrounds and knowledge and skills. Through the application of Bourdieu's conceptual tools, I constructed a model which assisted in understanding how the data categories operate *from, between* and *through* actors and agents. Moreover, in considering the dialectical relationship between and *within* structure and agency, it has been possible to bring complex issues and concerns to bear on the research problem. The thesis has identified gaps in the continuum from second to third level. These would seem to be indicative of the examination-driven context of the Leaving Certificate and point to the acquisition of music theory knowledge on a 'need-to-know' basis for the exam. Most importantly, this thesis has argued that equality of access and opportunity in higher music education requires equality of access to formal musical knowledge and skills. This has brought the topic of music theory 'knowledge back in' (Young, 2008) after much dissention on its previously over-emphasised importance.

## Limitations

A major qualitative and minor quantitative focus was chosen for this study in order to explore, investigate and interpret both student and lecturer views on the myriad of factors influencing higher music education teaching and learning. The broad methodological approach to this study could be perceived as conceding breadth over depth in the data gathering process and findings. However, the strength of the study lies in its unique encapsulation of a pan-like view of the historical and current contexts of Irish higher music education, and a gathering of multiple perspectives on current and pressing issues of concern. In particular, the concepts of field, habitus and cultural capital have given an analytical language of description that I found brought a higher level of abstraction and conceptualisation to the interpretation of data. At the same time, I have also aimed to ground all conceptual assertions in the data by 'blending together empirical evidence and abstract concepts' (Neuman, 2003, p. 440).

The unrepresentative sample from the survey data could also be seen as limiting the relevance and/or validity of the survey findings. I would argue however, that a predominantly

quantitative approach would solely *depend* on a representative sampling of the student population by year and institution It is already acknowledged that quantitative elements from the survey data cannot be generalised. Rather than attempt to prove correlation or causation, the thrust of the methodological approach was to gain further understanding by capturing the diverse perspectives of teachers and learners in higher music education

It could be argued that my position as lecturer may have had a limiting effect on encouraging the participation of students who would not have felt comfortable speaking to an academic about particular learning difficulties. However, this potential limitation was recognised early on during the interview process and consequently the research methods changed from individual to group interviews in order to balance perspectives. I found moreover, that my role and experience as musician and music educator added strength and rigour to the interview process and data generation that a general researcher in education would not have had. This manifested as the ability to put students at ease from the outset in introducing myself as a musician and music educator, and through demonstrating my understanding of the many explanations of course content and complex musical terminology.

## Recommendations for Further Research

In light of the scope, methods and findings of this study, I would like to suggest three areas for further research. First, it was not possible at the time of the fieldwork to include students or lecturers from the newer popular degree programmes in the study. Further research might examine popular students' musical backgrounds, prior music education, expectations, and experiences in higher education using the same survey method and interviews. It would be intriguing to compare these experiences with the existing data on students in conservatoires, for example. Second, in order to probe further on the gap from second to higher-level music, further research might investigate secondary students' perceptions of the study of music in higher education as well as self-conceptions of musical ability. Third, this study focused on the students that were successful in gaining access to a higher music education course. Further research could examine the musical backgrounds, prior music education and social class of *prospective* music entrants with a view to tracking their experiences of admissions procedures and their success or failure to gain a place in higher education

**Final thoughts**

Music's ubiquity has been shown to contribute in significant ways to people's everyday lives (DeNora, 2000). However, it can also be argued that with such ubiquity, the boundaries between music's function in society and its role in education have become increasingly blurred. The data from surveys, interviews and documentary evidence, illustrate the ways in which ideologies of musical value and knowledge continue to exert an impact on music education at all levels. The complex interplay of habitus, cultural capital and field clearly frames the musical choices and by extension, higher education choices, that students can make. Moreover, they point to an historical pervasive problem in Irish education that is the neglect of statutory music education provision within educational policy, thereby affording access to 'powerful knowledge' to the 'powerful' only. As a consequence, access to and opportunity in music education at all levels, remains unequal.

While the focus of the research has been situated in higher education, this question brings into sharp focus the unequal opportunity that has obtained in all levels of formal Irish music education for many decades. The absence of joined-up thinking in Irish educational policy has meant that children have been beholden to a dependency on economic and cultural capital in order to access formal music education. Until such time that *all* students regardless of background have equal access to music education, those with socio-economic and educational advantage will continue to be privileged at all levels of formal education, but especially in higher music education.

Through the application of a social realist conception of musical knowledge, the thesis has shown that there is a need to ameliorate the unequal distribution of 'powerful' knowledge by a reappraisal of music education policy and practice at all levels of education. A reverse to a staid, mechanical approach to music rudiments teaching is not what is called for here; rather, it is in reconsidering the value of musical knowledge that change can occur for the better. For it is only with knowledge that learners have agency, in not only negotiating access to, and success in higher music education, but also in the affirmation of their musical identities and future musical pathways.

# APPENDIX A
# STUDENT AND LECTURER SURVEYS

**Leading education
and social research**
Institute of Education
University of London

## *Exploring the Expectations, Values, and Experiences of Lecturers and Students of Music in Higher Education in Ireland*

### Gwen Moore, Doctoral Researcher, Institute of Education, University of London

## Questionnaire - Students of Music

Completion of this questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes. All information you provide is anonymous.

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**SECTION A: General Information**

---

**A.1. Institution at which you are studying:**

_____

**A.2. Title of the programme you are studying e.g. BA, B Mus, B. Ed, B Mus Ed**

_____

**A. 3. Are you:**  ☐  ☐
  Male  Female

**A.4. What is your nationality?** _____

**A.5. Year of study: (please tick)**

☐  ☐  ☐  ☐
1st year  2nd year  3rd year  4th year

**A.6. To which age category do you belong?**

☐  ☐  ☐  ☐  ☐
18-24  25-34  35-44  45-54  55+

## SECTION B: Musical Background and Music Education

**B.1. What is your first/main instrument (includes voice)?** _____

**B.2. Did/do you take lessons on this instrument/voice?**

☐        ☐

Yes       No

**B.3. At what age did you begin regular lessons on your first/main instrument (including voice)?**

☐      ☐      ☐      ☐      ☐

3-6     7-10    11-14   15-18   19+

**B.4. If you took lessons, which form did the *majority* of your training take (tick as many boxes as apply, not counting lessons/formats that lasted less than a month):**

☐ School band/ensemble

☐ One-to-one lessons in primary school

☐ One-to-one lessons in secondary school

☐ Group lessons in school

☐ A community group

☐ Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann

☐ Private one-to-one lessons with local teacher

☐ Private one-to-one lessons in a school of music

☐ Private group lessons in a school of music

☐ Other (please specify) _____

**B.5. Have you completed graded performing examinations on your first/main instrument?**

☐        ☐

Yes       No (go to Q.B.7)

**B.6. If you have completed graded examinations, please specify most recent** *grade(s) achieved, result* **and** *awarding body* **e.g. Royal Irish Academy of Music/Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music/London College of Music/Comhaltas etc:**

| Grade | Result              e.g. Pass/Merit/Distinction | Examining Board |
|-------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
|       |                                                |                 |

**B.7. List each instrument you play, including your main instrument and any others, and <u>please tick</u> whether the majority of your learning was either a) formal, i.e. lessons with a teacher(s) at school or elsewhere; or b) informal, i.e. self-taught/with friends or c) semi-formal, i.e. in an organised community group etc:**

| Instrument (s) | Formal | Informal | Semi-formal |
|----------------|--------|----------|-------------|
|                |        |          |             |

**B.8. To what extent did you study music theory/rudiments before coming to college/university? (please tick all that apply)**

☐ Theory lessons in a school of music        ☐ Theory lessons with instrumental teacher

☐ Secondary school curriculum        ☐ Self-taught

☐ Other (please specify)_____

**B.9. Prior to beginning university/college, did you take any theory examinations e.g. Associated Board Grade 5 Theory?**

☐ Yes        ☐ No        If yes, to what level?_____

**C.1 To what extent, if any, do/did your parent(s)/relatives/guardians play a role in your music education?**

**C.2. If/when in employment, what is/was your mother's occupation?**

**C.3. If/when in employment, what is/was your father's occupation?**

**C.4 Which of the following would best describe your mother's highest level of educational attainment?**

☐ Primary/elementary      ☐ Junior/Intermediate Certificate

☐ Leaving Certificate or Equivalent ☐ Diploma or Certificate

☐ Bachelor Degree      ☐ Masters Degree

☐ Doctoral Degree      ☐ Post-doctoral

☐ Don't know      ☐ Not applicable

☐ Other (please specify) _____

**C.5.** **Which of the following would best describe your father's highest level of educational attainment?**

☐ Primary/elementary        ☐ Junior/Intermediate Certificate

☐ Leaving Certificate or Equivalent ☐ Diploma or Certificate

☐ Bachelor Degree         ☐ Masters Degree

☐ Doctoral Degree        ☐ Post-doctoral

☐ Other (please specify) _____

☐ Don't know            ☐ Not applicable

---

**SECTION D: Music in Second and Third Level Education**

**D.1.Was music offered as part of the state examination system in the secondary school you attended?**

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not sure

**D.2. Which of the following state music examinations, if any, did you take?**
**(please tick all that apply)**

☐ Leaving Certificate        ☐ Junior Certificate

☐ None                ☐ Other please specify_____

**D.3. Which of the following best describes your level of ease with the Leaving Certificate Music Course:**

☐ Very Easy      ☐ Easy      ☐ Neither easy nor difficult

☐ Difficult      ☐ Very difficult      ☐ Not applicable

**Please give a reason for your answer:**

---

**D.4 Why did you choose to study music at third level?**

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                     │
│                                                                     │
│                                                                     │
│                                                                     │
│                                                                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

**D.5 Do you currently play in an ensemble or in a band/group?**

☐ Yes (go to Q D.6)          ☐ No (go to Q D.8)

**D.6 What kind of group is it? (please tick all that apply)**

☐ Orchestra          ☐ Small classical ensemble

☐ Rock/pop group     ☐ Jazz band

☐ Irish traditional group

☐ Other (please specify)_____

**D.7 Is your membership of the group/ensemble:**

☐ Part of music degree course requirements

☐ Extra-curricular but part of college/university

☐ Not at all related to college/university

☐ Other (please specify)_____

**D.8. Prior to entry to the music course you are currently studying, to what extent were you aware of the course content/curriculum? (Tick any that apply)**

☐ I read the prospectus in depth

☐ I heard about the course from a friend

☐ I discussed it with a member of the music department in advance

☐ I knew some information about the course content but not in depth

☐ I did not know much about the course content beforehand

**D.9. Which of the following best describes what you expected in the course content?**

☐  I thought I knew about the course content beforehand and it turned out to be what I expected

☐  I thought I knew about the course content beforehand, but it turned out to be different to what I expected

☐  Other (please specify in box below)

```




```

**D.10 Which of the following best describes your level of ease with the music course you are currently studying:**

☐ Very Easy          ☐ Easy          ☐ Neither easy nor difficult

☐ Difficult          ☐ Very difficult          ☐ Not applicable

**Please give a reason for your answer:**

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**D.11 Please <u>tick the box</u> that most closely applies to the degree of *importance* placed on being able to do the following musical skills/knowledge on the music degree you are studying:**

| Musical Skills/Knowledge | Important | Of some importance | Not Important | Not Applicable | Don't Know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Being able to follow a musical score | | | | | |
| Being able to sing at sight | | | | | |
| Being able to sight-read on an instrument | | | | | |
| Being able to play as part of an ensemble | | | | | |
| Being a proficient solo performer | | | | | |
| Being able to improvise | | | | | |
| Being able to compose four-part harmony | | | | | |
| Being able to write a song | | | | | |
| Being able to play by ear | | | | | |
| Being able to write down a melody (dictation skills) | | | | | |
| Being a fluent keyboard player | | | | | |
| Having music history knowledge | | | | | |
| Being able to compose instrumental music | | | | | |
| Music technology skills | | | | | |
| Having music industry knowledge | | | | | |
| Other? Please specify | | | | | |

**D.12. In your personal opinion,** what degrees of importance *should be placed* on the following musical skills/knowledge in the study of music at third level?

| Musical Skills/Knowledge | Important | Of some importance | Not Important | Not Applicable | Don't Know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Being able to follow a musical score | | | | | |
| Being able to sing at sight | | | | | |
| Being able to sight-read on an instrument | | | | | |
| Being able to play as part of an ensemble | | | | | |
| Being a proficient solo performer | | | | | |
| Being able to improvise | | | | | |
| Being able to compose four-part harmony | | | | | |
| Being able to write a song | | | | | |
| Being able to play by ear | | | | | |
| Being able to write down a melody (dictation skills) | | | | | |
| Being a fluent keyboard player | | | | | |
| Having music history knowledge | | | | | |
| Being able to compose instrumental music | | | | | |
| Music technology skills | | | | | |
| Having music industry knowledge | | | | | |
| Other? Please specify | | | | | |

**Please give a reason(s) for your answers:**

**D.13. Please <u>tick the box</u> that most closely applies to the degree of *emphasis\** placed on the following musical styles/genres on the music programme/course you are studying:*\*Emphasis* is defined here as the amount of time given to, or the amount of modules which focus on the following musical styles/genres throughout the music degree.**

| Musical Styles | Most Emphasis | Some Emphasis | Least Emphasis | Not Applicable | Don't Know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Irish traditional music | | | | | |
| Electro-acoustic | | | | | |
| Western classical | | | | | |
| Popular | | | | | |
| Jazz | | | | | |
| European folk music | | | | | |
| Other world music | | | | | |
| Other (please specify) | | | | | |

**D.14. <u>In your personal opinion,</u> what kinds of emphasis do you think certain musical styles *should have* in third level music courses? (please tick)**

| Musical Styles | Most Emphasis | Some Emphasis | Least Emphasis | Not Applicable | Don't Know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Irish traditional music | | | | | |
| Electro-acoustic | | | | | |
| Western classical | | | | | |
| Popular | | | | | |
| Jazz | | | | | |
| European folk music | | | | | |
| Other world music | | | | | |
| Other (please specify) | | | | | |

**Please give a reason for your answers:**

**D.15 Please describe your experience thus far of the study of music at third level:**

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```

**D.16 Do you think there is a relationship between your _musical background_ and your experience of music at third level?**

      ☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not sure

**D.17 Do you think there is a relationship between your _prior music education_ and your experience of music at third level?**

      ☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not sure

**D.18 Feel free to add any further comments here:**

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<div align="center">

**Thank You – Before you finish…**

</div>

**Interview?** Finally, would you consider partaking in a confidential, anonymous one-to-one interview that would further help this study?

**What would this involve?** I would ask you about your experience of the study of music in higher education It would last no longer than 30-40 minutes and would occur at a time that suits you.

**Why?** To explore the student experience of the study of music in more depth and to inform educational policy and practice.

**If you are interested, please supply you're email address below:**

<div align="center">

**End of Questionnaire! Thank you sincerely for your contribution**

**Gwen Moore**      gwen.moore@mic.ul.ie

</div>

*Exploring the Expectations, Values, and Experiences of Lecturers and Students of Music in Higher Education in Ireland*

**Gwen Moore, Doctoral Researcher, Institute of Education, University of London**

## Questionnaire - Lecturers of Music

Completion of this questionnaire will take approximately 5-10 minutes. If you do not have time to fill in all of the open boxes, please do tick the boxes as your answers will still be valuable. All information you provide is anonymous.

**SECTION A: Professional and Background Information**

**A.1. Number of years teaching in higher education:**

| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21+ |

**A.2. Your position:** ☐ Full-time ☐ Part-time ☐ Temporary Wholetime

☐ Lecturer ☐ Assistant Lecturer ☐ Senior Lecturer

☐ Head of Dept ☐ Professor

☐ Other (please specify)_____

**A.3. Gender:** ☐ Male ☐ Female

**A.4. Professional Qualifications (please tick all that apply)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ B.A. | ☐ B.Mus | ☐ B.MusEd | ☐ B.Ed |
| ☐ M.Mus | ☐ M.A. | ☐ M.Ed | ☐ M.Phil |
| ☐ PhD | ☐ DMus | ☐ EdD | ☐ DPhil |
| ☐ ALCM | ☐ LLCM | ☐ LRSM | ☐ FRSM |
| ☐ ARIAM | ☐ LRIAM | ☐ FRIAM | ☐ DipABRSM |
| ☐ ATCL | ☐ LTCL | ☐ FTCL | ☐ LRAM |
| ☐ FRAM | ☐ Other(s) (please specify)_____ | | |

**A.5. To which age category do you belong?**

☐25-30     ☐31-40     ☐41-50     ☐51-59     ☐60-69

**A.6. What is your nationality?**

_____

**A.7. On which undergraduate programme(s) do you teach or have previously taught?**

_____

**A.8. Please list the titles of modules or components on modules that you currently teach or have taught:**

```



```

## SECTION B: Musical Background and Music Education
The purpose of this section is to gather data in a systematic way from both lecturers and students in the event that any observable trends emerge from the findings.

**B.1. In which higher education institution did you study at undergraduate level?**

_____

**B.2.What is your first/main instrument (includes voice)?**_____

**B.3. Did/do you take lessons on this instrument/voice?**

☐ Yes (go to Q. B.4)       ☐ No (go to Q.B.6)

**B.4. At what age did you begin lessons on your first/main instrument (including voice)?**

☐3-6     ☐7-10     ☐11-14     ☐15-18     ☐19+

**B.5. If you took lessons, which form did the *majority* of your training take (tick as many boxes as apply, not counting lessons/formats that lasted less than a month):**

☐ School band/ensemble ☐ A community group

☐ Group lessons in school ☐ Private group lessons in a school of music

☐ Individual lessons in primary school ☐ Individual lessons in secondary school

☐ Private individual lessons in a school of music

☐ Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Eireann

☐ Private individual lessons with local teacher

☐ Private individual lessons in a school of music

☐ Other (please specify) _____

**B.6. Please list all instruments that you play, and <u>please tick</u> whether the majority of your learning was either a) formal, i.e. lessons with a teacher(s) at school or elsewhere; or b) informal, i.e. self-taught/with friends or c) semi-formal, i.e. in an organised community group etc.:**

| Instrument (s) | Formal | Informal | Combination |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

**B.7. Was music offered as part of the state examination system in the secondary school you attended?**

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

**B.8. Which of the following state music examinations, if any, did you take? (please tick all that apply)**

☐ Leaving Certificate ☐ Junior Certificate

☐ Intermediate Certificate ☐ None

☐ A level ☐ GCSE ☐ Other (please specify)_____

**B.9. Did you complete any theory examinations prior to studying music in college/university?**

☐ Yes      ☐ No      If yes, to what level?_____

## Section C. Music and Curricula

The purpose of this section is to gather your considered opinion on music curricula at second and third level. In particular, your views on the current Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus and your needs in relation to curriculum content and practice in higher education will provide a constructive platform for future debates surrounding this issue.

**C.1. What is your opinion if any, on a) the content, and b) assessment of the current Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus:**

**C.2. Do you think 1ˢᵗ year students expect the course content in higher education to be similar to the Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus?**

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not sure

Please give a reason for your answer to C.2.

C.3. Please **tick the box** that most closely applies to the degree of *importance* placed on students being able to do the following musical skills/knowledge on the course you are teaching:

| Musical Skills/Knowledge | Important | Of some Importance | Not Important | Not Applicable |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Being able to follow a musical score | | | | |
| Being able to sing at sight | | | | |
| Being able to sight-read on an instrument | | | | |
| Being able to play as part of an ensemble | | | | |
| Being a proficient solo performer | | | | |
| Being able to improvise | | | | |
| Being able to compose four-part harmony | | | | |
| Being able to write a song | | | | |
| Being able to play by ear | | | | |
| Being able to write down a melody (dictation skills) | | | | |
| Being a fluent keyboard player | | | | |
| Having music history knowledge | | | | |
| Being able to compose instrumental music | | | | |
| Music technology skills | | | | |
| Having music industry knowledge | | | | |
| Other? Please specify | | | | |

C.4. **In your personal opinion**, please tick the level of importance you think is placed in general, on the following musical skills/knowledge within Irish higher music education?

| Musical Skills/Knowledge | Important | Of some Importance | Not Important | Not Applicable |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Being able to follow a musical score | | | | |
| Being able to sing at sight | | | | |
| Being able to sight-read on an instrument | | | | |
| Being able to play as part of an ensemble | | | | |
| Being a proficient solo performer | | | | |
| Being able to improvise | | | | |
| Being able to compose four-part harmony | | | | |
| Being able to write a song | | | | |
| Being able to play by ear | | | | |
| Being able to write down a melody (dictation skills) | | | | |
| Being a fluent keyboard player | | | | |
| Having music history knowledge | | | | |
| Being able to compose instrumental music | | | | |
| Music technology skills | | | | |
| Having music industry knowledge | | | | |
| Other? Please specify | | | | |

Please give a reason(s) for your answer

**C.5 Please <u>tick the box</u> that most closely applies to the degree of *emphasis*\* placed on the following musical styles/genres on the music programme/course on which you teach:** *Emphasis* is defined here as the amount of time given to, or the amount of modules which focus on the following musical styles/genres throughout the music degree.

| Musical Styles | Most Emphasis | Some Emphasis | Least Emphasis | Not Applicable |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Irish traditional music | | | | |
| Electro-acoustic | | | | |
| Western classical | | | | |
| Popular | | | | |
| Jazz | | | | |
| European folk music | | | | |
| Other world music | | | | |
| Other (please specify) | | | | |

**C.6 <u>In your personal opinion,</u> what kinds of emphasis do you think certain musical styles *should have* in third level music courses? (please tick)**

| Musical Styles | Most Emphasis | Some Emphasis | Least Emphasis | Not Applicable |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Irish traditional music | | | | |
| Electro-acoustic | | | | |
| Western classical | | | | |
| Popular | | | | |
| Jazz | | | | |
| European folk music | | | | |
| Other world music | | | | |
| Other (please specify) | | | | |

Please give a reason for your answers to C.6:

C.7. To what extent do you encounter teaching and learning **challenges** relating to students' musical backgrounds and prior music education?

C.8. To what extent do you encounter teaching and learning **advantages** relating to students' musical backgrounds and prior music education?

C.9. To what extent do you think that students' musical backgrounds and prior music education impact on their experience in higher music education ?

**End of Questionnaire. Please use enclosed SAE for return.**
**Thank you sincerely for your contribution**
gwen.moore@mic.ul.ie

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# APPENDIX B
## INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS, LECTURERS AND FOCUS GROUPS

**A Study of the Expectations and Experiences of Students and Lecturers of Music in Irish Higher Education**

Tell me about your musical background and how you learned music.

What are your views, if any on the current Leaving Cert Music Syllabus?

What are your views on musical knowledge and skills necessary for the course? Why?

What areas should form the curriculum at third level? Why?

How do you think your musical background might influence your experience of learning/teaching?

In what ways do you think your music education might be influencing your experience of learning/teaching?

# APPENDIX C
## STUDENT AND LECTURER INTERVIEW PROFILES

# General and musical background information of students interviewed (in order of interview schedule)

**Students (n:18)    Sex: 9 Male, 9 Female**

| Interview Number | Pseudonym | Age Category | Institution-Type | Year of Study | Instrument(s) | Completed Grades |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Áine | 18-24 | University | 4th Year | Voice<br>Violin | Grade 5<br>Grade 5 |
| 2 | Thomas | 18-24 | Conservatoire | 3rd Year | Piano<br><br>Organ | ALCM Diploma (performance)<br>LTCL Diploma (performance)<br>LTCL Diploma (teaching)<br>RIAM Diploma (accompaniment)<br>ALCM Diploma (performance)<br>Grade 8 Theory |
| 3 | Christopher | 18-24 | Conservatoire | 2nd Year | Piano | Grade 8<br>Grade 4 Theory |
| 4 | John | 35-44 | Conservatoire | 2nd Year | Saxophone (Jazz)<br>Flute | Grade 8 (LSM)<br>Grade 5 (RIAM) |
| 5 | Sarah | 18-24 | Conservatoire | 2nd Year | Piano<br>Violin<br>Voice<br>Irish Harp | Grade 8 (ABRSM)<br>Grade 8 (ABRSM)<br>Grade 8 (ABRSM)<br>Level 3 (Irish Academy of Harpers) |
| 6 | Fionn | 18-24 | University | 4th Year | Violin<br>Uilleann Pipes<br>Piano<br>Bass Guitar | Grade 8<br>Grade 8 Theory |
| 7 | Annemarie | 25-34 | University | 4th Year | Piano<br>Guitar | None<br>Rock band |
| 8 | Lorcan | 25-34 | University | 3rd Year | Violin<br>Voice | Grade 5 (ABRSM)<br>Punk band singer |

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| 9 | Maria | 18-24 | University | 3rd Year | Piano<br>Violin | Grades 1-8 (RIAM)<br>Grade 3 (RIAM) |
|----|--------|-------|------------|----------|------|------|
| 10 | Alan | 18-24 | University | 1st Year | Guitar (Jazz)<br>Voice | Grades 1-8 (LCM)<br>None |
| 11 | Diane | 18-24 | University | 3rd Year | Voice<br>Guitar | None<br>None |
| 12 | Robyn | 18-24 | College of Education | 1st Year | Piano<br>Violin | Grade 8 (CSM)<br>Grade 8 (CSM) |
| 13 | Melanie | 18-24 | College of Education | 1st Year | Violin<br>Piano | Grade 8 (CSM)<br>Grade 8 (CSM) |
| 14 | Sadhbh | 18-24 | College of Education | 1st Year | Voice<br>Flute<br>Piano | Grades 2-8 (RIAM)<br>Grade 6 (ABRSM)<br>Grade 4 (RIAM)<br>Grade 5 Theory |
| 15 | Cormac | 18-24 | Conservatoire | 1st Year' | Piano<br>Saxophone<br>Harp<br>Guitar | Grades 1-8<br>Grade 5<br>Grade 6<br><br>Grade 7 Theory |
| 16 | Hannah | 18-24 | Conservatoire | 2nd Year | Voice<br>Piano | None<br>Grade 5 |
| 17 | Matt | 45-54 | Institute of Technology | 4th Year | Trumpet (Jazz) | Grade 8 (ABRSM)<br>Grade 5 Theory |
| 18 | Simon | 25-34 | Institute of Technology | 2nd Year | Guitar (Pop and now classical) | Grade 7 (TCL) |

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**General information of lecturers interviewed (in order of interview schedule)**

| Interview Number | Pseudonym | Position |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Dr Philip Hannon | Senior lecturer |
| 2 | Dr Annette Long | Lecturer |
| 3 | Dr Emer Murphy | Lecturer |
| 4 | Dr Jane Strong | Lecturer |
| 5 | Prof Harry White | Chair of Music, UCD |
| 6 | Dr Ian O'Brien | Lecturer |
| 7 | Dr Louise Parker | Lecturer |
| 8 | Matthew Canning | Lecturer |
| 9 | Dr Peter Enright | Lecturer |
| 10 | Dr Anthony Morrissey | Lecturer |
| 11 | Dr Alan Maguire | Lecturer |
| 12 | Prof Mícheál Ó Suilleabháin | Director, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick |

# APPENDIX D
## STUDENT INFORMATION, LECTURER COVER LETTER AND CONSENT FORMS

# A Study of the Expectations and Experiences of Students and Lecturers of Music in Irish Higher Education

## Participant Information Sheet – Student Survey

### *Who is undertaking this project?*
My name is Gwen Moore and I am a part-time doctoral student at the University of London under the supervision of Prof Lucy Green.

### *Why is it being undertaken?*
The aim of the study is to explore whether students' musical backgrounds and prior music education at secondary school are related to their experience of music in college/university. Many students of music find the transition from school music to university a considerable challenge Similarly, although lecturers have discussed the challenges encountered by students on their courses, no study has been conducted that takes both students' and lecturers' views into account.

### *What are the benefits of this research?*
It is hoped that the data gathered from participants will (a) enhance our understanding of the study of music at both second and third level and (b) may further our understanding of possible ways in which the transition from music at Leaving Certificate level to university can be improved.

### *Exactly what is involved for the participant*
A questionnaire that takes approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. You are not required to provide your name and no sensitive personal questions are included.

### *Right to withdraw*
Participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from answering particular questions and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason

### *How will the information be used /disseminated?*
All information you give will be anonymous and confidential throughout the gathering of research and in any dissemination of findings in the thesis or subsequent publications. The data from the questionnaire will be combined with that of the other participants and institutions in this study, thus individual participant and institutional data will not be identifiable in the results.

### *What will happen to the data after research has been completed?*
In accordance with the Data Protection Act (2003) all participant data will be stored for five years (2011-2016) after which time it will be destroyed.

### *Contact details:*
Gwen Moore   gwen.moore@mic.ul.ie   Ph: 086 8053300

# Cover Letter to Lecturers

Mary Immaculate College
South Circular Road
Limerick

10th November 2011

Dear Dr Hannon,

My name is Gwen Moore and I am a doctoral candidate at the Institute of Education, University of London under the supervision of Professor Lucy Green. I also work full-time as a lecturer in music education at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick and I am a council member of the Society for Musicology in Ireland (SMI) and the Society for Music Education in Ireland (SMEI).

The purpose of my doctoral research is to explore the expectations, values and needs of lecturers and undergraduate students in higher music education in Ireland The rationale for this study emerged from an investigation of data contained in the Music Education National Debate (2001), in which changes to curricula and assessment at second level were discussed with particular reference to consequent changes in expectations, values and needs for those learning and teaching in higher music education Though the views of some lecturers and music scholars are documented in M.E.N.D, there is no account of students' views on curriculum content at second and third level, nor, therefore, any study of how the views of lecturers and students relate to each other.

The first phase of the research includes a nationwide survey of both lecturers and students of music. To that end, I have enclosed a questionnaire and hope that you will participate in the study. As a lecturer myself, I fully appreciate the intensity of an academic workload, however your response will be greatly appreciated. I hope that this study will be of value to students, lecturers and policy makers in second level and in higher education The second phase of the research will include semi-structured interviews with lecturers and students of music. Please be assured that you are not required to give your name or institutional affiliation on the questionnaire. All responses are anonymous and the data will be stored securely. If you would like to receive a copy of the final report, please contact me by email below and I will gladly oblige.

I have enclosed an SAE for your convenience. If you have any further questions about this research, please do not hesitate to get in contact with me.

Yours sincerely,

Gwen Moore
Phone: 061 204945
Email: gwen.moore@mic.ul.ie

This research was approved by the Institute of Education Ethics Committee on 25 October 2010.

# A Study of the Expectations and Experiences of Students and Lecturers of Music in Irish Higher Education

## Interview Information Sheet and Consent Form - Students

### *What is the project about?*
This study explores the relationship between students' and lecturers' musical backgrounds, music education and experiences of higher music education

### *Who is undertaking it?*
My name is Gwen Moore and I am a part-time doctoral student at the University of London under the supervision of Prof Lucy Green. I also work full-time lecturer in music education at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick.

### *Why is it being undertaken?*
The aim of the study is to explore whether students' musical backgrounds and prior music education at secondary school are related to their experience of music in college/university. Many students of music find the transition from school music to university a considerable challenge. Similarly, although lecturers have discussed the challenges encountered by students on their courses, no study has been conducted that takes both students' and lecturers' views into account.

### *What are the benefits of this research?*
It is hoped that the data gathered from participants will (a) enhance our understanding of the study of music at both second and third level and (b) may further our understanding of possible ways in which the transition from music at Leaving Certificate level to university can be improved.

### *Exactly what is involved for the participant*
A face-to-face interview that will last approximately 30-40 minutes. Names of persons or institutions will be anonymised in the generation of the data. Sensitive personal questions will **not** be asked in the interview.

### *Right to withdraw*
Participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to decline from answering any question(s) and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason

### *How will the information be used /disseminated?*
All information you give will be anonymous and confidential throughout the gathering of research and in any dissemination of findings in the thesis or subsequent publications. The data from the interview will be combined with that of the other participants and institutions in this study, thus individual participant and institutional data will not be identifiable in the results.

*How will confidentiality be kept?*
All information gathered will remain confidential and will not be released to any third party.

*What will happen to the data after research has been completed?*
In accordance with the Data Protection Act (2003) all participant data will be stored for five years (2011-2016) after which time it will be destroyed.

*Contact details:*
If at any time you have any queries/issues with regard to this study my contact details are as follows:
Gwen Moore
gwen.moore@mic.ul.ie

086 805330

## Informed Consent Form – Interview

Please read the following statements before signing the consent form I have read and understood the **participant information sheet**.

- I am over 18 years of age.
- I understand what the project is about, and what the results will be used for
- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason
- I am aware that my results will be kept confidential and that anonymity will be guaranteed at all stages of the study.

**Informed Consent**
I have read the information about the research.
I agree to participate in a semi-structured interview.

Name_____

Signed_____          Date_____

# Information Leaflet and Informed Consent for Lecturers of Music

## A Study of the Expectations and Experiences of Students and Lecturers of Music in Irish Higher Education

**Purpose of the Study**

The aim of the study is to explore the extent to which students' and lecturers' of music expectations and experiences of learning and teaching are related to students' musical backgrounds and prior music education I also wish to explore what musical skills/knowledge you think students need on entry and how this relates to music curricula at second and third level.

**Why is this research being done.?**

It is hoped that this study will (a) enhance our understanding of the study of music at both second and third level, (b) may benefit our understanding of the best way to aid the transition from school music to university music, and (c) may inform future educational policy and practice.

**Exactly what is involved?**
This phase of the research comprises a **short interview** that will take approximately 30-40 minutes.

**What are the risks involved?**
There are no risks involved with partaking in this study. All names, institutions, places mentioned during the interview will be anonymised during data generation and in any dissemination of same. You have the right to refuse to answer any question or to withdraw from the study at any stage if you wish.

**Confidentiality**
All information collected in this study is confidential. The information that you give will be grouped with all other responses. All data will be stored in a locked cabinet in a secure location and will be accessed only by the researcher.

**Informed Consent**
I have read the information about the research.
I agree to participate in a semi-structured interview.

Name_____

Signed_____          Date_____

# APPENDIX E
## SAMPLE OF QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Student Survey Sample of Cases – Qualitative Comment Analysis

**Section C Parental background**      **Section D: Music in Second and Third Level**

| S | To what extent have your parents guardians supported your music Ed | Mother's /Father's Occupation | On the Leaving Cert | Why did you choose to study music at third level | D14 reasons | Describe your exp experience thus far | Influence of Musical background/Prior Music Education |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | Financial Support / Music in the family / Encouragement / self-motivated | Prof/Manag / Semi-skilled/Unskilled / Musician/Music Teacher | | Passion/Love 137 / Talent/Good at it 13 / Career/Money 67 / Upward... Knowledge-Skills... / ...Exp 17 / Teacher Influence | | 266 – Positive / 100 – Negative / 45 - Blank | |
| 153 | Yes they are both musicians | Violin player in an orchestra / Violin player in an orchestra | Actually was more difficult as I hated to study things that I'll never apply on my life | Because I love music and I am talented | Blank | Blank | Blank |
| 154 | Provide money for lessons and theory lessons take me to concerts musically etc money to join a choir driving to choir practice (church and school) | Secondary school teacher | | Would like to become a blues singer performance... music | Should study all types not just one | Challenging but enjoying and already have learned so much | Takes me longer to figure things out so need to practice more than others |
| 155 | Naturally I found my close relation to music in my childhood years and then I started to play piano when I was 12 – 13 and from 15 I was studying classical guitar more properly. Since 17-18 I was focusing more and move on classical music and guitar. So I would say that it was process of self improvement and will it... | | Blank | Since I started to play on classical guitar I knew that I wanna play music. I'm from a very musical family and also my background was very musical and cultural. So it came naturally that I found myself in music and especially in classical and classical guitar music | Blank | Blank | Blank |

| ID | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| [redacted] | Provided an interest/have paid for instrumental lessons. Supported musical endeavours | Managing director/conference interpretor | Managing director/conference interpretor | Blank | It is the only thing I am passionate enough about to study full time for four or more years | Blank | Demanding difficult rewarding | D17 unfortunately I feel I was inadequately educated before entering this course (entirely my own fault) |
| 157 | Taught and shown how to play initially by my parents | English/music/drama teacher | IT teacher/musician | Didn't do music in school | Styles of music are emphasised in accordance with their difficulty and developed techniques. I may have slightly different perspectives but generally agree | Enjoying it immensely. Learning many things from lecturers and classmates alike | I have little academic background in music and this is quite an unfamiliar step up. But my own development is useful in other aspects | |
| 158 | Parents are both musicians | Singer | Trad musician | [bar chart] | Want to become a music therapist | Blank | I liked first and second year but prefer that I can pick the modules I like. Find I work harder with things I like doing | Able to keep up |
| 159 | [bar chart] | [redacted] | [redacted] | Cause I like it. Hands music | Blank | It's pretty good I like what I'm doing and improving slowly | Cause you need to have learned a bit to pass auditions into music college (usually) | |
| 160 | Very musical family. Uncles and grandfather involved in concert bands for many years | Hairdresser | Soldier | Didn't study leaving cert | I'm a full time professional player and have been for over 10 years. Went back to fill holes in my education | Blank | Fulfilling – time consuming. Overall very good | 10 years of professional experience prior to joining course |
| 161 | Blank | Blank | Blank | Blank | It's my life | Blank | Demanding | Blank |
| 162 | Funded and aided me all the way. Encouraged my learning and performing always | Blank | Blank | Found it hard to learn as teaching wasn't great but subject itself and exam was ok | It is my passion and want to pursue a career in it | It is a classical course should be mainly classical | Enjoyable | Blank |
| [redacted] | None | N/A | N/A | Blank | I wanted to gain music theory knowledge performance skills for singing, or which I have a passion | Blank | Blank | Blank |
| [redacted] | [bar chart] | Primary school teacher | Civil engineer | parts and writing and reading music but there | Because I love playing music and I love singing/performing music own skills of | Blank | It has been very enjoyable I like the way there are many ensembles that you can | Blank |

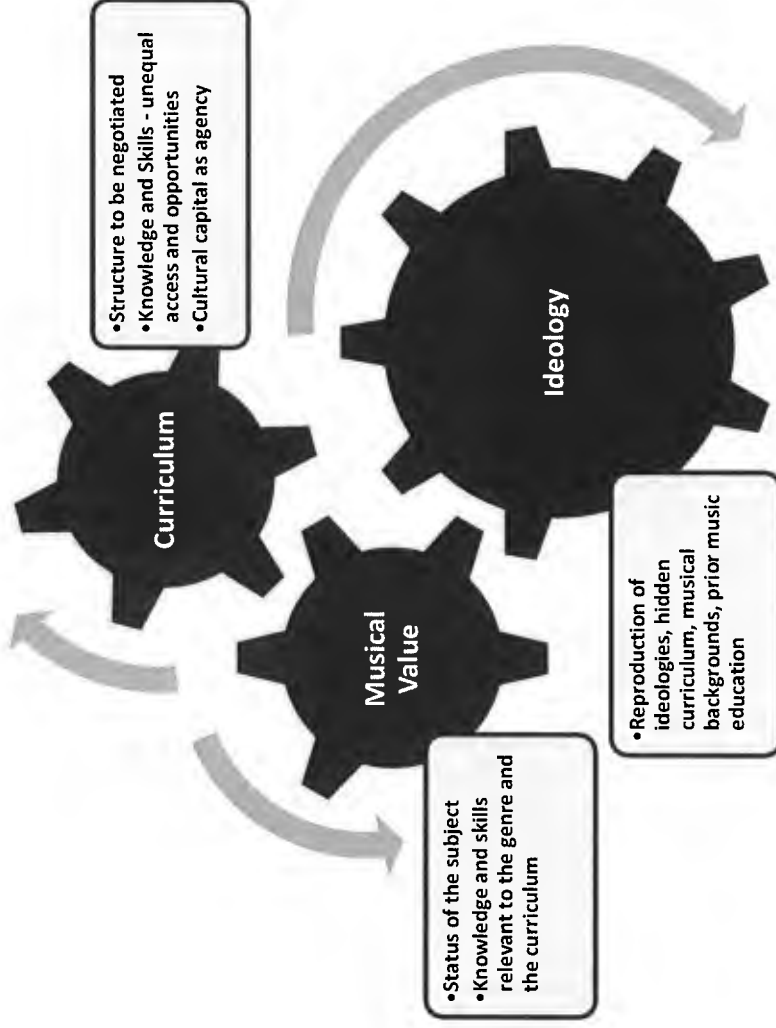| No. | Parent occupation A | Parent occupation B | Musical influences / support | Prior background | Reason for studying | Views on other music | Course experience | Reflection |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  | was quite a large amount you had to learn for writing essays | [redacted] |  | take part in and the teachers and lecturers are very good |  |
| [redacted] | Joiner | Nurse | [redacted item] | Sat a level music found this very difficult | Interest in a career in music therapy after showing a music therapist in work experience in school | Blank | Blank | D17 prior knowledge of musical theory helped me greatly when starting college |
| 166 | [redacted] | None | Initially large – financial support me | Blank | I like music | There's much to be learned from other cultures music | Enjoyable challenging | Blank |
| 167 | Blank | Blank | [redacted] | Blank | Blank | Blank | Course is useful but would be improved if one could focus on other genres why the sole emphasis on classical? | Playing classical guitar prior to course was an advantage |
| 168 | Woodsman/forester | Factory worker | Many musicians in the family, going back 60 to 70 years and more voice, piano, cello | Blank | Something to do during years of retirement | The Bmus course at CSM is very much geared to classical music which suits me just fine | Very positive, thoroughly enjoyable sometimes stressful and demanding | I believe I received a good basic foundation during childhood and adolescence i e ten years of private lessons from age 7 to 17 |
| 169 | Block layer | [redacted] | Sole role paying for education | Blank | because music is my passion | Blank | Clash | [redacted] |
| 170 | Engineer | Housewife | Grandparents – musicians. Granddad plays accordion Grandmother played [redacted] | Blank | [redacted] | Blank | It has been challenging but I still enjoy it | It created pathways for me in music |
| [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] | Blank | [redacted] | Blank | Blank | [redacted] |
| 172 | Management accountant | Psychotherapist | Paid for lessons, drove me to lessons orchestra | Already had grade five theory so not an issue set works I had played some of them practical fine grade eight violin | It was all I saw myself doing and I love to play violin | Blank | Not enough performance opportunities. No encouragement to student to create more performance opportunities | Blank |

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# ABDUCTION OF CORE THEMES

## PhD Data Analysis Qualitative Themes (Interviews and Surveys)

*Recurring themes that led to overarching Data Categories*

| KNOWLEDGE and SKILLS | CURRICULUM | IDEOLOGY and MUSICAL VALUE |
|---|---|---|
| Taxonomy of skills | Structure to be negotiated – agency required | Born of historical and cultural Irish context |
| The importance of musical knowledge and skills – framed in a WAM context | e.g. electives, prior musical knowledge, determination and motivation | Opposing ideologies of musical values |
| Keyboard skills as necessary – related to the history and forms of WAM | Valued knowledge included on the curriculum but also | The universality of Western Art music |
| Not appropriately challenging at second level | Designed in terms of lecturer expertise and knowledge and college resources | Formalising vernacular music traditions seems. preposterous to some |
| Challenges in skills/knowledge on entry to 3$^{rd}$ level | Taxonomy of skills | Diminishing importance of WAM – explosion of Popular culture. Deconstructing the canon – |
| The transferable music skills related to WAM | Entry requirements | most students don't even know what a canon is! |
| The notion of talent and giftedness – musicality what constitutes being musical? | Assessment methods | Music as ubiquitous – no sense of past only present |
| Teacher education – what knowledge should music teachers have? | Ideology – Philosophy | XFactor/Glee effect music as recreation not enlightenment |
| Conflict in the skills valued to be a 'musician' | Unequal opportunities | De-valuing of the subject music |
| Unequal access | | De-valuing of the humanities in general and the need to compete with other disciplines |
| | | HE funding – the perception of music and how it is increasingly devalued in higher education 'playing your instruments' |

# Interplay between data categories



- Structure to be negotiated
- Knowledge and Skills - unequal access and opportunities
- Cultural capital as agency

**Curriculum**

**Ideology**

**Musical Value**

- Reproduction of ideologies, hidden curriculum, musical backgrounds, prior music education

- Status of the subject
- Knowledge and skills relevant to the genre and the curriculum

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## APPENDIX F
## KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TABLE

| Skills/Knowledge | Important | | Of some importance | | Unimportant | | Not applicable/ Don't know | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| % | Students | Lecturers | Students | Lecturers | Students | Lecturers | Students | Lecturers |
| Current importance placed on Notation and Theory skills | 75 | 78 | 20 | 18 | 2.5 | 3 | .2 | 0 |
| Importance Notation and Theory should have in HE | 80 | 88 | 18 | 11.4 | 2.3 | 0 | .5 | 0 |
| Current importance placed on Score-reading skills | 75 | 74 | 20 | 24 | 19 | 2 | .2 | 0 |
| Importance score-reading should have in HE | 80 | 94 | 18 | 6 | 1.8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Current importance placed on Sightreading skills | 58 | 50 | 34 | 47 | 6.4 | 3 | 1.8 | 0 |
| Importance sight-reading should have in HE | 74 | 80 | 24 | 20 | 2.3 | 0 | .2 | 0 |
| Current importance placed on Harmony-Writing SATB | 48 | 44 | 33 | 41 | 14 | 8.8 | 5.7 | 6 |
| Importance writing SATB should have in HE | 41 | 68 | 45 | 24 | 12 | 8.8 | 2.1 | 0 |
| Current importance placed on Dictation skills | 66 | 58 | 28 | 30 | 5 | 12 | 1 | 0 |
| Importance dictation should have in HE | 65 | 85 | 29 | 9 | 4.3 | 6.1 | .3 | 0 |
| Current importance placed on Keyboard Skills | 51 | 26 | 35 | 47 | 11 | 21 | 3.4 | 0 |
| Importance keyboard skills should have in HE | 57 | 61 | 33 | 26 | 9 | 12 | .7 | 0 |
| Current importance placed on Improvisation skills | 21 | 6 | 35 | 44 | 35 | 47 | 8.2 | 3 |
| Importance improvisation skills should have in HE | 48 | 61 | 33 | 35 | 17 | 3 | 1.1 | 0 |
| Current importance placed on playing by ear | 23 | 15 | 38 | 38 | 30 | 44 | 8.7 | 3 |
| Importance being able to play by ear should have in HE | 55 | 56 | 34 | 38 | 8.4 | 3 | 1.3 | 3 |
| Current importance placed on Songwriting skills | 16 | 15 | 34 | 50 | 39 | 30 | 10.4 | 6 |
| Importance songwriting skills should have in HE | 28 | 32 | 43 | 47 | 26.4 | 20 | 2.5 | 0 |
| Current importance placed on music history knowledge | 43 | 61 | 40 | 35 | 13.6 | 3 | 2.5 | 0 |
| Importance music history knowledge should have in HE | 45 | 77 | 40 | 23 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Current importance on being a proficient solo performer | 46 | 38 | 29 | 47 | 20 | 12 | 5 | 3 |
| Importance being a proficient solo performer should have | 62 | 41 | 28 | 44 | 9 | 12 | .8 | 3 |
| Current importance on ensemble/group performance | 51 | 50 | 29 | 41 | 17 | 9 | 3.2 | 0 |
| Importance ensemble/group performance should have in HE | 73 | 73.5 | 20 | 23.5 | 6.6 | 5.8 | .3 | 0 |

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## Music Education Research

# 'Tristan chords and random scores': exploring undergraduate students' experiences of music in higher education through the lens of Bourdieu

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# 'Tristan chords and random scores': exploring undergraduate students' experiences of music in higher education through the lens of Bourdieu

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Within a theoretical framework drawn from Bourdieu, this article explores the relationship between undergraduate students' experiences of music in higher education and their musical backgrounds and prior music education experiences. More critically, this study aims to discover whether ideologies surrounding musical value impact on the student experience in higher education. A survey of undergraduate students of music ($N = 60$) at a higher education music department in the Republic of Ireland was conducted. Preliminary data suggest that students' musical *habitus* and *cultural capital* impact on their experience of music within the *field* of higher education. Implications of findings from this study suggest a reappraisal of curricula and assessment at secondary level and of musical value and curriculum content in Irish higher education.

**Keywords:** higher education; musical value; cultural capital; curriculum; students experiences

## Introduction

Historically, formal music education in Ireland at both secondary level and in higher education was conceptualised on the western classical tradition. Changes in music curricula at secondary level in the 1990s led to much debate amongst academics and music scholars at the time. Moreover, the more inclusive nature of the revised music curriculum at secondary-level threw into sharp focus the historical exclusivity of the music curriculum in Irish higher education. Although the landscape of Irish higher music education has diversified in the last decade (O'Flynn 2009), such gradual changes contrast starkly with the significant growth of music programmes in contemporary and popular music in the UK over the same period (Gaunt and Papageorgi 2010).

There is extensive discourse on musical values concerning school music curricula and practice within the field of music education literature; conversely, there is significantly less literature on musical values in higher education. Previous research on students' experiences of music in higher education (Burt and Mills 2006; Burland and Pitts 2007; Feichas 2010; Finnegan 1989; Kingsbury 1988; Nettl 2005; Pitts 2003, 2005) highlights issues of confidence, the hidden curriculum and feelings of inadequacy and isolation amongst students of music. In examining the socio-cultural learning experiences of music students, Dibben (2006) highlights a relationship between social

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class and issues of access to higher music education. Other studies focus on the influence of genre and gender on musical learning in higher education (Welch et al. 2008); points of similarity and difference in regard to 'classical' and 'non-classical' musicians (Creech et al. 2008); and attitudes to performance (Papageorgi et al. 2010). Compartmentalised subjects such as harmony, dictation and the history of music seem disconnected from many non-classical students' musical backgrounds and prior experiences (Feichas 2010).

Of particular relevance to this research are studies on students' musical backgrounds and their experiences in higher education. Burland and Pitts (2007) illustrate the relationship between students' musical backgrounds and their experiences of self-doubt and anxiety in regard to academic success vis-à-vis theoretical knowledge and skills. Although the findings of this study resonate to a certain extent with Burland and Pitts (2007), research on the relationship between students' musical backgrounds, prior music education and their expressed experiences of higher music education within the context of Ireland has not been conducted heretofore. Moreover, although data from this study echo the misgivings expressed by academics in relation to the content and assessment of revised secondary school music curricula in the 1990s, findings also suggest that students from diverse musical backgrounds express very different experiences to their classical counterparts who have more formal prior training in music theory.

## Background

### Musical value: the Irish context

The dominance of the western classical tradition in school music has been discussed within international contexts of music education (Campbell 1991; Elliott 1995; Green 2003, 2008; Small 1977; Volk 1998; Vulliamy and Shepherd 1984). Although formal music education in Ireland was also conceptualised on the western classical tradition, assumptions of musical value in regard to western classical music have only recently been interrogated in an Irish context by a few authors including McCarthy (1997, 1999) and O'Flynn (2005, 2009). A glimpse at the historical context of Irish education affords some understanding of this.

In 1831, an education system was established in Ireland by the British Government Music was formally introduced in 1841 and the implementation of a progressive-graded syllabus of singing and music literacy at primary level known as the Hullah method represented the colonial influence on music education policy and practice (Stakelum 2008). Over ensuing generations, political agendas regarding ethnic or national identity continued to shape music education with the advancement of colonial values in the nineteenth century and the inculcation of native Irish ideologies post-independence (McCarthy 1999, 57). Following the inception of the nation-state in 1922, although Irish educational policy aimed to preserve and emphasise cultural heritage and Irish traditional music, the canon of the western classical tradition came to be privileged in formal education policy and practice (Mc Carthy 1999; O'Flynn 2009). O'Flynn (2005, 196) explains how 'an overarching colonial-nationalist dialectic' ensued in which the hegemony of western classical music that predominated music curricula in Ireland, brought many issues to bear in relation to the preservation and cultivation of Irish traditional music. Moreover, the manner in which different

discourses and ideologies of musical value appear to compete with each other for domination of learning spaces reveals an Irish traditional – western classical dualism (O'Flynn 2009). While Ireland's musical culture can in some respects be described as a bimusical culture (O'Flynn 2005), in so far as Irish traditional music and western classical are both products of autonomous and often contentious ideologies, the legacy of both musical traditions has also given rise to the prevalence of bimusicality among many Irish musicians.

Coined originally by Hood (1960), bimusicality is broadly defined as the ability to perform in two distinct musical systems. In reference to the Irish context, this can be best described as the ability to traverse the aural tradition of Irish traditional music and the notational system in western classical music (O'Flynn 2005). As an overemphasis on a dualistic notion of Irish culture/heritage and art has predominated music education discourse, the diverse musical cultures within contemporary Irish society have been to a great extent lost and neglected in Irish educational policy (Moore 2011; O'Flynn 2009). Therefore, unlike the struggle for space in regard to popular music on the curriculum within the context of the UK and elsewhere (Green 2008; Vulliamy 1977; Vulliamy and Shepherd 1984), music education in Ireland is beset by a unique set of tensions surrounding musical value, not least the music curriculum at secondary-level education.

### Leaving certificate music

The Leaving Certificate Examination comprises the culmination of assessment at secondary-level education (ages 12–18) and passing this examination is mandatory for entry onto higher education programmes. Within the Leaving Certificate curriculum, a syllabus for each subject contains prescribed and optional material from which the teacher and students select. It should also be noted that equality of access to the study of music at secondary-level education in Ireland is at best inconsistent, due to factors such as the 'optional' status of music in schools and the absence of musical traditions within schools; thus, not all students have access to music education within statutory secondary education.

Prior to significant changes to the Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus in the mid-1990s, the selection of music as a subject for Leaving Certificate largely remained the privilege of those who were attending private instrumental lessons and/or those who intended to study music in higher education (McCarthy 1999). The older syllabus (Department of Education 1974) reflected a model of music and musicianship in which western classical music predominated and a strong emphasis on historical knowledge, analytical and notational skills prevailed. With a fear, on the one hand, of dissipating numbers choosing music in secondary school and, on the other hand, an urge to make the subject more inclusive (see also Ross 1995; Wright 2008 on the UK context), a revised Leaving Certificate Syllabus was introduced in 1996 which encompassed a performing, listening and composing model of music education along with a broadening of musical genres (Department of Education and Science 1996). Most notable was the inclusion of a compulsory performing aspect for all students at examination (which could form up to 50% of the overall grade) and the introduction of music technology. Essentially, the change of focus within the Leaving Certificate Syllabus constituted a departure from a musicianship/literacy-based conception of music education to a more praxial one (Elliott 1995). Following the introduction of

the new syllabus, participation rates increased by 66% within a three-year period (State Examinations Commission 1999).

Many music teachers who feared the impending extinction of music within secondary schools welcomed the aforementioned changes; however, some academics and music scholars expressed strong reservations about the changing nature of the subject. Discussions revolved around the potential suitability of the syllabus for those who might wish to study music in higher education and the view that changes in music curricula at secondary level would lead to falling standards on entry to music degree programmes, inter alia, in technical skills and theoretical knowledge. This not only fuelled many debates within higher education circles in the 1990s but also highlighted the ways in which contested ideologies of musical value were brought to bear. These manifested most prominently in the Music Education National Debate (MEND) (Heneghan 2001).

## MEND and the leaving certificate debate

A lack of statutory music education provision which had concerned practising musicians, music educators and musicologists for many years, gave rise to an international forum on music education entitled the (MEND). Convened in Dublin over three stages between 1995 and 1996, the proceedings were collated and summarised in an ensuing report by Heneghan (2001). However, the quest for establishing 'a philosophy' in the remit of the forum highlights an assumption that an overarching philosophy would pave the way for music education in Ireland. O'Flynn (2005, 198) criticises the editing of the proceedings emphasising that its narrative was '...hierarchised by a classically oriented conception of musicality'. Thus, in attempting to arrive at a coherent and comprehensive 'philosophy as basis' rationale (see Westerlund and Väkevä 2011), MEND could be best described as a watershed event in the ways in which different discourses and ideologies of musical value were brought to bear within the lengthy discussions. In addition, the timing of the proceedings coincided with the newly published Leaving Certificate Syllabus in 1996.

Describing the new syllabus as the *bête noire* during MEND discussions, Heneghan (2001) identifies caveats within the content and the assessment of the new syllabus as perceived by those teaching in higher education. In particular, he highlights what he regards as the unchallenging nature or 'easiness' of the revised programme and its over-emphasis on performing: 'not all students are performers or want to give it the time' (Heneghan 2001, 253). In a separate publication, Barra Boydell, then Professor of Music at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, echoed Heneghan's concerns about the new syllabus and implications for those teaching in higher education thus:

> The new syllabus may encourage musical self-expression and creativity, but in a manner that does not demand more than the most basic ability to read or write music. This ability (i.e. musical literacy) may be largely irrelevant to popular music, which is aurally based, but to what extent should the demands of a state-sponsored musical education be determined by the least challenging forms of music? Should not such a syllabus challenge and expand the minds of students, providing them with the means for a deeper appreciation of the wealth of musics that both the past and the present offer us? And whatever type of music you identify with, the European art music tradition is part of our shared cultural heritage, an appreciation of which should form an intrinsic part of a broad education (and I don't mean just a 'musical' education). (Boydell 2001, 22)

The manner in which Boydell compares the value of self-expression and creativity with music literacy highlights an assumption that knowledge and skills associated with the western classical tradition (music literacy) are superior to that of popular music (aurally based). One could surmise that Boydell's description of popular music as 'the least challenging forms of music' refers to the minimal necessity for literacy skills and its apparent lack of structural and harmonic complexity if appraised from a western classical perspective. Nonetheless, such ideological iterations of musical value (see also Garberich 2004; Johnson 2002) reflect a Eurocentric view of music education which permeates the MEND publication. An opposing viewpoint to that of Boydell emerged in a follow-up article by Irish jazz musician and teacher, Ronan Guilfoyle who states:

> The new Leaving Certificate has shown just how inadequate the range of options for students of music at third level[1] really is. The third-level institutions in Ireland allow only one music form to be studied — that of Western art music. This is not only an outdated philosophy, but also one that makes no sense on economic grounds for someone wishing to have a career in music. (Guilfoyle 2001, 24)

I have selected these contrasting statements because they reflect the ways in which ideologies of musical value have been contested in the Irish context. On the one hand, students unpreparedness for the study of music in higher education is attributed to the changed content and assessment of the Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus; and on the other hand, higher education providers' reluctance to teach students from musical backgrounds other than western classical represents a hegemony of western classical music in Irish higher education institutions. Although the aforementioned statements are by now a decade old and the landscape of undergraduate degree provision has since broadened, albeit gradually; they still afford a glimpse into the ways in which students' musical backgrounds and prior music education may be perceived in higher education and in turn, impact on the student experience.

## Musical backgrounds and cultural capital

In order to understand the relationship between students' musical backgrounds and their experiences in higher education along with the differing discourses and ideologies of musical value, I draw upon the rich interplay of *field, habitus* and *cultural capital* as conceptualised by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1977) describes field as social environments inhabited by a number of groups in which spheres of play can be dynamic but can also be areas of struggle for domination and power in which systems of hierarchy are contested or challenged. As identified by O'Flynn (2009), the ways in which different discourses and ideologies of musical value between western art music and Irish traditional music compete with one another for space and place in Irish music education policy and practice, represent a struggle for power. For the purpose of this study, the concept of field constitutes the music department within higher education. Within the field lie the socio-historical institutional contexts, settings, dispositions and values that students must negotiate. However, the ways in which they negotiate and experience the field depends largely on their musical backgrounds or

habitus and prior music education (whether formal or informal), identified here as cultural capital.

Habitus can be interpreted as the 'tastes, habits, norms, values, and traditions of a particular society or community of likeminded agents' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 52–65). It can also be considered as dispositions to thought, action, understanding or perception that the individual acquires as a member of a particular social group or class. More importantly, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) maintains that such dispositions operate at an unconscious level yet have a profound effect on the way an individual or group experiences and responds to the world or social environment. With specific reference to the focus of this study, habitus is operationalised as the dispositions students have acquired vis-à-vis musical practices, traditions and prior music education experiences, whether formal or informal. Moreover, students' musical habituses which can be dynamic and fluid prior to higher education are bound by the structures of the music department when they enter college. These can be seen as 'durably inculcated by the possibilities and impossibilities … opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in the objective conditions' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 54).

One attribution of cultural capital by Bourdieu (1977) is that of the added power associated with participation in the beaux arts but as Lareau and Weininger (2003) point out this initial use of the concept has been overused in educational research. Of more significance is how cultural capital also refers to the ways in which ideologies about education, art and literature come to be legitimised and reproduced in education and society (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). What remains problematic in regard to assumptions about musical value is a tendency 'to perpetuate the values of particular, interested social groups at the expense of others' (Green 2003, 264). Skills associated with the western classical tradition such as music theory, historical and analytical knowledge through membership of conservatoires or schools of music tend to be unequally distributed. Thus, competence in the skills associated with the western classical tradition functioning as cultural capital in higher music education engenders exclusive advantages (Lareau and Weininger 2003; Reay 2004) to those already immersed with prior educational and cultural experiences in this style.

Within the context of this study, cultural capital is a manifestation of the student's habitus and his/her negotiation of the field in higher education. Moreover, cultural capital as competence can be interpreted as skills and knowledge inextricably linked with success in traversing the musical tradition in question. For example, a student who has had private instrumental lessons and theory tuition in the western classical tradition in a formal school of music or conservatoire holds cultural capital within socio-cultural contexts of formal music education where the skills and knowledge of the western classical tradition are particularly valued. Equally, a student from two generations of highly esteemed Irish traditional musicians who plays numerous 'tunes' by ear with effortless ornamentation holds cultural capital within the socio-cultural context of the Irish traditional music scene. Thus, cultural capital is not always fixed per se; rather it is dynamic and fluid depending on the socio-cultural context. It becomes problematic however, when the student's musical habitus and cultural capital are at odds with those valued in the music department in higher education.

With reference to the particular context of this study, I contend that students who have acquired understanding of the forms, styles and notation associated with the classical tradition have more relevant cultural capital over those who do not.

Moreover, students' musical habitus and by association, their musicality or bimusicality within the field has the potential to impact in a profound manner on the ways in which they describe their experiences.

## Method and participants

Students from diverse musical backgrounds and prior music education circumstances may have very different experiences of higher music education, therefore, this research aimed to understand how experiences are constructed within a context of higher music education where western classical music predominates. In particular, the following research question was investigated:

- Is there a relationship between undergraduate music students' musical backgrounds and prior music education and their experiences of music in higher education?

From the main question, two sub-questions arose:

- What are undergraduate music students' musical backgrounds and prior music education?
- How do undergraduate music students' describe their experiences of the study of music in higher education?

Situated in the sociology of music education, the entire research project is qualitative in its approach. In this article, data are drawn from the initial phase of the research which comprised a survey questionnaire at Institution X. A complete sample of undergraduate students of music ($N = 60$) in Years 1 (70%), 3 (18%) and 4 (12%) at Institution X was chosen (Year 2 students were unavailable at the time). With permission from the Head of Department, I visited the students on three occasions at the beginning of lectures on musical analysis to invite them to participate in a self-completion questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised three sections which focused on students' musical backgrounds, their prior music education and their experiences in higher education. A combination of open and closed questions was used throughout for ease of use and to elicit qualitative responses. Questions were posed on particular aspects of their musical backgrounds and prior education including:

- Their first instrumental/vocal training, other instruments played and whether learning was formal, informal or a combination of both
- The extent of music theory prior to entry
- What role, if any, that parents/guardians played in their music education
- Their secondary education and views on the Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus
- Their experiences of the study of music in higher education

The questionnaires were subject to in-depth qualitative analysis based on the close examination of data in order to identify connections among categories. In addition, a number of quantitative devices including frequency, mean and scale were used in the design and analysis of the survey. Participants were asked to rate the importance of a

range of musical skills from one (extremely important) to five (extremely unimportant). The mean age of the students was 20 with 77% studying a Bachelor of Education and 23% a Bachelor of Arts. 82% of students were female with just 18% of males and all respondents were of Irish nationality. The majority of the sample were in their first year of study (70%), while students in Years 3 and 4 (18% and 12%, respectively) although smaller in number, had decided to major in music as part of their Arts or Education degrees. This variance in the sample was taken into account in the subsequent analysis of all data.

## Findings

### Musical backgrounds

The majority of students attended formal private lessons with a local teacher or in a school of music, while some had a bimusical background including lessons with *Comhaltas Ceoltóiri Éireann*[2] along with private individual lessons in classical music (Table 1). A minority learned their first instrument informally, two of whom were Irish traditional musicians and one who had a background in both Irish traditional and popular music.

Seventy-five per cent achieved Grade 7[3] or higher on their first instrument (Table 2). As most of the sample was in their first year of study, this illustrates that the majority of students had completed formal graded examinations in performance on their first instrument to a relatively high standard. However, those who completed examinations in Irish traditional music through *Comhaltas* only represented a minority. Bimusical students had taken graded examinations in both classical and Irish traditional music through *Comhaltas* (11), while two students had not completed any graded examinations. Of particular significance were students who presented as multi-instrumental (four students each played five instruments) and the average number of instruments played by students in the sample was three.

Table 1. Formal/informal instrumental learning.

| First instrument | Frequency | Per cent | Cumulative |
|---|---|---|---|
| Formally | 43 | 71.67 | 71.67 |
| Informally | 3 | 5.00 | 76.67 |
| Combination | 14 | 23.33 | 100.00 |
| Total | 60 | 100.00 | 100.00 |

Table 2. Graded instrumental examination level of students on first instrument.

| Grade achieved | Grade 8 + | Grade 7 | Grade 5 + | Graded exams and *Comhaltas* graded exams | *Comhaltas* graded exams only | No graded examinations taken |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of students | 34 | 12 | 9 | 11 | 2 | 2 |

*Musical skills/knowledge as cultural capital*

When asked about the levels of importance placed on particular musical skills or knowledge at Institution X: Notation and Rudiments (91%); Harmony and Counterpoint (82%); and Composition (97%) were regarded as important/extremely important. In contrast, skills/knowledge deemed unimportant/extremely unimportant included: Improvisation (80%); Playing by ear (71%); and Music Technology (72%). This data demonstrates that the musical skills associated with the western classical tradition had higher priority over skills associated with more informal practices. Therefore, it was necessary to explore whether negotiating and achieving success in this context was bound by constraints of the curriculum content and its associated cultural capital.

In describing their experiences, over half of the students mention challenges associated with the theoretical emphasis on the course and a perceived irrelevance of some of the course content. The ways in which students describe the learning of harmonic content would seem to be (1) unrelated and at odds with their musical backgrounds and their prior music education experiences; and (2) indicative of their musical habituses and cultural capital.

> If I was back in 1<sup>st</sup> year again, I'm not sure I would decide to study music. I think too much of the course is spent analysing random music scores. There is also not enough emphasis at all on Irish traditional music. (Student 8, Year 3, Irish traditional background)

The following comments by students which refer, respectively, to 'Tristan chords' and 'Plainchant', illustrate the extent to which the transmission and reception of knowledge can be perceived in terms of apparent irrelevance, disinterest and abstraction (Young 1971):

> 'Do not enjoy harmony classes – Tristan chords etc – pointless!' (Student 9, Year 3 – Irish traditional Background)

> 'Plainchant was difficult and not interesting. Much of the theory is based on chord assembling. Chord progressions were easier/more interesting when I was learning Tom Waits' (Student 27, Year 1 – Informal Background)

The learning of chord progressions through familiar and related music (in the example of Tom Waits) is indicative of the student's informal musical background or habitus. Moreover, understanding chord progressions in a western classical habitus through the '...decoding of notation to realise the products that make up the western classical canon' (Boyce-Tillman 2004, 118) seem not only far removed from this student's musical background but also more difficult and 'not interesting'.

*Relationships between students' musical backgrounds, music education and experiences in higher education*

Through repeated analyses of qualitative comments and cross examination with student's musical backgrounds, a number of interrelated themes emerged from the data. These included challenges with course content/music theory for students whose backgrounds were not primarily in western classical music; and

issues of self-confidence, anxiety and self-doubt. Of particular significance was the role that parents played in the students' music education. In coding responses on the part played by parents from the entire sample, findings pointed to three primary categories: 'coming from a musical background', 'financial support' and 'encouragement'. Moreover, findings from students who did not have prior training in music theory except for the Leaving Certificate Examination point to recurring issues of self-confidence, self-doubt and anxiety.

Following an indepth examination of students from various musical backgrounds, I now present four cases (Table 3) in order to illustrate the diversity of musical backgrounds, ease with the course, experiences and self-esteem.

The role of 'parental cultural capital' as addressed by McDonough (1997) in her study on parental 'first-hand knowledge' of college admissions processes is pertinent in all cases in this study. In case one below (Table 3), first-hand knowledge of musical skills and choice of tuition has afforded this student's ease with the course and in her opinion the content is 'relevant'. In contrast, cases two and four show how the less formal musical habituses of parents are transmitted to the students in a 'passing on' of the tradition and culture (McCarthy 1999). Moreover, the less formal backgrounds of students two and four would seem to be related to their difficulties with music theory and self-doubt. Furthermore, it would appear that the reproduction of cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) vis-à-vis the musical backgrounds of their parents exerts a strong influence on the students' prior knowledge and ease with the course thus far.

Most disconcerting is how the student with an informal/self-taught background (Case 4) questions her musicality and her ability in the context of 'this class' even though she achieved a high grade in the Leaving Certificate examination. And although this echoes findings in Burt and Mills (2006) where students were faced with their own shortcomings in light of other students' performing abilities, in this case, it is clear that the student equates her musicality with her theoretical knowledge and skills: '... theory is essential to succeeding... '. This student's lack of cultural capital and prior, informal musical background would seem to be having a profound effect on her experience. The way in which she questions her musicality and by association her ability in this context having achieved apparent success at Leaving Certificate, echoes the process of demusicalisation as described by Small (1998).

In contrast, the student with a bimusical background (Case 3) describes the course as 'easy', 'enjoyable and challenging' and 'A lot of the topics I would have been familiar with beforehand due to my musical and orchestral background'. Although it would seem that having cultural capital in the habitus of both Irish traditional music and western classical music work to her advantage, she *identifies* her relative ease with course content in her classical 'orchestral background'.

### Entry to higher education

The majority of students (96%) agreed that a high standard of theoretical knowledge/ skills is required on entry to higher music education. In the case of applying to study music at Institution X, students are required to sit a written entrance test and an audition is not required. When asked about their experience of the entrance test itself, over half of the students stated that the entrance test was difficult and very different to what they had experienced in secondary school music education, while 12% referred to specific content with which they were unfamiliar. Examples included

Table 3. Students' musical backgrounds, music education and experiences.

| Habitus | Musical background | Parental role | Ease with course | Entrance exam | Overall experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classical | Grade 7 completed on piano, Violin, Percussion, Jazz piano to Grade 5. Studied theory, completed all theory examinations. | 'My parents introduced me to music and instruments from an early age and were big into classical music'. | 'Having completed theory levels it's quite easy. I enjoy it which helps a lot'. | 'Easy, just wasn't sure of term enharmonic as I had never come across it before'. | 'Enjoyable, the stuff we do is relevant'. |
| Irish traditional | Plays concertina, tin whistle, traditional flute, fiddle, studied with *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann*. No theory studied apart from secondary school. | 'Dad involved in *Comhaltas* ... he organised sessions and took me to festivals'. | 'It is very theory-based and detailed. Hard for me to give back other musical examples in class'. | 'The entrance exam material was totally alien to the Leaving Certificate and I had not attended music theory lessons so it was difficult'. | 'Finding it very hard. Plainchant is really boring. Don't think I'll keep it up next year'. |
| Bimusical | Bimusical background. Plays six instruments. Has diploma in Irish traditional performance, Grade 8 piano, Grade 8 violin, Grade 7 theory. | 'Both parents are set dancers ... music in the family ... currently play my great grandfather's fiddle'. | 'Easy. While I do not find the course challenging, the material can be boring sometimes'. | 'Very easy. A lot of the topics I would have been familiar with beforehand due to my musical and orchestral background'. | 'Enjoyable and challenging. Probably too much theory, could be more practical'. |
| Informal/ self-taught | Self-taught on piano, bodhrán, guitar, voice. Music for leaving certificate. No grades on instruments or theory. | 'Father was a kind of child prodigy who never got lessons and is a very skilled musician – writes songs, plays loads of instruments and is a song-writer'. | 'Very difficult. Theory is essential to succeeding third level music. I'm a lot slower than others to decipher chords from notation because I learned mostly by ear'. | 'Did not learn before, was thrown in the deep end. I had never learned to recognise chords and Lydian modes etc. in notation but I've played them for years'. | 'I lose confidence when I come into this class. I would have considered myself musical before and got an A2 in the Leaving Cert but I am not a good student in this class. Want to keep it up but not sure if I should'. |

having to give definitions of the terms 'enharmonic' and 'mixolydian mode' in the entrance test:

> It appeared to assume a greater knowledge of theory than I had ever been exposed to in my exams and was completely foreign to any of the secondary school curriculum. (Student 19, Year 1, Theory tuition in secondary school only).

> What I had done in leaving cert music was not much help to me. The entrance test was very difficult and didn't relate to my previous knowledge. (Student 3, Year 3, Theory tuition in secondary school and with instrumental teacher).

A minority (8) thought that the entrance test was easy. Examples of comments include:

> It wasn't challenging due to the theory I had previously done. (Student 13, Year 3, Grade 8 Theory)

> I thought the entrance exam was easy enough, it was only around Grade 4 level. (Student 11, Year 4, Theory tuition in a school of music, Grade 7 achieved)

Evident in these comments is the mismatch between secondary school music theoretical content and expectations in higher education, but also the implicit privileging of those with more relevant cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) vis-à-vis formal graded theory examinations through private tuition. However, the mismatch also corresponds very closely with the contentions of Boydell (2001) and Heneghan (2001) in relation to the reduced emphasis on theoretical knowledge at Leaving Certificate level. And although their contentions reflect conservative, ideological assumptions of western classical values, they also shed light on the crux of the problem which as I see it is disjunct on two levels.

First, the more inclusive, praxial focus at secondary-level music education would seem to have given rise to a caveat in the teaching of notation and theory. Moreover, the current configuration and assessment of the Leaving Certificate Syllabus provides students with less cultural capital on entry to the field or music department than their peers who have had conservatoire training. Second, students' contrasting experiences of ease with theory, doubt in regard to their musicality, and self-esteem would seem to be constructed in the context of self and lecturer expectations, curriculum content, peers and in the context of the western classical values of the music department. Evidence from this research resonates with findings in the study by Feichas (2010), in so far as it relates to the ways in which many students perceive curriculum content as alien and unrelated to their musical backgrounds. However, as illustrated in the results of this study, students have limited agency in relation to institutional habitus, field and cultural capital. This is because the curriculum which is currently conceptualised and configured primarily on the theory and history of the western classical tradition, does not include electives from which students can choose areas of specialism. Thus, achieving success would seem to be largely dependent on prior skills and knowledge of music theory and on a strong western classical background. A student from a classical background in her third-year situates the problem for students whose cultural capital is at odds with the prevailing norm thus:

While I understand the need for a high standard of technical notation/theory ability for a degree programme, music is a very broad discipline with people from a huge variety of styles and backgrounds who may be unintentionally excluded due to the level of proficiency required. (Student 6, Year 3 – Classical Background)

## Discussion

Preliminary findings indicate that students whose musical backgrounds are not predominantly western classical have different but arguably, less relevant cultural capital in the socio-cultural context of the music department at Institution X, than those who have had a more formal background in a school of music or conservatoire. The design of the degree for BA and BEd students at Institution X has a more academic as opposed to practical focus at the core of its modules, thus there is limited space for students to realise success in performing. Therefore, what students bring to the table vis-à-vis their musical backgrounds and music education in conjunction with institutional expectations of students' prior knowledge and skills as evidenced in the entrance test and curriculum content reflect dualisms of agency-structure. Moreover, I contend that it is through the interplay of habitus and cultural capital that students' ability to 'fit into' the socio-cultural context of the field or music department is determined. However, it is also important to stress that this may not prove exclusive to institutions whose primary focus is that of the western classical tradition and could equally apply to students in higher education contexts where Irish traditional music or jazz are the main focus, for example. To put it more succinctly – habitus, cultural capital and field will most likely differ depending on the socio-cultural context (Lareau and Weininger 2003) of higher music education.

Furthermore, students' prior formal music education experiences within secondary education, evidenced in this study as self-doubt and anxiety in regard to theoretical knowledge and skills are also related to the current configuration and conceptualisation of the Leaving Certificate Syllabus and examination. The undemanding nature of the Leaving Certificate Syllabus as predicted by Heneghan and others in the MEND discussions, resonate with student comments in relation to the standard of theory required on entry to the course. However, if students are 'unprepared' for the notational and analytical demands of the curriculum in higher music education, then a reappraisal of induction practices in higher music education for students of diverse musical backgrounds requires consideration.

In acknowledging the challenges faced by a diverse student population in higher music education, Burland and Pitts (2007) suggest that with support from institutions, induction programmes can be of benefit for both students and staff. In the context of this study where western classical music dominates course content, certain measures could be taken to reduce anxiety and doubts felt by students whose musical habitus is not primarily western classical. Suggestions might include: making learning expectations more explicit from the outset (Pitts 2003); and identifying more possibilities for differentiation of curriculum content and pedagogy, bearing in mind the variance in students' prior musical training (Burland and Pitts 2007).

## Conclusion

Different discourses and ideologies about musical value and music education came to the fore most prominently at the MEND forum ultimately reflecting Ireland's unique

socio-political and socio-cultural historical context. However, findings from this study show that the ways in which ideologies about musical value have competed with each other in discussions surrounding space and place in formal education at secondary level and in higher education, continue to exert an impact on students' experiences in higher education.

Students whose musical habitus differ from the dominant ideologies at play in higher education, can be disadvantaged in regard to a perceived lack of relevant cultural capital. Moreover, in the context of Institution X, such disadvantage afforded positive affirmation of those from classical backgrounds but left students from other musical backgrounds doubting their musical ability, in particular, vis-à-vis their theoretical/technical skills. This study focused on one institutional context only and the findings were not intended to be generalisable. However, the next phase of the research will comprise a national survey of higher education institutions offering music to degree level followed by semi-structured interviews with students and lecturers of music. The aim of this large-scale approach is to provide a more complete picture of the landscape of higher music education as it is currently experienced by both learner and teacher in the Republic of Ireland. While acknowledging the diversification in recent years of music curricula within Irish higher education in general, it is hoped that this study may provide a springboard for discussions on the relationship between students' musical backgrounds, prior music education and their experiences. In order to improve student experiences, such discussions may afford consideration of a reappraisal of the curriculum at secondary level and of musical value within the context of Irish higher music education.

## Notes

1. In recognising various international interpretations of the term 'third level', in Ireland the term is synonymous with higher education.
2. *Comhaltas Ceoltóiri Éireann* [The Association of Irish Musicians] is an organisation that promotes traditional Irish music and includes community groups, group lessons and most recently a series of structured examinations in the performance of Irish traditional music.
3. Grade 7 is the penultimate grade in instrumental/vocal examinations prior to certificate or diploma, for example in the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music examinations.

## Notes on contributor

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