

Curriculum power positioning in classroom music education: music curriculum design in the secondary music classroom in England.

Anthony Anderson

Classroom music teachers in England design their own music curricula for Key Stage 3 (11 – 14 year olds, 6th – 8th Grades). These curricula are designed in a context where policymakers define, regulate and legitimate curriculum formulations. This study traced curriculum development in England, where government has validated a policy driven approach. It explored *programs of study*, which music teachers in England design as summaries of musical learning for Key Stage 3. The research consisted of documentary analysis in a two-phase study of 13 secondary (high) schools in the English midlands, exploring musical knowledge for musical learning, which is analysed utilizing qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The paper concludes with a discussion which explores the impacts of music education policy on classroom practices, and presents a proposed model which captures this interaction.

Keywords: *music curriculum; program of study; curriculum design; music education; policy*

Introduction

In English secondary schools, up until the age of 16, music classes take the form of ‘general music’, rather than the band or choir electives common in North America. From the age of 16, students may choose to take a GCSE (General Certificate of Education) in music, which is an examined course, that follows a specification determined by one of four main examination bodies (Edexcel, OCR, AQA and Eduqas), whose courses are in turn validated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulations (Ofqual), the examinations regulator in England. Prior to this age group, music programs are designed by individual classroom music teachers and these curricula may vary considerably from school to school. Music teachers, who if they are leading music in a school, are known as ‘subject leaders’ (Bush, et al., 2012), are accountable for the programs they design to a school leader. Such a school leader may be the Head teacher or another senior teacher, commonly known as a Deputy or Assistant Head teacher (NCfSL, 2012). These senior teachers are unlikely to have a background in music and will also have responsibility for a significant number of other subjects across the school. Annual music teacher evaluation (generally known as ‘performance management’ in English schools) is more likely to rest on the achievement of targets focused on examination results (such as GCSE), than it is on the details of music teachers’ curricula. The relationship between curriculum,

assessment, teacher evaluation and how teachers are managed is therefore complex and intertwined and laced with power dynamics, where the negotiation of curriculum ownership is a constant tension.

With such complexities in mind, where curriculum supremacy is contested it is perhaps helpful to set out how music ‘curriculum’ is understood for the purposes of this paper. The following definition of curriculum will therefore be adopted: “An intentionally designed and sequenced programme of study, evidenced in documentation, enacted and realized in dynamic musical encounters, experienced as musically dialogic and responsive interchanges in learning space” (Anderson, 2019, p. 126). In other words, music curriculum in this article is about musical interactions and exchanges, which are represented in documentation, as a means of summarising these engagements, and where these differ from policy priorities the article also discusses the potential conceptual power battles that result. The research study that this paper discusses goes on to address how music teachers think about planning musical knowledge for musical learning and resolving conceptual differences of curriculum between their own philosophies and policy paradigms. Music teachers’ thinking is examined by means of their *programs of study*, through which they realize and express the music curriculum that students in their classrooms will encounter. A more detailed explanation of materials and methods alongside examples of such *programs of study* will then be discussed in the findings section of this article, before a model of policy and curriculum design systems is proposed.

Curriculum Perspectives

In music education in England, the usage of *curriculum* is evident in a variety of discourses, and education stakeholders apply curriculum conceptualisations in a variety of contextual circumstances. Curriculum is used by Senior Leaders (School Administrators) as a synonym for *subjects on the timetable* connected to the allocation of teaching time and staffing (Spielman, 2017); it is used by the English government in their discussion of educational policy as *standards of achievement* (Department of Education and Science [DfES], 1987); it is used by

mass media as a *typology of education* (Richardson, 2014); and by teachers for *lesson content* and how learning is organised over an extended period of time (Anderson, 2017).

Conceptualisation of curriculum is therefore crowded and opaque, with different understandings and applications of the term rarely objectified, even within a recent historical timeframe, such as the inception of the English National Curriculum (Department of Education and Science [DES], 1991). Given the centrality of curriculum in decision-making processes for education policy in England, this lack of clarity is a significant vacuum, especially where curriculum managers and curriculum policymakers are positioned to enforce their conceptualisations of curriculum onto classroom music teachers, whose perspectives may differ.

Despite such a lack of clarity and potential issues with curriculum power, classroom music teachers continually engage with their own realizations of *curriculum*. Musical practices which music teachers adopt and validate operate as a result of these interpretations. The process in which teachers select what is included or excluded in their music curriculum, and the rationale for these decisions can be submerged, and different understandings of curriculum between policymakers and practitioners, in particular, can be unacknowledged. The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), has suggested that curriculum should “build pupils’ procedural knowledge in controlling sound” (Ofsted, 2021, p. 22), whilst music education commentators have suggested that curriculum is a creative and critical development (Spruce, 2002), and that curriculum arises from lived experiences based in participation (Hess, 2019). These perspectives present widely disparate models. As music teachers consider what a music curriculum means for their school and their students, their understandings thus become a filter, which determines their individual classroom practices in music. Teachers’ perspectives of what a musical curriculum should be and the boundaries of their own thinking emerge from previous music curriculum viewpoints they may already have encountered. What music teachers believe is permitted in a classroom context and what they allow themselves to realize is influenced by their own philosophical or policy expressions of curriculum. Music teachers, therefore, do not approach curriculum design as an independent event. It is this intersectionality between policy

perspectives and music teachers' curriculum programs, how these visions have the potential to create dissonance, and the resulting submerged conflicts that arise that this paper seeks to explore.

Impacts of Music curriculum policy history

Curriculum design describes concepts, structures and processes through which secondary (high school) music curricula are shaped and practiced by curriculum designers. Music teachers have always operated as curriculum designers (Cooke & Spruce, 2016) as they have sought to develop the musicality of their students. However, music teachers in England have never had legitimised control of their curriculum, which has instead rested with official bodies to whom teachers are accountable. Curriculum design as a political driver in music first began to emerge in England during the 1980s, where directives about music education transitioned from flexible guiding frameworks (Her Majesty's Inspectorate [HMI], 1985), underpinning musical activity, to a set of policy documents for whose implementation music teachers held statutory responsibilities (Department for Education [DfE], 2013a). Whilst, on the one hand, some music education research maintained that in curriculum design, teachers should set the general direction of study only, with the sole requirement being that students should perceive a general progression in their work (Paynter, 1982), the policy discourse adopted a quite different tone. English school inspection for music now required music programs at Key Stage 3 for 11 – 14 year olds, (6th, 7th and 8th Grades) to exhibit *progression* as well as *coherence*, and to be broad and balanced, with a systematic plan (DfES, 1991). These conceptualisations demonstrated a radical development in curriculum design in which processes became progressively more evidential and document-led, and a performativity culture began to consolidate in schools. The National Curriculum for Music contained “attainment targets” (DES, 1992a, p. 7), and music teachers were held accountable for both their assessment of these targets and the outcomes of their assessments. Head teachers (School Administrators) had a “duty to secure the implementation of the National Curriculum” and to “consider with his or her staff whether existing schemes of work adequately cover the attainment targets and programs of study for

music” (DES, 1992b, p. 5). Accompanying guidance for the National Curriculum for Music also placed considerable emphasis on teachers’ legal responsibilities where “the Order and associated Document both [had] statutory force” (DES, 1992, p. 2), but “the guidance contained in this Circular does not constitute an authoritative legal interpretation of the legislation: that is a matter for the courts” (DES, 1992b, p. 2). It was therefore teachers’ responsibility to interpret and implement music teaching in a legal landscape, and to demonstrate to their managers that they were doing so. This was a significant shift of emphasis.

In such an environment, music teachers in England began to be scrutinised for their curriculum design, and were in turn guided by the official political boundaries within which they operated. *The State* became the subsuming force of curriculum design in England, as it set out requirements which were obliged to be incorporated into music curriculum programs. Although individual music teachers had apparent autonomy over the music curriculum they designed at Key Stage 3, (KS 3) the state justified government agencies, (*National Curriculum Council, Schools Examination and Assessment Council, Office for Standards in Education*), as quality assuring bodies, on the basis of curriculum design, which were established to ensure a balanced and accountable infrastructure. As the new embodiment of curriculum as a statutory responsibility took hold, a tension emerged between these responsibilities and music teacher practices up until this time, which had previously rested on free teacher choice and shaping of musical experience in the classroom. This is represented through projects such as the Schools Council Music Project (Paynter, 1982), with its emphasis on integrating music-making activities into classroom practice. There thus came into existence a competing discourse at the centre of curriculum design, where music *Programs of Study* designed by teachers (the lesson scope, and sequence of music lesson content), and state legislature (accountability structures) brought practitioners and legislators into conflict. What emerged was a struggle for curriculum power, between individual teacher outlook, and state ideology, realized in the statutory documentation of the National Curriculum. This is a state of affairs which has continued to develop and is

evident in teacher and government discourse around classroom music education in England, where a battle of powerful discourses now exists.

Emergent curriculum power positioning

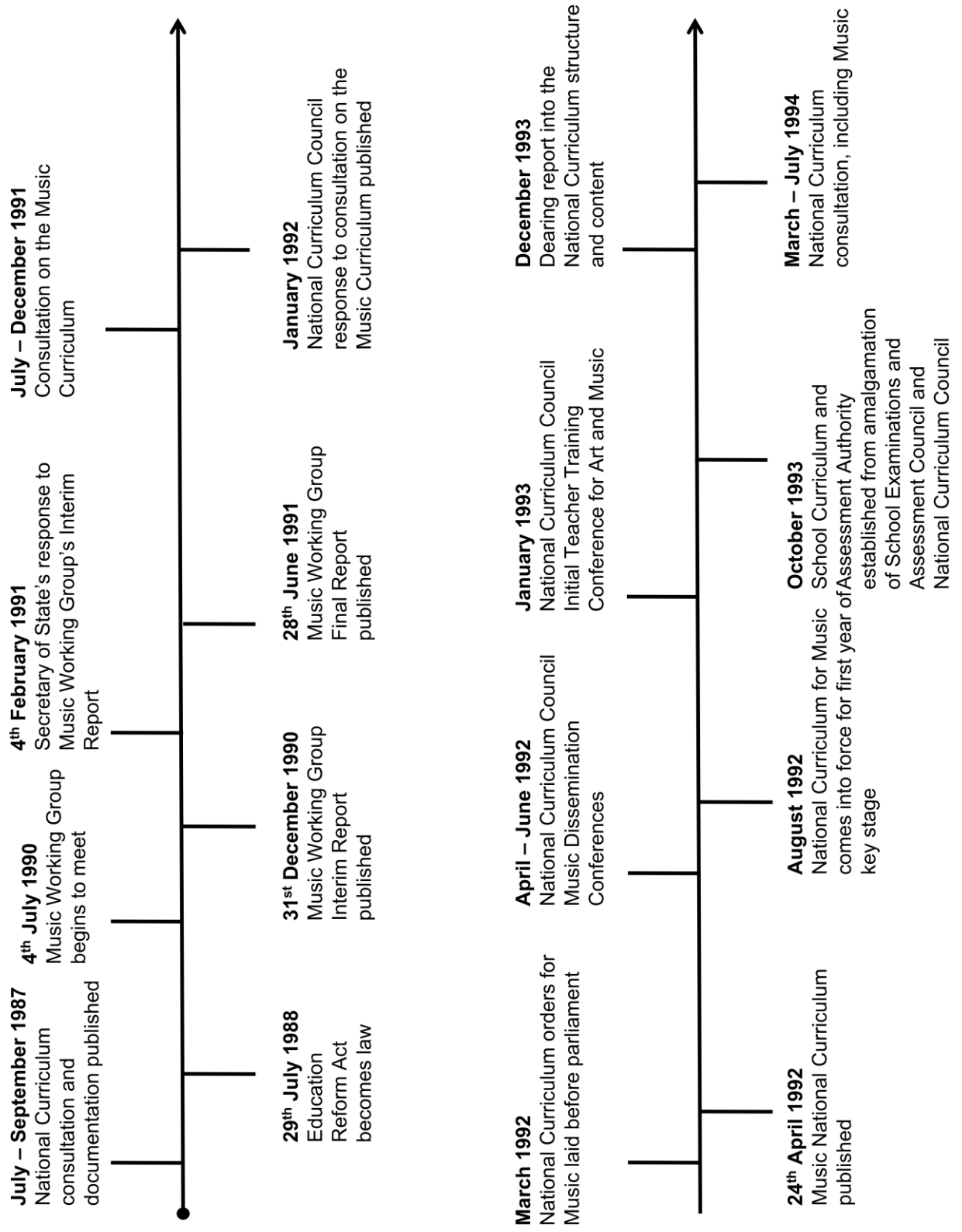
Advantages of a national curriculum in Music for England were evident from its inception in 1992: access to regulated entitlement irrespective of geographical region, and expert facilitation to develop musicality, supported by pedagogical approaches. Lamont (2002), later described this as commonality of musical experience with the aspiration that children should become more ‘musical’ as they grew older. Green (2008), was to assert that the English National Curriculum implied both content and pedagogical procedures in its construction. However, these constructs only emerged subsequently, and meanwhile approved discourses for the functions of a national curriculum by those wielding political power had already gained traction during the 1990s. The English Secretary of State for Education had outlined some of these justifications in a press release immediately prior to the establishment of the *Working Group for Music* in 1990. These included the proposition that the National Curriculum would lead to good curriculum practice being widely deployed in music and that the National Curriculum would encourage the achievement of consistently high standards (MacGregor, 1990). These conceptualisations were developed further in successive political consolidation: the National Curriculum would result in a population “which is better educated, musically, than ever before” (DfES, 1991, p.7); and proposals would result in a “coherent and manageable music curriculum” (National Curriculum Council [NCC], 1992, p.5). That the curriculum was more manageable politically, as well as contextually, was developing in policy, although this may not have been the National Curriculum Council’s intended meaning.

Curriculum and power politics

Political negotiation, persuasion and dominance were evident in the manner in which classroom music was situated as a result of this state regulation in England. The emergent points of power dominance led to the National Curriculum being described as the “most centralised state control

of secondary music in England since the establishment of a universal education in 1870” (Finney, 2007, p.13), and as a “straitjacket for the containment and demarcation of knowledge” (Fautley & Savage, 2011, p.3), despite the original National Curriculum proposals insisting that: “the law provides a framework not a straitjacket” (DfES, 1987, p.5).

The vacuum of power positioning around education that existed in England between the *1944 Education Act* and the *1988 Education Reform Act* was thus politically recolonised with the inception of a national curriculum. From this politicization the dominating concept of curriculum as a set of subjects emerged, together with its hierarchy of *core* and *foundation* subjects (DfES, 1987). A powerful curriculum discourse was thereby gradually constructed within political fields (Maw, 1993). The acceptable form that a realized curriculum should take, tacitly took hold. As a consequence, a more complex understanding of ‘hidden curriculum’ (Froehlich, 2007; Kelly, 2009; Lamont, 2002; Pollard & Triggs, 1997), began to dominate, in which positioning to obtain curriculum power became critical to political dominance. The timeline of this transformation is given below in *figure 1*:



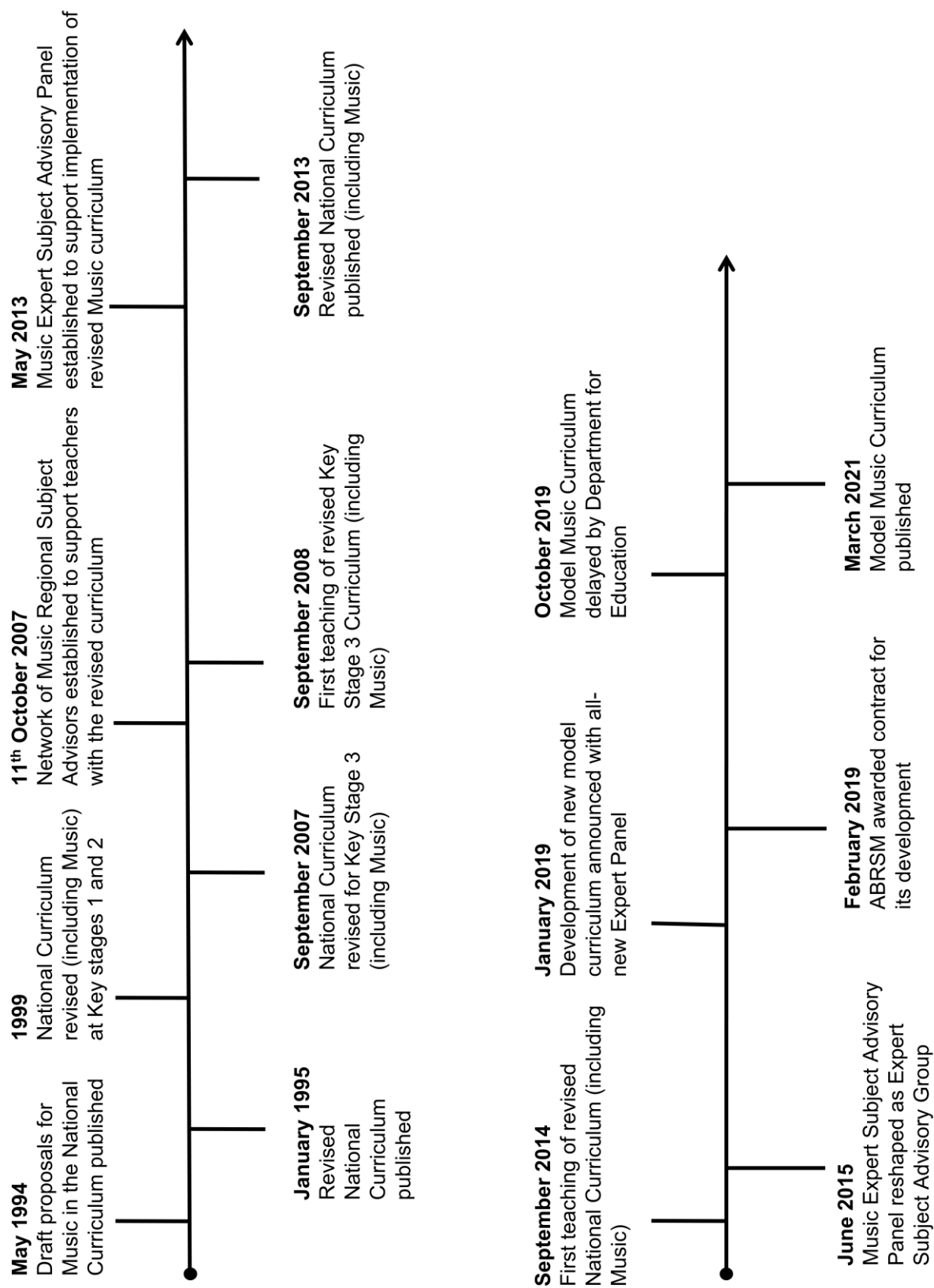


Figure 1: A chronology of the development of Music curriculum 1987 – 2021

It can therefore be seen that it was during the mid-1980s and early 1990s in England that many of the constructs that govern curriculum boundaries, as determined by political ideologies in policy formation began, and whose influence remain a dominant force. Bureaucratic bodies commissioned with advisory roles were established at this time, of which: the *National Curriculum Council* (NCC), the *School Examinations and Assessment Council* (SEAC) and the *Office for Standards in Education* (Ofsted) are examples. These bodies served to legitimate policy (Maw, 1993), as well as fulfilling their public-facing advisory function.

Although some were later amalgamated or disbanded, Ofsted, the English inspectorate for schools, remains a strong ideological curriculum force in England, despite the differing emphases of successive governments and their political origins. Through the triennial Ofsted Music reports (Ofsted 2009; Ofsted, 2012), Ofsted began to comment on its opinion of music curriculum plans in music classrooms in England, insisting that curriculum was central to effective teaching and learning, arguing for “robust curriculum plans” (Ofsted, 2012, p.7), “curriculum vision” (Ofsted, 2012, p.7, p.25), and “a meaningful curriculum programme” (Ofsted, 2012, p. 23). At around the same time, the British Government also issued a set of “Teacher Standards” against which teachers were, and continue to be, measured at all stages of their careers. Teacher Standard 4.5 required teachers to “contribute to the design and provision of an engaging curriculum within the relevant subject area(s)” (DfE, 2013b, p.11).

Through such a process, statutory requirements and their boundaries were demarcated, but opportunities for music teachers to conceptualise their aesthetic approaches to curriculum design were absent. Teacher positioning between personal curriculum design choices and legislative obligations therefore become a source of tension.

Such tensions have grown, and Ofsted’s three-part conceptualisation of curriculum (Phillips, 2017), has now become clear as: *intent* (setting out the aims for an educational program); *implementation* (translating that framework to a contextual narrative over time); and *impact and*

achievement (evaluating knowledge and understanding gained against expectations). Ofsted's curriculum paradigm has been further consolidated through a revision of the *School inspection handbook* (Ofsted, 2019a) and more recently, through the *Ofsted Research Review for Music* (Ofsted, 2021), a policy discussion of quality, progression, pedagogy, and assessment in music education (2021, p. 3), in which it supports its perspectives by citing a selected research canon. Empowered by political policy, Ofsted's conceptualisation of curriculum is, therefore, well placed to become the dominant definition of what curriculum means for schools. This is an unacknowledged force which operates within the field of music teacher design of curriculum summary documents, where teachers' discussions of 'curriculum' are dominated by *intent*, *implementation* and *impact*, which were not a part of English policy educational discourse prior to 2017 when Ofsted introduced them, and did not appear in English music teachers' conceptualisations of curriculum prior to this time (Anderson, 2019). The curriculum in England has therefore become politically rationalized. Music teachers operate not only in original and isolated contexts, where their curricula originates from their own musical experience, but also within curriculum policy contexts as music curriculum follows lines of development (see *figure 1*).

The complexity around disentangling curriculum from power relationships that the English government retains in supremacy over Ofsted, and that Ofsted practices in turn over schools, raises serious questions around legitimacies of this dominant discourse in controlling subject content, teaching methods and evaluation of what is regarded as 'successful' in school music classrooms. Whilst curriculum knowledge may always be contested (McPhail, 2012), the natures of potential dominance, which accompany political power, play pivotal roles in knowledge validation through curriculum formulations.

Power relationships between policy makers and classroom teachers, in which what is deemed to be appropriate knowledge is validated, has continued beyond its origins in the 1980s. An example of this is the *Model Music Curriculum* (MMC) (DfE, 2021), which the Minister of

State (Education) in England commissioned in 2019, and later described as providing “a benchmark to help teachers, school leaders and curriculum designers make sure every music lesson is of the highest quality” (DfE, 2021, p. 2). The MMC privileges western classical music, and its stated purpose as a curriculum document is to “introduce the next generation to a broad repertoire of music from the Western Classical tradition, and to the best popular music and music from around the world” (DfE, 2021, p. 2). Such privileging is also seen through the conceptualisation of a western canon of classical music (Whittaker, 2020), in suggested tables of listening in the MMC, where classical pieces are given dominance over other musical traditions. Classical music is always presented first, indicating its supremacy, followed by “Popular Music (defined broadly) and Traditional Music from around the world” (DfE, 2021, p. 8).

Although a non-statutory document that is formulated as guidance, rather than obligatory, support for the MMC has been written into funding agreements for Music Education Hubs (A *hub* is a collection of music partners, who work together to create a music education offer for young people in a geographical region in England (Anderson, 2021; DfE, 2011)). MMC is already being described by the Chief Executive of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (the largest instrumental examining body in the UK) as “the new curriculum” (Cobb, 2021, April, 05), who has also suggested it will “give teachers an understanding of what is required and how they can go about delivering music teaching” (Cobb, 2021, April, 05). These subtle shifts and external funding motivators indicate the continued political will to determine both how teachers design their music curricula and their pedagogical approaches. This is to side-line curriculum design reality, that music teachers have been formulating their classroom curricula for many decades, and are, themselves, experts in the field. Policy dynamics such as the *Model Music Curriculum* hesitate to acknowledge the role that music teachers already take in developing their own rationales and philosophies which provide the foundation for the curricula they consequently design.

Following this discussion of music teachers as curriculum designers and the formation of curriculum rationales in schools, it is also important to acknowledge how curriculum is both conceptualised and realized in teachers' documentary summaries. Consequent from the setting of curriculum into its English historical and educational context, the concern in the second part of this paper will be to discuss impacts and influences of curriculum thinking for music at KS3 in the English secondary school.

Curriculum formulations

The history around how English classroom music teachers have transitioned into curriculum designers, within a field exhibiting tension between prescribed policy and teacher practices, can be overlooked, but this is a necessary contextual understanding in order to grasp how and why classroom music teachers design KS3 curricula as they do. The dynamics of this tension has resulted in *Programs of Study (PoS)*, which have been defined as:

A summary document that outlines titles of musical topics, as the basis for teaching and learning content in classroom music lessons. Such a document is categorised into year groups, presented in consecutive layers and includes: sequences in which topics are to be taught, their duration, and their scheduling in the academic year. (Anderson, 2019, p.217)

In order to better understand the history of the English policy paradigm, and classroom music teachers' interpretation and subsequent realization of curriculum in programs of study, this research aimed to examine PoS documents as originated by music teachers. There is a paucity of understanding in this area in which programs of study are sometimes obliquely referenced (Adams, 2001), or considered in more detail, but only as part of a subset of research with a different primary aim, such as an analysis of musical pedagogies (Cain, 2017). This area is therefore of considerable importance, as it has seldom been subject to detailed analysis in an English context and the research that does exist is now from another era (Swanwick, 1989). Programs of Study are important as they provide an insight into teacher thinking and in this paper they represent the teachers' voices. Such perspectives may not be as evident as responses given in interviews (for instance), but as teacher programs of study are the result of much cognitive effort and are a concentrated representation of music teacher philosophies (Cooke et

al., 2016), they are crucial to understanding music curriculum narratives in schools. The development of music curriculum models, understood through music teachers' *programs of study*, is infrequently researched and a gap in knowledge exists. Where research does exist into this area, it tends to consider *Programs of Study* as part of wider studies exploring school structures, teaching approaches, and teaching materials rather than curriculum programs of study and their nature being the primary focus (Fautley, 2015; Fautley et al., 2018).

Materials and methods

The research which is the subject of this paper and which sought to address this gap in research knowledge about *programs of study* was situated around the research question:

- In what ways do secondary classroom music teachers plan musical knowledge for musical learning in their Key Stage 3 curriculum programs?

Programs of study for Key Stage 3 (11 – 14 year olds) were chosen as the medium to understand teacher interpretations as these were generated by the teacher participants of the research and for secondary school (high school) teachers, these are the curricula over which they have most agency. Examined courses which students may begin at 16 (commonly GCSEs or their equivalents as referred to in the opening of this paper) contain prescribed content, and whilst music teachers design their own pedagogies for these courses, the required components are nevertheless already determined. This is not the case with programs of study for the 11-14 age range over which teachers have more control, notwithstanding the political constraints of curriculum legitimisation discussed earlier in this article. Programs of study in this research were generally designed and used by music teachers as a first step towards more detailed teacher planning and provided an overview, which was followed by the teachers, sometimes reproduced and given to learners, and also used as evidential documentation for line managers of Music Subject Leaders (Music Directors) to explain the Key Stage 3 music curriculum in operation at their school. The topics appearing in this document were almost exclusively organised into discrete areas, of which representative examples included: *the Blues*, *Minimalism* or *the Orchestra*.

The study took place in two phases. For phase 1, data collection took place in four schools ($n=4$), which consequently informed the second phase. This data collection took the form of documentary analysis of Key Stage 3 *Programs of Study* (PoS) for music, primarily in years 7, 8 and 9, (6th, 7th, and 8th Grades) but also including year 6 (5th Grade), where schools were organised differently and maintained an earlier age of entry. For phase 2, data collection took place in nine schools ($n=9$), following lines of enquiry suggested by the first phase. These lines of enquiry considered topics occurring in PoS, their frequency, their duration and their sequencing. From this data, conclusions were drawn about music teaching pedagogies and philosophies. The same class years (grades) were included in this second phase of the study.

Schools were chosen to enable maximum variation sampling (Cohen et al., 2007), to facilitate the collection of representative data, and to reveal hidden structures in curriculum (Froehlich, 2007; Kelly, 2009; Lamont, 2002; Pollard & Triggs, 1997). The research study took place between December 2012 and July 2013, ensuring that it was temporally bounded and therefore consistent in educational context, and was part of a doctoral research project. Since this time, teachers have continued to operate within very similar frameworks. (The National Curriculum (DfE, 2013a) in England, for instance, was introduced in 2013, a time contemporaneous with the research, and this curriculum framework is still operational at the time of writing in 2021.) Music teacher curriculum summaries have also continued to follow very similar realization in England in both their format and content (Anderson, 2021b), continuing to make the findings of the research presented in this article relevant to curriculum design practices for the music classroom. The research was based in schools in Birmingham and Leicestershire in England, and research participant music teachers were of different genders and ages, which ranged from early career teachers to those close to retirement. There was a wide spread of teacher background, training and experience, age-range and school context.

Phase 1 Findings

The findings of phase 1 highlight music teachers' conceptualisation of curriculum design as a series of topics, which enable students to access a wide variety of musical experiences. This is a summary of music teacher curriculum design thinking and a means to understand their philosophies and pedagogical choices. There are therefore many layers of curriculum design which lie beneath these selections, which are informed by music teachers' ontological perspectives. The topics chosen by the teachers demonstrated a considerable divergence of curriculum interpretations, even where congruence of educational background, was evident, indicating the influence of music teacher identity on curriculum design. The range of topics chosen by teacher participants, for example, were highly eclectic (see *Table 1*):

Topics occurring in pilot study schools	Number of schools where topic occurs
Blues	4
Film music	3
Musical elements	2
Performance/composition project	2
Rhythm and pulse	2
Rounds	2
Pop song; Rhythm and musical elements; Samba; Medieval music; Ukulele; Form and structure; Graphic scores; Guitar skills; Chasing cars band project; Fanfares; Compositional techniques; Silent movie; Garage band; Creative composition; weather report; Calypso; Ternary form; Musical cycles; Music for an occasion; Carnival of the animals; Pictures at an exhibition; Theme and variations; Building bricks; Song structure; Musicals; Folk music; Rap; Minimalism; Gamelan; African drumming; Concerto; Hooks and riffs; Song-writing; Music and media; Pitch; Music technology; Chinese opera; Structure; African music; Music of India; Notation; Caribbean music; Musical Futures; Ostinato; Harmony; Melody; Leitmotif; Sequence.	1

Table 1: Topics occurring in phase 1 schools

Most topics were not repeated, and appeared only once in the four schools from which data was collected, with three out of the four schools in phase 1 of the study designing a curriculum in which topic frequency was one per half-term (approximately one topic every 6 weeks). Areas in which there was agreement consisted of the *Blues* and *Film Music*, which were the most frequently occurring topics; results which were to be replicated in the second phase of the study.

Musical elements, performance and composition projects and rhythm and pulse, were the next most frequently occurring. *Musical elements* also known as the *inter-related dimensions of music* appear in the English National Curriculum and were therefore taken as starting points by many English teachers in their curriculum design. The elements include: pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, structure, notations (DfE, 2013a). *Rhythm* appears in PoS as a facilitating learning concept, whereas this is not so evident in *pitch* in music teacher designed curricula. This may be because rhythmic characteristics are used by music teachers as a way of subsuming all types of drumming, which may be taught in the classroom, whereas *pitch* cannot be applied exclusively to these areas.

If topics are classified into areas of thematic similarity, there remains significant divergence in teacher choices of learning materials, notwithstanding the small number of schools ($n=4$) for this initial data collection. If topics from phase 1 schools were therefore grouped into broader thematic categories curriculum design remains *multi-faceted*, demonstrating widely differing curriculum conceptualizations and practices (figure 2):

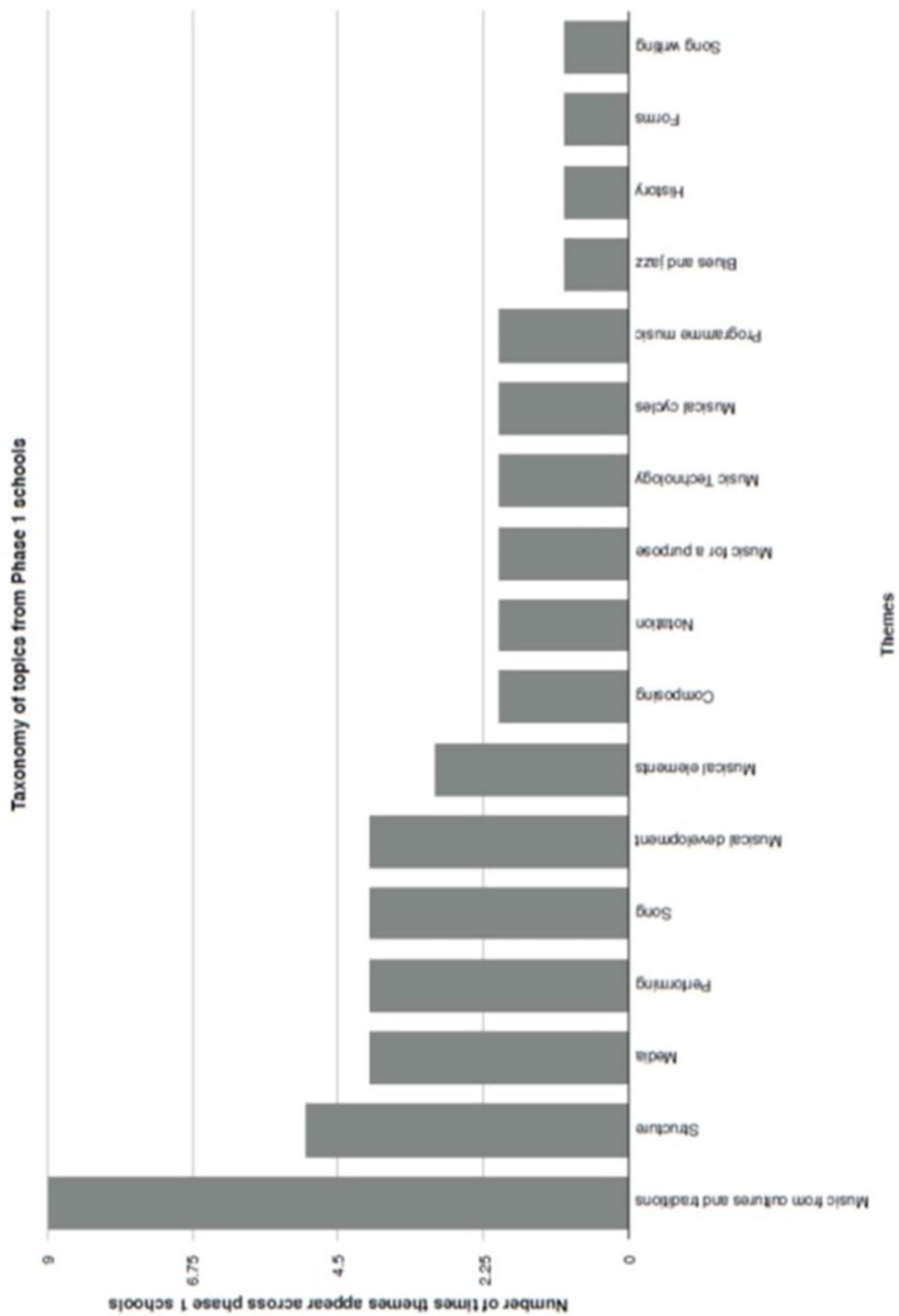


Figure 2: Taxonomy of themes in phase 1 schools

Phase 1 indicated music teacher polyphony in the area of topics, where such learning domains were alternatively titled, sequenced, and in which there existed very little agreement of the manner in which classroom music essentials were understood. This included whether topics constituted evidence of musical development, whether and how they might be revisited, and

whether the inter-related dimensions of music (DfE, 2013a), constituted a topic in teachers' conceptualization of curriculum design.

Phase 2 Findings

Program of Study format

There was no stylistic consensus that emerged from documentary analysis of formats for the presentation of *Programs of Study*. However, all participant teachers contributed substantial documentation to the research (primarily *programs of study* and sometimes also supporting rationale statements or departmental policies), indicating their perceived importance of representing musical activity in a form capable of policy interrogation. In other words, no teacher was teaching without a *program of study* realized on paper, even though some teachers had not been required by their schools to produce one. Notwithstanding the presentation differences, it was possible to identify bounded commonalities, from which two distinct approaches emerged, indicating teachers' conceptualisations of curriculum: *ordered* and *pictorial*. This is significant, as no proforma for creating these exists: their design and content are entirely within the music teachers' own control. *Ordered* consisted of a topic heading for successive years, often with a bracketed reference to a resource. This was a linear realization of a Program of Study in which a domain summary was often followed with a list of chronological learning activities with no indication of topic length. The content here is often very specific and is therefore interpreted as of greatest significance to the music teacher's philosophy of curriculum design. *Pictorial* consisted of a table with a row for each school year in KS3 and a column for duration (frequently six half-termly (approximately 6 weeks in duration) blocks, or three termly blocks (approximately 12 weeks in duration)) and often included a type of learning interaction: performing, composing, listening or their various combinations. Here the content tends to be less specific and to act more as a general summary, with the emphasis on the form of musical engagement, indicating that musical experience, rather than content, is uppermost in the music teachers' curriculum ontology. Within a *pictorial*, there was often a topic title followed by a brief summary of indicative content, as with *ordered*, but a rationale for a topic's selection

was also sometimes included. Some examples of *pictorial* also tracked congruent musical pedagogies in the successive years of Key Stage 3. Representative examples of these two forms, which are designed by teachers themselves from scratch and not drawn from other sources are given below (figure 3 and 4):

School I

Year 7

Baseline test

Rhythm & Pulse (Percussion small ensemble skills & note lengths)

Pitch & Melody (Pitches on stave, Singing, Piano simple Melody fingering)

Instrument Families: (Texture & Timbre)

Music Technology 1: (Garage-band loop remix + basic apple computer commands)

Rock Band: (Smoke on the Water riff on guitar, keyboard & drum kit)

Figure 3: Ordered style Program of Study

Year 7		
AUTUMN	SPRING	SUMMER
Musical Elements and Danse Macabre – Composition and Performance	Keyboard Skills- Reading basic notation, fingering, note finding- leads to solo performance	Medieval Music/Folksong-Composition and Performance
The Music of Africa- Djembe Drumming and singing	Musical Structures- Composition on Dance EJ- Performance- Keyboards	Samba/Djembe – Ensemble Performance

Figure 4: Pictorial style Program of Study

In a development of these *Program of Study* styles, such schemes were also sometimes presented either as published realizations in music department publicity information, or as further multi-faceted charts, detailing contrasting musical operations (*context, conventions,*

elements and skills). Such realizations may be regarded as developments or subordinates, but remain essentially *ordered* or *pictorial* in their orientation. Extracts from these two cases are given below and again these are of the teachers' own design, hence their differing formats (figure 5 and 6):

Music at Key Stage 3

Year 7

The Pupils are taught the skills of composing, performing and listening through a range of activities. The main focus is on whole class activities group performances and compositions. Initially, they make use of percussion instruments but they also use keyboards, musical I.C.T, Saxophones, Clarinets and Bass Guitars.

The topics in year 7 include

- Starting points in composing (Using images - 'Pictures at an Exhibition').
- Rounds - Singing / Composing Activity,
- Graphic Notation
- Introduction to Staff Notation
- The Elements of Music
- Salsa Music - Use of Clarinet, Saxophone and bass guitar.
- Film Music - Creating Music for Films (Use of Musical I.C.T.)

Figure 5: Showcase List Program of Study (Ordered)

Year 8	Autumn I	Autumn II	Spring I	Spring II	Summer I	Summer II
Title:	Band Skills	Integrated Band Skills	Drums of the World Blues	Image Junction	Drums of the World Gamelan	Music Technology Club Dance Music
Context:	Learning how to develop instrumental skills on a range of Band Instruments.	Learning how to develop instrumental skills on a range of Band Instruments and expand the knowledge of chords/melodic patterns/riffs for known songs.	Learning how music can reflect a time and place, and how disparate cultures can influence each other's music.	Learning how music can be composed to link to images. Learn how to compose music in the minimalist style.	To learn about musical techniques of the Gamelan as used in Java and Bali.	Learning how music technology is used to create contemporary forms of music for dance.
Convention:	Learning to perform a known pop song, and developing instrumental specific techniques	Learning to perform a known pop song, and developing instrumental specific techniques - pupils choose their own songs to develop and learn in a style appropriate to themselves	Learn how blues music uses triads I, IV and V in the 12 bar sequence, creating swung, homophonic music with solo improvisations to convey personal ideas and feelings	Learn how to compose and perform music using minimalist conventions.	Learning how Gamelan makes use of improvisation, scales and cyclic patterns.	Learning that they key characteristics of Club Dance Music are a 4 to the floor drum beat, simple harmonies, repetitive riffs and melodies and common structure.
Element(s):	Pitch : Bass riff/melody Texture : Layering of music, combining all instrumental parts effectively	Tempo: appropriate use of steady rhythm -developing more complicated drum patterns	Pitch: blues scale related to chords, learning bass clef pitch through walking bass Rhythm: creating rhythmic patterns from words	Timbre : using appropriate instruments to create sounds that link to images Texture : Using minimalist techniques to compose music	Texture: layering music in groups to create a desire effect Timbre: using appropriate instruments to create an authentic sound	Tempo: conventions in tempo for dance music Texture: layers of percussion and synthesised sounds, vocals and samples
Skill(s):	Performance : Learning individual instrumental parts for a known song	Performance : Learning individual instrumental parts for a known song	Composition: how to develop solo melodic line within constraints of core 12 bar conventions (harmonic and structural).	Performance : learning to play simple rhythmic parts in performances of minimalist pieces such as clapping music Composition: composing music to accompany moving images using minimalist conventions	Performance: of gamelan composition Listening: to various examples of Indonesian Music	Performance: creating and performing a dance-style track.

Figure 6: Multi-faceted Chart Program of Study (Pictorial)

Topics in operation

Documentary analysis revealed a wide variance of both the number of topics in operation and their substance, further indicating the interaction that teacher identity brought to bear on curriculum as realized in *Programs of Study*. These findings are set out in the table below:

School	Number of year 7 topics	Number of year 8 topics	Number of year 9 topics	Total topics
A	5	5	No data	10
B	6	6	2	14
C	4	4	4	12
D	6	3	14	23
E	6	6	3	15
F	7	4	5	16
G	4	6	6	16
H	7	7	6	20
I	6	4	3	13

Table 2: Documentary analysis findings – topic frequency

The total topics in KS3 for which there is a complete data set ranged from 12 to 23 topics, with an arithmetic mean of 15.4 topics. The pattern of one topic per half-term (6 weeks = 6 topics) is most common in year 7 (6th grade) (4 out of 9 cases), and also appears in other years with less frequency (3 out of 9 cases for year 8 (7th grade), and 2 out of 8 cases for year 9 (8th grade)).

However, this pattern is not consistent between schools, and no *Program of Study* contained six topics for years 7 (6th grade), 8 (7th grade) and 9 (8th grade) in a single context. Most schools (5 out of 9 cases) planned for the same number of topics in Years 7 and 8 (6th and 7th grade), with the greatest variety being between these lower and middle years of the Key Stage and the upper year. With the exception of two participants, the *Program of Study* for the majority of schools exhibited fewer topics in Year 9 (8th grade) than in Year 7 (6th grade). There is therefore a transition between years in the quantity of topics that form KS3 curricula, with the tendency to do less in these later years, where topics were often project based and delivered over an extended period. Topics such as *Pop Band*, *Music Industry*, *Performance Project*, or *Music Technology* were typical expressions of this form of extended learning. Opportunities for musical exploration and development in an extended module that provided additional space for musical creativity, were thus restricted to Year 9 (8th grade) learners. It may therefore be

surmised that Year 7 (6th grade) is regarded as a foundational year to establish musical principles in extended teacher focused content. This tendency exhibits a “starting again in Year 7” persona (where Year 7 is the first year of high school), which has often been associated with problematic transition between primary (elementary) and secondary (high) schools in England in the context of school music (Glover & Young, 1999). The design of curriculum is therefore indicative, in some domains, of teacher perceptions of musical learning tenets, and how these should be enacted (Saunders, 2008). This informs the design of curricula, but the origins of these practices and why they are perceived by teachers to be appropriate is less clear.

Analysis of curriculum topics demonstrates diverse curriculum foundations from musical structures (such as *chords*), performance domains (such as *Ukulele*), music from cultures and traditions (such as *Taiko*) and a wide range of styles, genres and traditions (such as *Medieval Music* or *R n' B*). There are also topics that are congruent in their inclusion in music curricula, with *Music Elements*, *Blues*, *Film Music* and *Music of Africa* being the most frequently occurring. The complete results for the topics which appear in curriculum documentation of research participant schools is given below (figure 7):

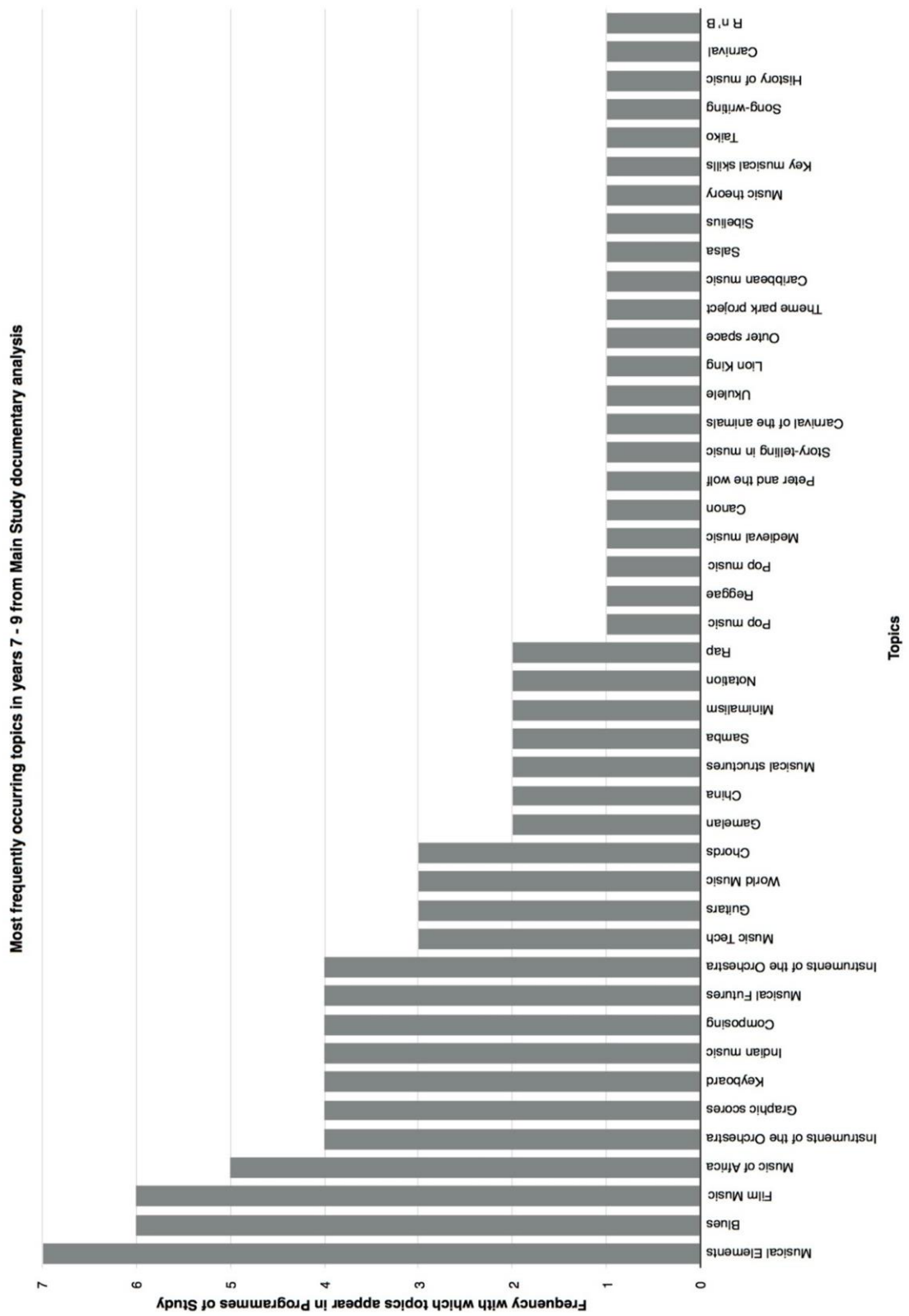


Figure 7: Documentary analysis findings – topic frequency

Discussion

Curriculum Design

The research in this paper considers curriculum design as that which is enacted by Music Subject Leaders (Music Directors) for music in a *program of study* intended for Key Stage 3 learners (6th, 7th and 8th Grade). Such music curricula are realized within political contexts, which indicates that music curriculum is an unstable domain, due to its position in the midst of powerful ideological policy making. Shifting fields of political perspectives, and how these are enacted through legislation, result in inevitable classroom confusion realized as a curriculum that is continually in flux. Tensions between school contexts and political dominance mean that curriculum can never be in balance.

The topics that teachers chose to include their curriculum programs, as a representation of their pedagogical choices and the manner in which these are sequenced and shaped indicate how teachers interpret policy paradigms in a music context. Therefore, shifting policy perspectives which privilege knowledge types and valorise subjects, impacts what music is taught in the classroom. Legitimated political understandings and interpretations of music, therefore become the lens through which music teachers themselves interpret and create their own frameworks of learning, and their own musical knowledge and experiences become confined by policy perspectives. Curriculum control therefore exists on a macro level in how music is permitted to be practiced in classrooms by political authorities, which is in turn enforced by school Senior Leaders (School Administrators). This is, consequently, replicated through classroom teacher approaches to musical learning at a micro level, where musical engagements which align with overarching policy perspectives are the only ones permitted. Knowledge (in this case curriculum design knowledge) is thereby legitimised in approved forms and realizations of music. Such legitimisation is evident in the Department for Education's approach to music, which includes formal structures. For instance, there is an explicit emphasis on using "staff and other relevant notation appropriately" in the National Curriculum orders for Music (DfE, 2013a,

p.2), which Ofsted has also stated “should feature in teaching and learning from an early age” (Ofsted, 2012 p.47), and which has also appeared more recently in *The Model Music Curriculum* (DfE, 2021) where it is described as enabling students to be “taught music independently” (p. 5). The Ofsted *Research review series: music* (Ofsted, 2021) also includes notation as one of the examples of its technical “Pillars of Progression” (Ofsted, 2021, p. 10) and reiterates that “the National Curriculum requires pupils to learn to understand and use staff notation” (p. 13).

The dominance of Ofsted as an accountability body to whom teachers would have to justify their music curriculum during an inspection visit thus holds significant sway. For instance, Ofsted will inspect that “the subject curriculum is designed and delivered in a way that allows pupils to transfer key knowledge to long-term memory” (Ofsted, 2019a, p. 44). Where a school is considered by Ofsted as inadequate following an inspection, consequences can be severe and include additional monitoring by Ofsted or an obligatory requirement for the school to become a sponsored academy, where it becomes part of a multi-academy trust (Ofsted, 2019b). Whilst such consequences will not be the result of a curriculum model in music alone, Ofsted requirements, as interpreted by Head teachers, are likely to be reflected in Senior Leader (administrator) interactions with teaching staff in all subjects. A cycle of curriculum control is therefore evident at levels of both policy and practice where one constrains the other (figure 8):

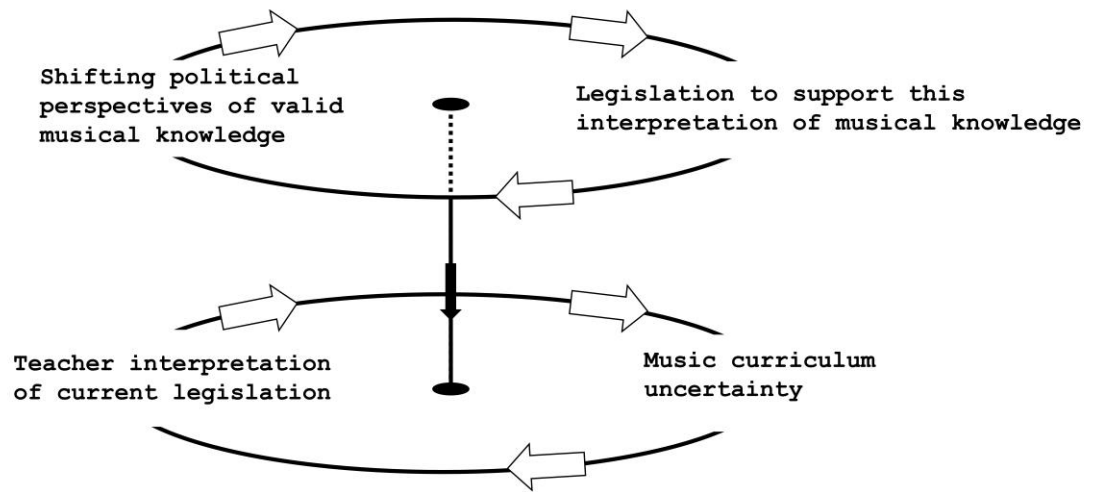


Figure 8: Policy and curriculum design cycle systems

This is therefore a continuing tension, as music teachers work to interpret and realize curriculum documentation as meaningful musical experience, which goes beyond the perception of music as a backwater in the school curriculum (Stunell, 2006), and instead regards music in the classroom as a fundamentally transforming process, enabled by dynamic interactions, which liberate rather than constrain. The implications from such tensions are that music teachers would benefit from both the time and space in their work schedules to reflect on external structures of political power and to critically evaluate what this means for the design of music curricula in their own classrooms. The promotion of teacher agency by school leaders (administrators) would further enable music teachers in their curriculum design activity, ultimately enhancing the experience of students in the classroom. Policymakers' aspirations for development can thereby be enhanced through acknowledging the expertise of classroom teachers and school leaders in a complex curriculum field, and embedding opportunities for discussion with practitioners as a matter of course. Curriculum as meaningful musical experience interacting with policy documentation is a complex dynamic and the interactions between these two entities can strongly influence musical pedagogical practices. Such

influences can be unrecognised. However the shifting plates of political reconceptualization over individual teacher planning perspectives and philosophies can create perpetual disruptions. Recognising the presence of these disruptions, and evaluating their nature, is the beginning of acknowledging that music curriculum design is a challenging process. Music teachers continue to engage with such challenges in order to realize music education in the classroom, where the potential for diverse interpretive practices is significant. Perspectives of the nature of music education from young people, teachers, Senior Leaders of Schools (School Administrators) and policy-makers thus continue to be directly influenced by music teachers. As a result, music teachers continue to act as both interpreters and mediators of musical learning experiences, and therefore remain the unacknowledged negotiators of curriculum design.

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