How Composing Assessment in English Secondary Examinations Affect Teaching and Learning Practices

By

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Abstract

Composing has been a significant and assessed part of music in the classroom since its introduction into the English National Curriculum in 1988. However, there is very little research into how the assessment of composing influences teaching and learning practices. Within a time of great educational change and uncertainty for music education, this research seeks to uncover complexities within teaching and assessing composing at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5.

To investigate this under-researched area, mixed methodology approaches were used. Two surveys were conducted to gather breadth of teachers' experiences of the assessment and nine telephone interviews with selected participants from the survey were also conducted. Five case studies allowed for in-depth data collection from diverse school settings from teachers as well as students. Case study data were obtained through interviews, focus groups and field observations. As the research sought to capture multiple perspectives, interviews with five composer-educators were also included. Data from participants were analysed through thematic and grounded theory approaches, as well as theorised using Engeström's (2001) cultural-historical activity theory and Bourdieu's (1984) notions of field, capital and habitus.

Several contributions to knowledge are presented and discussed such as the significant concerns regarding reliability, subjectivity and bias in the assessment of composing at KS4 and KS5, along with questions regarding validity and real-world usefulness of the teaching and examinations. Due to high accountability cultures many teachers felt they had to alter their teaching to ensure their students passed the examinations. The study uncovered layers of powers, myths and mechanisms used to keep control, which in turn created internal conflict in teachers. Although this study found discontent and conflict, teachers and students were also complicit, not feeling able to openly contest the current systems in place. This exploratory study gives an in-depth overview into the complexities of assessing and teaching composing at KS4 and KS5 outlining the challenges and pressures teachers and students face.

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Abbreviations

AERA	–	American Educational Research Association
A-level	–	The General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level
AoS	–	Area of study
BERA	–	British Education Research Association
AQA	–	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
B-Tech	–	Bachelor of Technology
CHAT	–	Cultural historical activity theory
DfE	–	Department for Education
DoL	–	Divisions of labour
EBacc	–	The English Baccalaureate
GCE	–	The General Certificate of Education
GCSE	–	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GT	–	Grounded theory
ISM	–	Incorporated Society of Musicians
KS3/4/5	–	Key stage 3/4/5
LCC	–	Little C creativity
LPP	–	Legitimate peripheral participation
NACCCE	–	National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education
NAME	–	National Association of Music Educators
OCR	–	Oxford, Cambridge and RSA examinations
Ofqual	–	The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation
QCA	–	Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency
TGAT	–	Task Group on Assessment and Testing
TTCT	–	Torrance Test for Creative Thinking
TTT	–	Teaching to the test
WCN	–	Western classical notation
WCT	–	Western classical tradition
WJEC	–	Welsh Joint Education Committee
ZPD	–	Zone of proximal development

1. Introduction to the Research

Before undertaking the PhD, I worked as a composer-practitioner in a range of English schools and educational settings. During this time I was struck by the stories music teachers shared with me regarding their experiences of the assessment of composing at key stage 4 (KS4) and key stage 5 (KS5). The stories commonly centred on the unreliability and subjectivity of the GCSE and A-level examinations, with teachers expressing how this affected their confidence, as well as their students' confidences. I was disheartened to hear that many students and teachers I worked with had received negative experiences of composing due to assessment, and that it had potentially discouraged them from composing in the future. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to be able to pursue these concerns further by undertaking a PhD at Birmingham City University.

This thesis outlines the findings of a four-year exploratory research project into the assessment of composing at KS4 and KS5. The structure of the thesis is as follows: firstly, my own background as a composer-practitioner is presented highlighting how and why I chose this area of research. Secondly the focus of the research is outlined, including key research questions. A detailed and focused review of current research literature follows highlighting key policy implementations and placing the research within the current social, historical and political context. The methodology underpinning the research process is then presented, describing the research methods used to collect and analyse data. Proceeding this, the findings of the study are given and ordered by data type. An in-depth discussion is then undertaken, bringing together pre-existing contextual, social, and cultural theoretical frameworks from Engeström's (1999) cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), Vygotsky's notion of enculturation (1990) and Bourdieu's field of practice (1984). The thesis concludes outlining key findings from the research, offering recommendations for practice and policy, and highlighting areas for further future inquiry.

1.1 Researcher Background

In order to help the reader understand my progression and motivations towards the area of focus, a brief overview is presented. My formal music education started in primary school when I received free flute lessons. Coming from a family with no professional or even amateur musicians, this first opportunity to learn an instrument was pivotal. I attended the local comprehensive secondary school in West Cumbria. Although the school faced a number of challenges, it had a passionate music department that provided free music lessons and a range of extra-curricular activities. From year 9 I decided to take up more instruments, starting with keyboard, leading to cello, guitar, piano, voice and finally saxophone in year 12, finding a dedication and work ethic I had never had before. Noticing that our school orchestra did not resemble a traditional orchestra, due to having guitars, saxophones, drum kits, and very few string instruments, I started to arrange music for them, making it more suited for our group. My teachers encouraged me have my arrangements performed, something that was critical and motivated me to do more. At GCSE I started to compose my own music.

Although early on in secondary school I struggled academically and was made to attend extra maths and spelling classes, my motivation from music transposed over to my academic schoolwork. After achieving full marks in my first GCSE examinations I was moved from the lower sets into the gifted and talented classes. In my final year, one of my music teachers left. I stepped in to help my other teacher by orchestrating concerts and musicals, conducting, and organising termly concerts. I did not know it at the time, but these experiences were vital for my development as a musician.

Although I decided I wanted to study music at higher education I had very little information about courses being the only one to apply to a Conservatoire in the school or family. I applied for both universities and Conservatoires, not really believing I would be good enough to get a place, but to my amazement I was given offers at most

of my choices. I decided to go to the Birmingham Conservatoire[1] after being offered a scholarship. During my time at the Birmingham Conservatoire we were encouraged to be creative, to take risks and to explore new possibilities. I began to become interested in teaching composing but realised there were very few who shared this passion with me. Noticing there were few opportunities for young composers, I set up the Young Composers Project when I graduated in 2013 with the aims to support the long-term progression of young composers aged 14-18. Whilst running the Young Composers Project and working as a practitioner, I met Professor Martin Fautley who suggested I take my ideas and concerns further by starting a PhD.

My previous experiences as a composer-practitioner have helped to identify initial areas of enquiry within the assessment of composing at KS4 and KS5; however, I ensured I remained flexible to any changes within the research design and focus as the research progressed.

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[1] Now known as the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

1.2 Research Aims

Three research questions were identified and modified throughout the research process, these were:

1. In what ways does the examination of composing directly affect teaching and learning of composing at KS4 and KS5?

2. Is assessment of composing perceived as reliable and fair?

3. Does composing at examination level reflect real-world composing and creative practices?

Through in-depth interviews I was able to uncover if and how teachers felt the assessment of composing influenced their own teaching, as well as identifying what and who influenced these changes. It was also important to identify if participants believed the assessment of composing was reliable, meaning that they felt the examinations were consistent and accurate. Ensuring that that a test is fair considers the role of subjectivity and bias in the creation of the examination and the marking, raising further questions regarding equality in education and the role of privilege and power in wider society. The final research question raises concerns regarding the validity of composing assessments, questioning if KS4 and KS5 tests assess and measure composing ability. Through comparison of the composer-educators, I was able to analyse differences between professional composing practices and composing practices in the classroom, as well as beliefs about composers, composing pedagogy and progression.

I was keen to investigate both the extent and the breadth of the issues experienced by teachers in assessing composing, as well as uncovering in-depth detail and the complexities of the concerns. Coming from a practitioner background, I was motivated for the research to be of use within the current education climate; therefore, capturing student and teacher voice was central. This was achieved through case-study research involving semi-structured interviews, observations and focus groups, as well as two online music teacher surveys and telephone interviews.

2. Literature Review

In order to investigate assessment of composing at KS4 and KS5 thoroughly, an in-depth literature review was conducted. The review identified significant gaps in the literature, specifically regarding composing at KS4 and KS5, and the consequences of assessment pressures on the teaching and learning of composing. Similar and relevant areas of research were included in the literature review to ensure a broad understanding of the topic. The literature review is divided into four main sections:
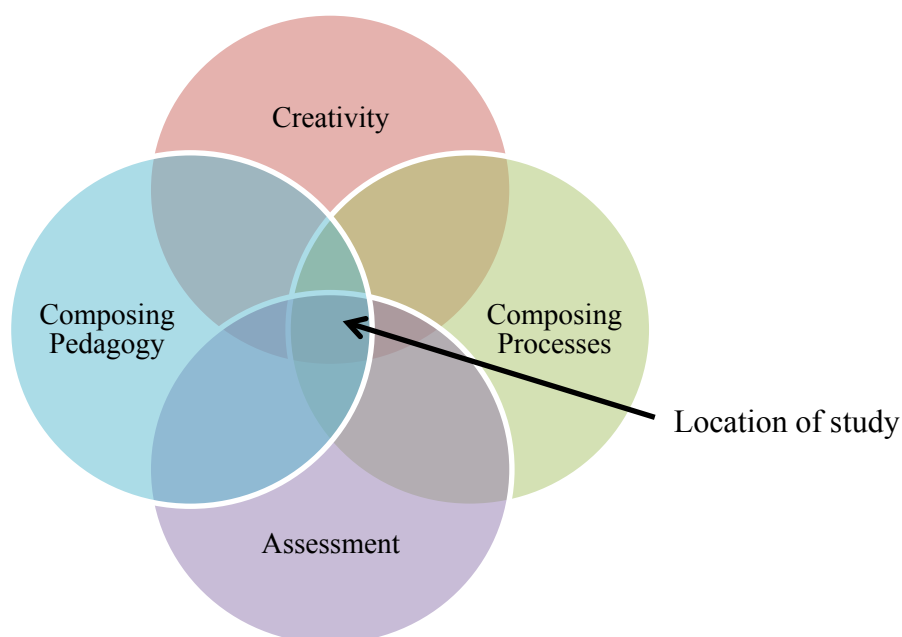
Figure 1: Positionality of the research within existing literature

These range of topics helps situate the enquiry within the wider field of education, assessment, composing and creativity research, giving this study a unique position.

As teachers do not work within a 'social or political vacuum' (Torrance, 1995a: 3), this chapter also identifies key links between policy and practice, which define 'the space in which [teachers] work' (Stunell, 2006: 5). Thus, placing the findings of the study within the current political, cultural, and socio-historical landscape.

2.1 Creativity in Composing

Music is commonly referred to as inherently creative (Webster, 1990) with composing as the purest form, but is composing unquestionably creative? As the phenomenon of creativity is 'notoriously difficult to define' (Lucas, 2001: 38; Sawyer, 2003: 20), there is no one universally agreed definition. Therefore, multiple perspectives and beliefs regarding creativity exist, leading to confusion and ambiguity (Webster, 1996).

2.1.1 Diverse Notions of Creativity

Early theorists and philosophers, such as Plato, believed that the act of creation was directly influenced from a higher power (Craft, Gardner and Claxton, 2008); and that people only served as 'vehicles' for the Gods (Weisberg, 1993: 7). This notion has since been contested and challenged. Koestler (1964) promoted the notion of creativity as something tangible and within an individual's control:

> …the creative act is not an act of creation in the sense of the Old Testament. It does not create something out of nothing; it uncovers, selects, re-shuffles, combines, synthesizes already existing facts, ideas, faculties, skills (Koestler, 1964: 120).

Koestler's quote is significant as it rejects previous notions of creativity, and instead highlights how creativity can be studied. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, cognitive psychological studies aimed to identify and measure creative traits through lab experiments and biographical studies of creative individuals. Galton (1869) investigated the families of 26 musicians and composers, concluding that musical giftedness was hereditary: 'the fact of the inheritance of musical taste is notorious and undeniable' (Galton, 1869: 237). Underpinning these studies was the belief that creativity was a set of inherited personality traits (Amabile, 2001: 333), and that 'certain individuals have a tendency towards creativity' (Fautley and Savage, 2007: 3). Thus, alluding to the notion of the "creative genius" that is still popular today (Weisberg, 2010), especially in regards to music and composing (Burnard, 2012a).

Guilford (1967) and Torrance (1988) played a significant role in the advancement of creativity research using psychometric testing (Sternberg, 2006). Guilford (1967) devised his *structure of intellect* identifying multiple personality traits, as shown below:
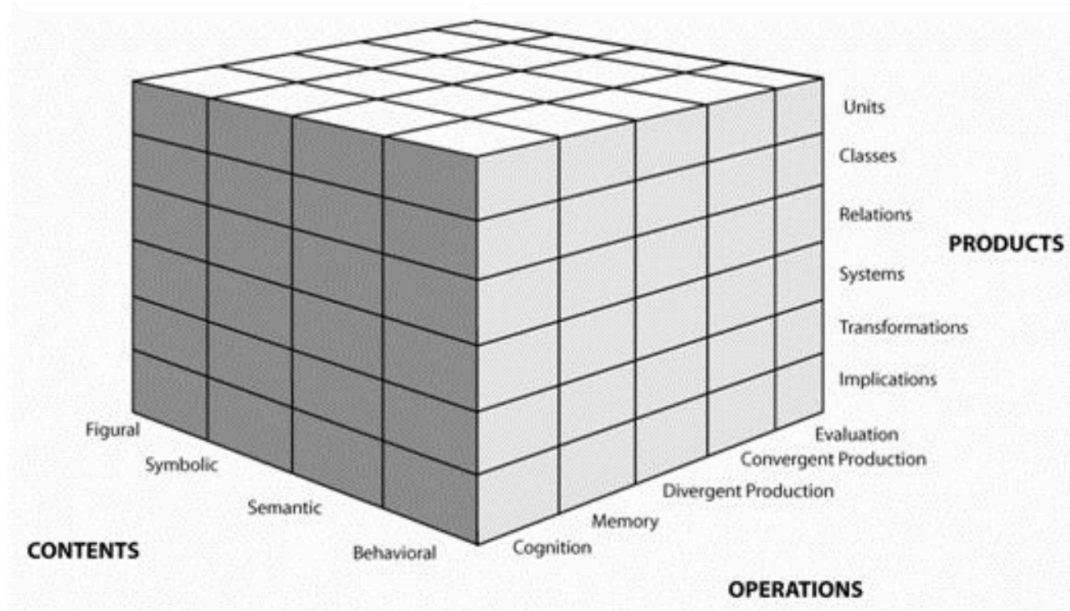
Figure 2: Structure of intellect (Guilford, 1967)

Guilford (1967) outlined two central forms of thinking: convergent, defined as aimed 'towards a fixed answer' (Fautley and Savage, 2007: 2), and divergent, viewed as non-linear, and enabling 'the possibility of novel outcomes being generated' (ibid.). Based on Guilford's research, Torrance (1988) developed a series of tests to measure divergent thinking, something often associated with creative thinking. These Torrance Test for Creative Thinking (TTCT) have been used extensively as a method of measuring creativity ever since, particularly in the US (Baer, 2011). Associations between intelligence and creativity were commonly raised in the literature of this time and even measured using similar tools. Gardner's 'multiple intelligences' (1984) recognised a diverse range of cognitive abilities (Craft, 1997: 9), and seven categories were identified, including music (Gardner, 1984). In terms of musical intelligence, Gardner (1993) identified pitch, rhythm, and timbre (p.104), but was also sceptical about viewing music in this way stating that 'a domain such as music…can involve any number of intelligences' (Gardner, 2006: 31-32).

Researchers have since challenged the use of psychometric testing to measure intelligence and creativity, questioning the validity and reliability of such tests (Gardner, 2006; Sternberg, 2006). Feldman (1999) argued that psychometric testing promoted a 'narrow and limited conception of creativity' (p.169) and Gardner (2006) commented that they 'focus almost exclusively on the more mundane instances of creativity' (Gardner, 2006: 43), rather than viewing creativity as a complex and holistic phenomena. A popular method of measuring creativity has been to monitor and study divergent thinking in participants; however, researchers have argued that divergent thinking 'cannot be a stand-alone measure of creativity' (Furnham and Bachtiar, 2008: 614). Longitudinal research conducted by Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976) found no correlation between high creative personality traits measured in experimental lab conditions, and success in creative achievements (Weisberg, 1993). In 2016, Gardner (2016) declared that multiple intelligences theory was 'no longer current' (p.169), and even commented that the original creation of the theory was 'a scientific theory' (1993, xxvi) and never intended it to become an 'instrument of social policy' (ibid.). However, against Gardner's will and a lack of experimentation and testing of the theory, multiple intelligences theory was utilised and promoted, with Gardner (1993) arguing against its oversimplification. These early studies and beliefs about creativity are still upheld and may have influence on the perception of students' abilities to compose and be creative at KS4 and KS5.

Domain Specific Creativity

Many beliefs above, viewed creativity as an objective and measurable trait, which Csikszentmihalyi (1999) defined as 'domain general' (p.177). Sternberg (2005) argued that different forms of creativity involve a different set of 'skills' and 'creative processes' (p.373); commenting that 'no one thing…is truly creative, but rather, multiple things are' (p.371). Csikszentmihalyi (1999) promoted creativity to be viewed as 'domain specific', believing that diverse creative skills were integrally linked to a particular creative activity, task or practice. Therefore, creativity in composing may have specific and unique skills and traits. Csikszentmihalyi (1999) outlined this through his *systems model of creativity*, shown below:
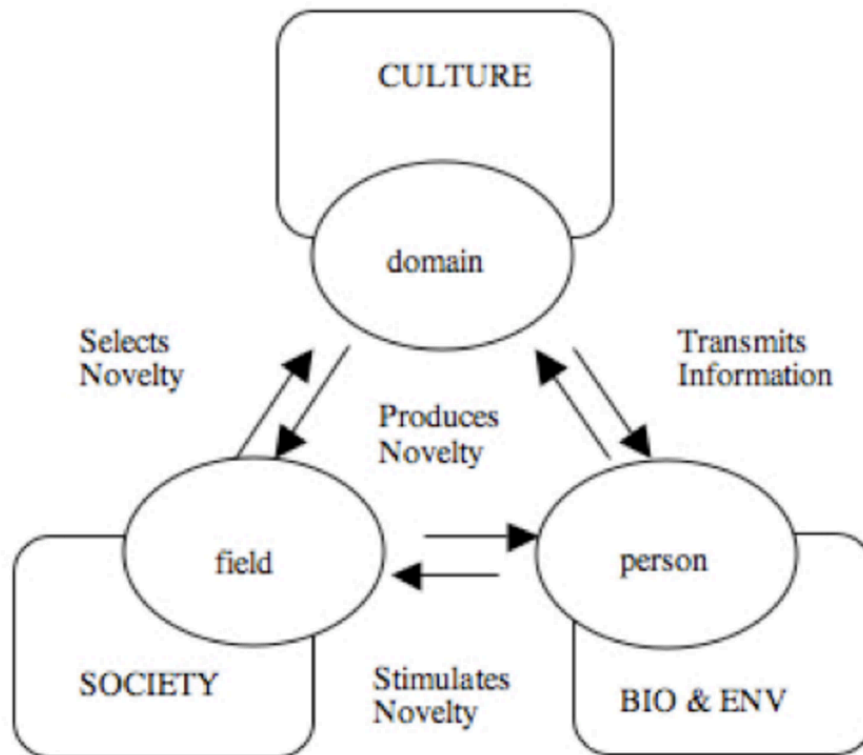
Figure 3: Systems model of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999)

In this model, the creative domain encapsulates creativity as part of a wider social system 'constructed through an interaction' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999: 314) with cultural and symbolic aspects, known as the knowledge system, and social perspective. Burnard (2012a) applied Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems model to the context of creativity within professional music-making practices, investigating the careers of 19 diverse musicians. Burnard (2012a) has since championed the concept of multiple *creativities* to be considered in music education, calling a 'single type of creativity for all music' an 'outdated misconception' (p.238). Similarly, Craft (2006) highlighted that the domain general view of creativity was dominant within education due to being based on 'the value framework of western individualism, driven by the capitalist, globalized marketplace' (p.340), suggesting potentially political and economic agendas for creativity, as will be discussed further.

Creativity as a Process

A significant field of creativity research is rooted in the notion of creativity as a 'staged' cognitive process (Sawyer, 2003: 22). Influenced by Helmholtz's three-stage model, Wallas (1926) developed a four-stage model of creativity, that included:

Figure 4: Four-stage model of creativity (Wallas, 1926)

In these stages, conscious and unconscious thinking were identified as important (Poincaré in Boden, 1990: 19). *Preparation* was viewed as the conscious processing of a problem: 'our mind is not likely to give us a clear answer to any particular problem unless we set it a clear question' (Wallas in Vernon, 1970: 93). Both the *incubation* and *illumination* stages were said to involve unconscious thinking, which Wallas defined as the 'voluntary abstention from conscious thought, and thinking in the 'periphery'' (in Vernon, 1970: 94). *Illumination* was identified as a sudden moment of clarity about a problem; where an idea may instantaneously 'flash' into consciousness (ibid.). This stage has also been referred to as the 'Aha!' reaction (Weisberg, 2010: 237), and 'Eureka act' or 'Eureka process' (Koestler, 1964). The final stage, *verification,* allowed for conscious evaluation and refining.

Wallas (1926) influential model also received criticism; with some arguing that creativity does not happen in clearly defined linear stages (Sawyer, 2003, Webster, 2003). Craft (2000) recommended viewing creativity as a cyclical process, as shown in figure 5, involving *preparation, letting go, germination, assimilation*, and finally *completion*:

Figure 5: Cyclical creative process (Craft, 2000: 31)

Webster (2002) developed Wallas' (1926) four-stage model to reflect musical creativity as a 'dynamic process' (p.11) involving stages that could move back and forth:
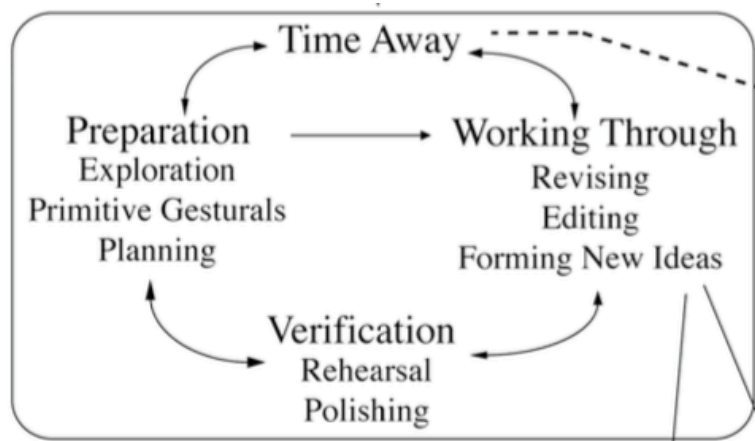
Figure 6: Centre of creative thinking processes in music (Webster, 2002: 12)

Similarly, Burnard and Younker's (2004) model of creativity reflected a non-linear process allowing for 'multi-dimensional pathways of composing routes' (p.64), thus, illustrating a more complex and multidirectional view of creativity, as shown below:

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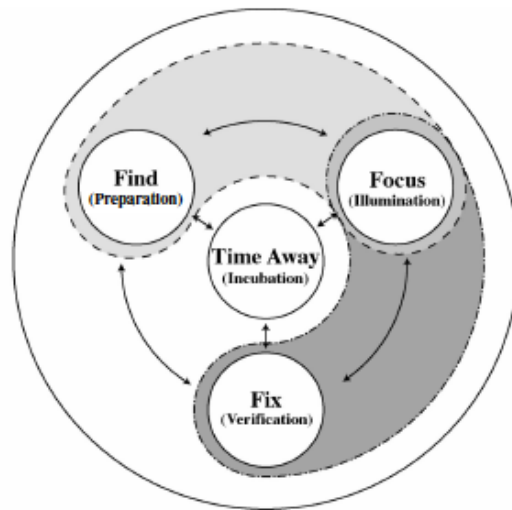
Figure 7: Adapted four-stage creativity model (Burnard and Younker, 2004: 65)

Although Wallas' (1926) four-stage model received criticism, by breaking down the creative process into clear stages, it allowed teachers a way of thinking about creativity and how they may be able to support it within the classroom. It has also acted as a starting point for researchers to adapt and modify models of creativity and composing process, which discussed in more detail in chapter 2.2.

2.1.2 Knowledge, Skills and Creativity

The relationships between knowledge and creativity are an ongoing debate. Boden (2001) summarised that 'creativity and knowledge are not opposed to each other' (p.95). The prevailing belief contests that if creativity is viewed as specific to a domain, then 'basic knowledge of the field' (Sternberg, O'Hara and Lubart, 1997: 9) is needed before creativity can take place. This argument between creativity, skills and knowledge is especially highly contested in music education (Fautley and Murphy, 2016b). Knowledge of the "rules", commonly referring to western classical music theory, is often viewed as superior and needed before creativity can take place. Gardner (2006) commented that 'one cannot be creative unless one has mastered a domain' (p.67), and beliefs alluded to the idea of needing to know the "rules" before being allowed to break them:

> Changing rules…. cannot be done if one does not know the rules in the first place…learning to follow the rules must always come first (Boden, 2001: 100).

Thus, highlighting the important relationship between knowledge and creativity:

> What makes the difference between an outstandingly creative person and a less creative one is not any special power, but greater knowledge (Boden, 1990: 24).

This debate is especially relevant in the current English education landscape due to the focus on developing a knowledge-based curriculum (Gibb, 2017b). In contrast, Koestler (1964) believed that true creativity took place when an individual could not rely on previous knowledge, making 'it impossible to solve the problem by the same rules of the game' (p.119).

It is believed that in order to make a creative advancement, a significant change to the domain must be made (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Researchers have considered different ways in which knowledge of the domain can be used to move a domain forward. Boden (2004) identified three main forms of creative contributions:

1. Making unfamiliar combinations of familiar ideas
2. Exploration
3. Transformation

(Boden, 2004: 3-4)

Boden (2004) described the process of *exploration* as when individuals 'explore a structured conceptual space, mapped by a particular style' (p.6), whereas *transformation* allows them to think beyond a particular style and imagine 'impossible' (ibid.) ideas that may change the boundaries of the chosen style or practice. Similarly, Eisner (2005) categorised four types of creativity in visual art, and Sternberg (2003a) identified eight types of contributions in his 'propulsion theory', summarised below:

1. Replication
2. Redefinition – change of perception of the field
3. Forward Incrementation
4. Advance forward incrementation – ahead of its time

5. Redirection
6. Reconstruction – Moving backwards but taking it forward a new way
7. Reinitiation – when a field has reached its point, so a new direction is taken
8. Integration – putting together different ideas

(Adapted from Sternberg, 2003a: 100-101)

In identifying multiple concepts and forms of creativity, it is possible to recognise if certain types of creative contributions are valued over than others, and if the students, teachers, examiners, examination boards, or composer-educators value some types of creative contributions differently at KS4 and KS5.

Knowledge and Skills in Teaching Composing

As discussed above, knowledge and creativity is widely debated in music education. Lupton and Bruce (2010) identified four approaches to teaching composing, each with an interesting relationship between knowledge and skills:

1. Learning from the masters
2. Mastery of techniques
3. Exploring ideas
4. Developing voice

(Adapted from Lupton and Bruce, 2010: 273)

Lupton and Bruce (2010) described *learning from the masters* as a 'time-honoured approach' (p.274) based on knowledge involving pastiche and imitative composing. *Mastery of techniques* described the learning of a set of tools and skills, whereas *exploring ideas* focused on the process of composing through active learning and self-reflection. The final approach, *developing voice*, was aimed at developing self-expression but was found to be the most 'underdeveloped' (Lupton and Bruce, 2010: 276) of the four teaching strategies. Colwell (2003) commented that teachers may concentrate on teaching what is easily taught, finding that that music assessment was often 'deeply embedded in the teaching of skills' (p.16), rather than promoting self-expression or creativity. This is important when considering the real-world applications and validly of the KS4 and KS5 examinations.

Relationships between skills, knowledge and creativity were explored further by Lupton and Bruce (2010) when investigating curriculum design. They investigated two undergraduate courses and the roles of *craft* (utilising techniques and skills), *process*, and *art* (self expression) within them. They discover that the two courses each had different focal points, as illustrated below:

Jazz: **Music Technology:**
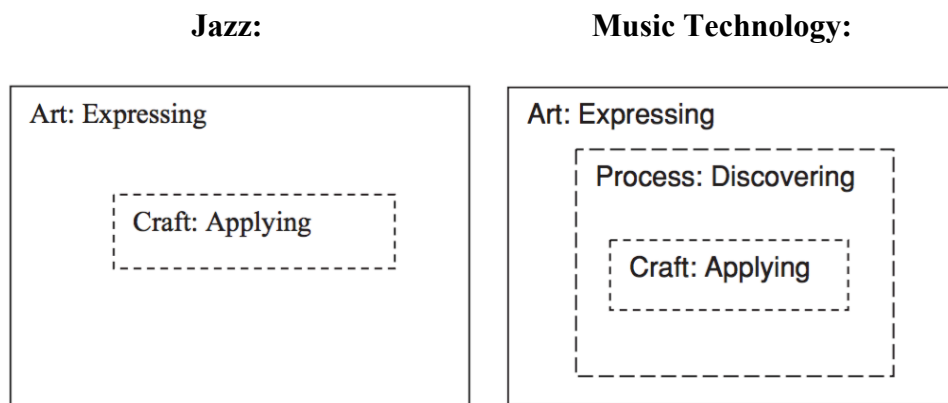
Figure 8: Lupton and Bruce (2010) comparison of jazz and music technology course design (pp.279-280)

As a result, different pedagogies were used, for example *mastery of techniques* and *exploring ideas* were more common in the music technology course, whereas the jazz course focused on *learning from the masters* and *mastery of techniques*, encompassing a more teacher-led approach (Lupton and Bruce, 2010). This highlights the different pedagogical approaches and beliefs in composing teaching.

One rationale for the teaching of composing skills argues that it supports creativity once the skills have been internalised (Lupton and Bruce, 2010), thus promoting the notion of music as an art form in which specific sets of skills and techniques are needed before creativity can start to take place (Paynter, 2008). This fixation on teaching skills was also found within other creative-based subjects such as creative writing (Grainger, Goouch, and Lambirth, 2005), which also presented the idea of developing a writer's 'toolkit' (p.5), so that once a set of skills have been learnt, a student's 'competence as a writer was assured' (p.7). Lupton and Bruce (2010) warned against the teaching of composing as 'discrete skills' (p.274) and Spruce (1996) also cautioned that teaching composing can easily become 'fragmented' (p.175).

2.1.3 Creativity for All

Research and education policy from the late 1990s and early 2000s aimed to promote creativity as universal (Craft, 2006), and something that could be taught and fostered:

> All people are capable of creative achievement in some area of activity, provided the conditions are right and they have acquired the relevant knowledge and skills (NACCCE, 1999: 29).

> [creativity] isn't confined to a tiny elite: every one of us is creative, to a degree (Boden, 2004: 1).

> [creativity is] a capacity common to all – one that should be effectively developed by the school (Eisner, 2005: 7).

Government recognised the importance of fostering and promoting creativity in education, publishing resources to support teachers such as: 'Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage' (2000) and 'Creativity Find it Promote it!' (2004a). In 1999, the seminal National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) report differentiated between teaching creatively, and teaching *for* creativity, stating:

> Teachers cannot develop the creative abilities of their pupils if their own creative abilities are suppressed (NACCCE, 1999: 103).

The report also commented that creativity in the classroom was not easy due to time restraints, lack of confidence, and the potential for negative repercussions due to taking risks; something important to consider in this study.

In promotion of the universality of creativity, researchers have distinguished two main forms of creative contributions, as summarised in table 1:

Table 1: Forms of creative contributions and terms

Types of creative contribution	Maslow (1967)	Boden (2004)	Craft (2001)
Novel and innovative to the individual	Primary	Psychological (P-creative)	Little C creativity (LCC)
Novel and innovative to the wider community of practice, the domain or field	Secondary	Historical (H-creative)	Big C creativity (BCC)

Much past understanding into creativity has focused on the *secondary* (Maslow, 1967) notion, with creativity only being possible if it changes the domain in some way (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Sternberg, 2005). In contrast, a *primary* (Maslow, 1967) notion of creativity recognises how young people can be creative and create things that are novel and new to them, rather than to the domain as a whole. Craft (2001) developed the concept of 'little C creativity' (LCC), acknowledging the creativity involved in 'everyday challenges of life' (Craft, 2001: 49). Fautley and Savage (2007) argue that these concepts of creativity, described above, have enabled teachers to view creativity as inclusive and as something we all have the potential to achieve. This view enables creativity in composing to be available to all students at KS4 and KS5, rather than viewing it as only achievable by a select few students.

Fostering Creativity, and Creative Teaching in the Classroom

A considerable amount of research has investigated key environmental, organisational and individual aspects that can foster creativity (Amabile 1996, 1997). This is important to this study as composing and creativity are required to take place within the classroom environment. Factors likely to encourage creativity included: having enough resources, supportive management practices, and organisational motivation (Amabile, 1997). Creativity was found to be needed to be valued from people high up in an organisation (Amabile, 1997). Similarly, Cremin, Barnes, and Scoffham (2006) discovered that in order for a teacher to teach creatively, creativity needed to be valued and supported from within school management, as illustrated below:
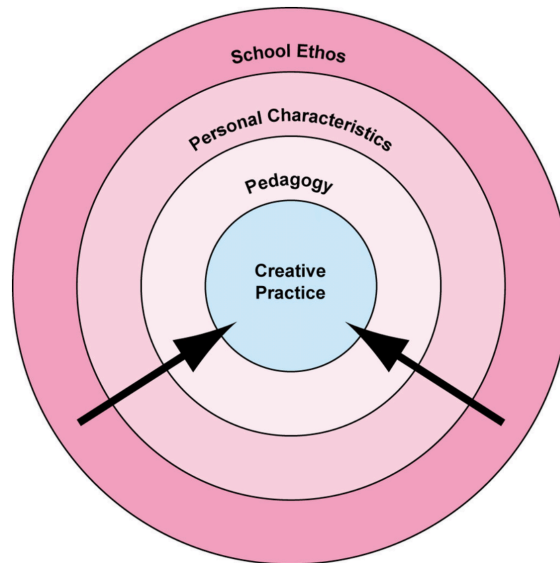
Figure 9: Creative teaching framework (Cremin, Barnes, and Scoffham, 2006: 5)

As this study is situated within examination conditions, the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on creativity was deemed as relevant. Amabile (1979) revealed, that intrinsic motivation, when an individual is motivated 'by their own interest and involvement' (Amabile, 1985: 393), was more 'conducive to creativity' (1979: 221). Extrinsic motivation, which is driven by 'external goals' (Amabile, 1985: 393), was 'detrimental' to creativity (Amabile, 1979: 221). Amabile (1976) also concluded that externally imposed deadlines could cause 'a decrease in subsequent intrinsic interest in that task' (p.97) and may have long-term negative consequences:

> …we may no longer desire to do something we once enjoyed after we have been forced to do it for the sake of meeting a deadline (Amabile, 1976: 92).

In contrast, Eisenberger and Cameron (1996) opposed the theory that extrinsic rewards have a negative impact on creativity, calling it a 'myth' (p.1154). Therefore, debates are still ongoing.

2.1.4 A Need for Creativity

As evidenced by the extent of research and policy into creativity, it is clear that creativity is deemed as important in education and society. Much education policy present an image of a 'rapidly changing world' (QCA, 2004b: 9) in which advancements in technology, globalisation and marketisation, has led to a re-framing of education in modern society:

> Education throughout the world faces unprecedented challenges: economic, technological, social, and personal…in particular to promote creativity, adaptability and better powers of communication (NACCCE, 1999: 11).

Creativity is commonly perceived as an essential tool for surviving in today's social and economic landscape; therefore, a need for creative skills and innovation in the workforce was also promoted (Eisner, 2002):

> Almost every company wants more highly creative employees (Sternberg, O'Hara and Lubart, 1997: 8).
>
> Firms that prepare for the future by implementing new ideas oriented towards this changing world are likely to thrive (Amabile, 1997: 40).
>
> Many employers want people who see connections, have bright ideas, are innovative, communicate and work well with others and are able to solve problems. In other words, they need creative people (QCA, 2004a: 9).
>
> The business community wants education to give a much higher priority to promoting young people's creative abilities (NACCCE, 1999: 14).

This move towards needing a creative workforce can be linked to the UK moving from an 'industrial economy' to a 'knowledge-based' economy (Sawyer, 2005: 41, NACCCE, 1999: 7).

Another perceived benefit to promoting creativity in education is the belief that it would lead to greater economic benefits for the UK. Burnard (2006) explained that in many countries the 'creativity agenda' has 'an explicit role in the economy' (p.313) and is consequently an important consideration for governments. The 'Creative

Industries Economic Estimates' (2016) showed that employment in the creative industries has been increasing since 2013, totalling 1.8 million jobs in 2014 (Department for Culture, Media and Sport: 4). The 'UK Music' annual report 'Measuring Music' (2017) also estimated that the music industry contributed £4.4 billion in GVA (gross value added) to the economy, 142,208 jobs in the music industry, and £2.1 billion in exports to the UK economy (UK Music, 2017: 9). However, Craft (2006) criticised this purely 'market-driven model of creativity in education' (p.337) calling it the 'establishment of creativity' (p.340), and warning that it may lead to promoting a narrow view and form of creativity.

The Diminishing Value of the Arts and Music in Schools

Despite benefits to the economy, and the perceived need for creative skills, there have been significant cuts to funding for the arts in the UK in recent years. The landmark scheme 'Creative Partnerships' ceased to receive government funding in 2011 and the AD:UK/Arts 'Arts Investment and Partnership Survey' (2013) revealed that 133 local authorities had 'no dedicated arts officer' and 'no direct arts service' (p.1) with 64.7% of services being 'vulnerable to cuts' (ibid.). Past Labour secretary of state for culture, media and sport, Chris Smith (2013), responded to these changes:

> The arts councils' funding is diminishing, and support from many local authorities is falling off a cliff – not because councils want to stop funding, but because their own funding settlements have been severely cut (Smith, 2013: online).

For music education, Fautley and Murphy (2016a) wrote 'we are living in troubling times' (p.1) and Burnard (2013) acknowledged that music can be the 'most conspicuous casualty' (p.1) when funding is cut.

In connection to funding cuts, uptake of music and the arts at KS4 and KS5 has been debated. The 2010 schools white paper, confirmed Government's backing of the EBacc; a range of GCSE subjects including English, mathematics, science, a modern or ancient foreign language and a humanities subject. In addition, the 2016 schools white paper set expectations that most students would take up the EBacc (DfE, 2016: 93). During the study, Progress 8 was also introduced to monitor achievement across

8 subjects, with maths and English receiving double weighting (DfE, 2016). Although the Department for Education (DfE) claimed that the EBacc 'should not (and does not) squeeze out wider study' (DfE, 2016: 91), and the 2017 New Schools Network report concluded that 'there is no evidence that the EBacc has affected GCSE arts entries' (Fellows, 2017: 7), other research has found that the EBacc has had a detrimental effect on uptake of creative subjects (Ipsos MORI, 2012). Ipsos MORI (2012) found that 45% of teachers experienced subjects being withdrawn due to the EBacc with drama and performing arts being the most common. With regard to uptake of GCSE music, the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) reported that 42% of music teachers felt the EBacc had 'a harmful impact', with 76.5% reporting fewer students were selecting music for GCSE (2012, online). Collins and Cowgill (2016) also reported a loss of 18% taking A-level music. Research conducted by Daubney and Mackrill (2017) of 705 schools, found that 59.7% of state schools believed the EBacc to be having a 'negative impact on the provision and uptake of music' (Daubney and Mackrill, 2017: 1). Their research also found that the number of schools offering GCSE music was down from 85% in 2012/13, to 75% in 2016/17 (Daubney and Mackrill, 2017: 2). The backlash also revealed reduced hours of music teaching at KS3, music teaching taking place outside scheduled school time, and music teachers losing their jobs (Daubney and Mackrill, 2017).

Over time, the perceived value of creative-based subjects has also been diminished. Past Conservative Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, regarded arts and humanities as being restrictive and limiting for future career and education pathways:

> …the arts and humanities were what you chose because they were useful for all kinds of jobs…of course, we know now that couldn't be further from the truth – that the subjects that keep young people's options open and unlock the door to all sorts of careers are the STEM subjects (Morgan, 2014: online).

In comparing and promoting STEM subjects over the arts and humanities, Morgan is devaluing the vocational and educational worth of creative subjects. This quote signals a dramatic turn away from previous educational policy, instead promoting a political agenda aimed at lowing public opinion regarding the value of the arts in education. Henley (2011) also outlined how music may be 'devalued' (p.18) due to the Ebacc and a report by Pearson and LKMco (2017), recommended that the DfE

should 'stop reporting schools' performance using the 'Ebacc performance measure' (Millard, Small and Menzies, 2017: 7). Ipsos MORI (2012) also reported that the segregation between academic and non-academic subjects has had a detrimental influence on the perceived value of the arts.

Interestingly, in 2008 Lamont and Maton found that music was deemed the least important compared to four other core subjects, as shown in figure 10:
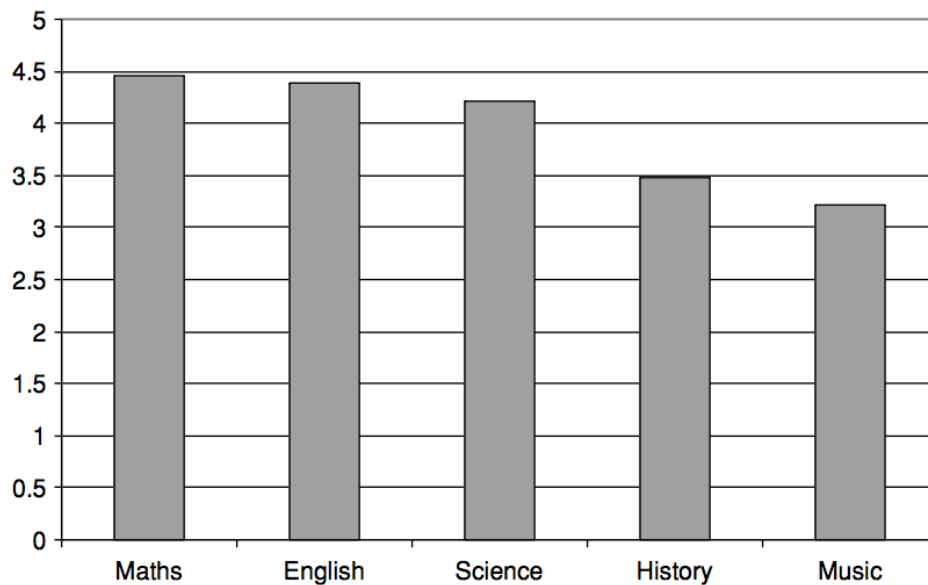
Figure 10: Perception of subject importance (Lamont and Maton, 2010: 65)

In addition, Bray (2000) also found that parents might perceive music, as a GCSE subject, as unimportant, which echoes Aspin's (1986) findings:

> The subjects thought by many parents and teachers to be fundamentals are still English, mathematics and the sciences…these are the subjects that have "high status"…because they are "hard" subjects in the sense that their content is held to be "objective" and progress in them easily measured (p.31).

Although parental perspectives were not obtained in this study, their influence on students' decisions in taking music at KS4 and KS5 was raised.

Music has a seemingly contradictory status as both an academic and non-academic subject and has traditionally been viewed as carrying 'greater academic credibility and currency' (Harland *et al.*, 2000: 192) compared to other arts-based subjects. Conservative Minister of State for School Standards, Nick Gibb (2016a), highlighted this in his speech:

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> Important though it is, playing an instrument is not the only aspect of a good music education. Music is also an academic subject, and the new national curriculum ensures that it will be taught as such (Gibb, 2016a: online).

Gibb reinforces the unique positionality of music has as both an academic and creative subject, however the quote also demonstrates current education policy to promote academic subjects by opposing and devaluing the role of creativity. Recent education policy discourse has promoted a return to the notion of a 'knowledge-based' curriculum whereby students are taught a body of knowledge' (Gibb, 2017b: online). They argue that previous education policy 'had been stripped of the rich knowledge content that all children deserve to be taught' (Gibb, 2017a: online), and 'all pupils must be endowed with the core knowledge needed to be culturally literate' (ibid.). Gibb (2016b) emphasised how students should 'listen to, review and evaluate music across a range of historical periods, genres, styles and traditions, including the works of great composers and musicians' (online). Similarly, Gove (2011) commented that 'children should receive a strong, knowledge-based cultural education' (in Henley, 2011: 38), rather than promoting creativity, exploration or active engagement in music making.

Even with substantial research and policy promoting the need for creativity, the current value and status of creative subjects and music has undergone challenge. With the current cuts to funding, there is significant worry that music will only be available for those privileged enough to afford them, thus creating a greater divide within society (Hill, 2018; Hemley, 2018). Along with the introduction of the Ebacc and Progress 8, this signals a prioritising of subjects perceived as 'core' and 'academic', with the arts being marginalised.

2.2 Composing Processes

In 1986, Sloboda affirmed that 'composition is the least studied and least well understood of all musical processes' (p.103). This is a problem for teachers as if little is understood about the processes of composers, it will be more challenging for them to support and develop young peoples' composing practices. Much research has been

conducted since, aiming to uncover composing processes. Methods of research have ranged from investigating professional composers' practices (Bennett, 1976; Sloboda, 1986; Biasutti, 2012), observing student and novice composers (Loane, 1984; Bunting, 1988; Kratus, 1989; Bamberger, 2003; Fautley, 2005; Burnard and Younker, 2004), to using computer software to the track stages (Collins, 2005), and comparative studies (Collins, 2005; Burnard and Younker, 2004; Kennedy, 1999; Biasutti, 2012).

This 'growing field of research' (Mellor, 2008: 251) is needed to support music teachers to understand how best to 'enhance creativity' (Burnard and Younker, 2004: 59) in the classroom, and to break down misconceptions they may hold about composing processes. There is currently very little research into composing processes specific to the age group of this study (14-18 years), and no known published studies investigating composing processes under examination conditions. Although this study does not seek to uncover and describe the composing processes of the students, it provides vital investigation into how the processes of composing are directed and altered by the presence of an examination. Therefore, studies that break down and outline composing processes are reviewed for the purpose of comparison and understanding. In addition, studies which investigate composing in groups are also relevant since group composing is very prevalent at KS3 composing and often the main experience students have of composing prior to KS4, as well as studies involving technology, as technology is used regularly for composing at both KS4 and KS5.

2.2.1 Professional Models of Composing

A number of studies investigate the processes of professional composers. Bennett (1976) interviewed eight professional classical composers, determining they all took 'similar steps' (p.6) when composing, as outlined below:
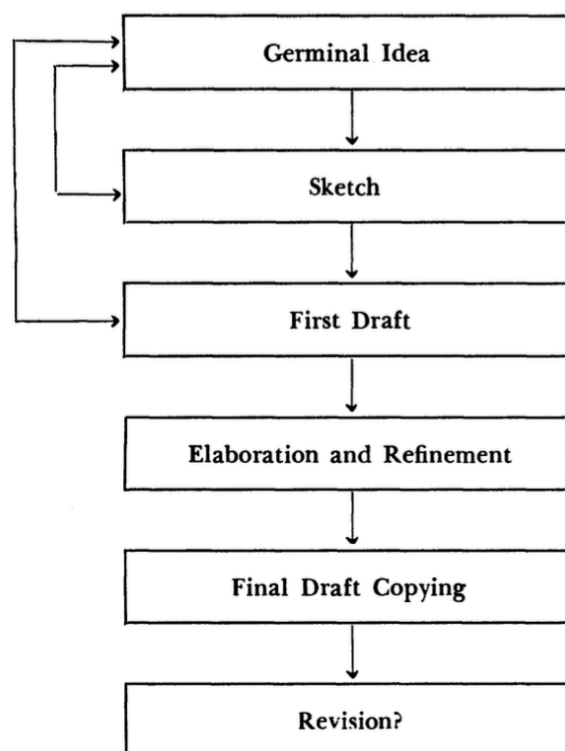
**Figure 1
Schematic of the Composing Process**

Figure 11: Composing Model (Bennett, 1976: 7)

Although Bennett (1976) found that improvisation played an important role in the first stage, he commented that not all composers used the piano due to it being 'too limiting' (p.8). This highlights some of the individual differences in preferred composing practices. The composers in the study also preferred to be alone, away from distractions and compose in silence (Bennett, 1976), thus raising questions regarding the possibility of this within the classroom. By analysing the reflective writings of composers, Sloboda (1986) identified two main stages in the composing process:

1. Inspiration: 'a skeletal idea or theme appears in consciousness'
2. Execution: 'the idea is subject to a series of more conscious and deliberate process of extensions and transformations'

<div align="right">(Adapted, Sloboda, 1986: 116)</div>

As with Wallas (1926), Sloboda (1986) recognised the relationship between consciousness and unconscious thinking for creativity, and composing.

By mapping a media composer's composing processes over three years via computer, Collins (2005) created a 'hypothetical model' of composing (Collins, 2005: 210). As with the more recent models of creativity (Craft, 2000; Webster, 2003; Burnard and Younker 2004), Collins (2005) took Wallas' (1926) notion of stages, but developed them, explaining how they were 'context-driven' and 'recursive' (p.208), thus allowing movement 'back and forth' (ibid.).

Although these studies highlight possible composing processes; they only use specifically selected professional composers, raising concerns regarding the generalisability of their findings. In Bennett's study (1976) all participants were male, from Washington D.C, and composed Western classical music. Collins' (2005) research only included one composer working within the field of media music, which may involve a different set of processes to classical concert composers. There are also dangers in assuming that children and novices may compose in the same ways as the adults and professionals. Little research has been conducted to investigate the composing processes of both young and novice composers. Kennedy (1999) conducted a comparison study of a student aged 17, and a composition doctoral student aged 25. In analysing the similarities and differences in their approaches he found that the younger student used the *exploratory* phase throughout her composing, thus illustrating a potential difference between adult and student composing.

2.2.2 Novice and Student Models of Composing

Kratus (1989; 1995; 2001) tracked the composing activities of children, analysing four-stages of: *exploration, development, repetition*, and *silence*. Expanding this, Kennedy (2002) developed a six-stage model of composing based on a study of four adolescents:

1. Listening as preparation
2. Thinking
3. Listening as stimulation and inspiration
4. Experimenting stage
5. Developing
6. Finishing off

(Kennedy, 2002: 105)

By using Wallas' (1926) four-stage model of creativity, Burnard and Younker (2002, 2004) established a detailed description of six potential composing pathways including *linear, recursive, regulated* (2002), as well as *floater, serial*, and *staged* (2004). These descriptors were created through comparisons of participants who came from a range of backgrounds, cultures, countries and ages (Burnard and Younker, 2004). Burnard and Younker (2002, 2004) described how the creative pathways specific students took, were diverse. Some students took a more *linear* approach, displaying little fluctuation between stages, as illustrated below:

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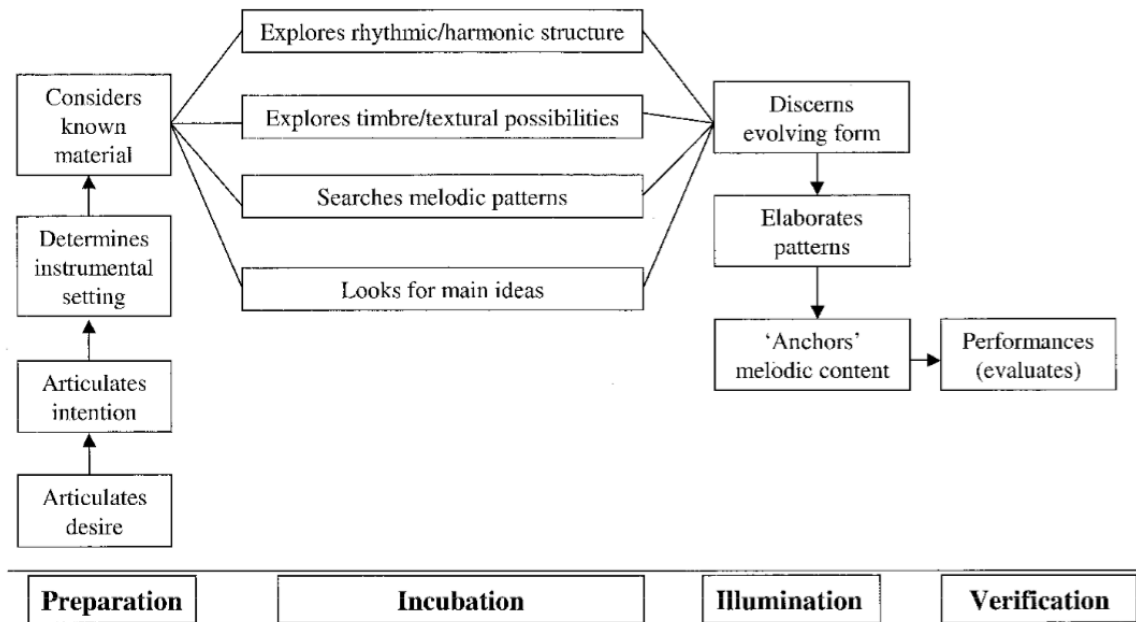
Figure 12: Linear composing pathway (Burnard and Younker, 2002: 255)

In comparison, the students that took a *recursive* pathway were more fluidly between the four stages, specifically between *incubation* and *illumination* (Burnard and Younker, 2002):
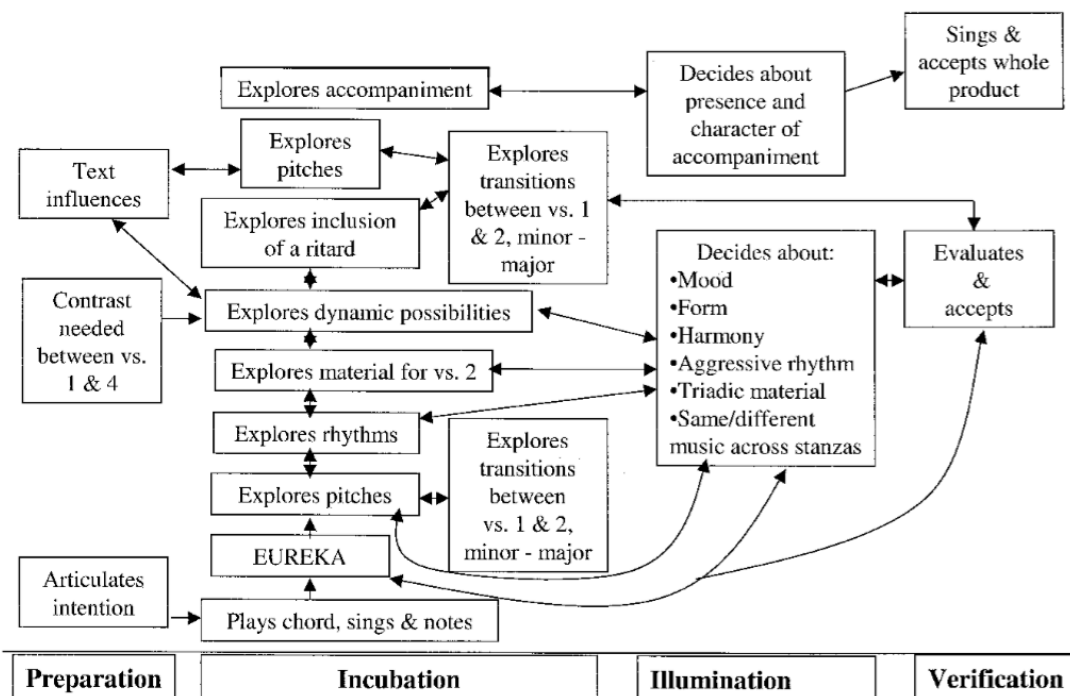
Figure 13: Recursive composing pathway (Burnard and Younker, 2002: 255)

Burnard and Younker's (2002, 2004) research illustrate composing as complex processes, involving different 'types of thinking' (p.59) and practices, and influenced by individual difference:

> …students' individual pathways will vary according to any number of factors, including socio and cultural practices (Burnard and Younker, 2004: 64).

Highlighting the challenges of attempting to create and explain composing in one universal model. The complexities and differences observed in these studies are important for educators to understand when teaching composing.

2.2.3 Group and Collaborative Models of Composing

Fautley (2005) argued that group composing can have a 'different dynamic' (p.42); however, very little research has been conducted in this area (Fautley, 2005; Biasutti, 2012). As group composing is often the most experience students have of composing prior to KS4, it is important to identify if and how, composing in a group context may alter composing, compared to individual composing.

Fautley (2004) categorised group composing processes into three overarching stages: *pre-generative, generative*, and *post-generative*, identifying nine steps:

1. Initial confirmatory phase (ICP): pupils discuss the task.
2. Generation: ideas are produced.
3. Exploration: ideas are explored, and potentialities investigated.
4. Organisation: the ideas explored are placed into some sort of ordering.
5. Work in progress performance (WIPP): can be formal (requested by the teacher) or informal.
6. Revision: material is revisited.
7. Transformation/modification: existing ideas are altered in some way.
8. Extension and development: existing ideas are built on and taken further.
9. Final performance.

(Adapted from Fautley, 2004: 204-205)

Fautley (2005) found that performances were commonplace, with revisions and modifications taking place both verbally and through the performance, and the *work-in-progress* phase recurred most frequently. These stages outlined, are more possible

within group compositions, as students can perform their own compositions; therefore, in excluding this significant phase, this may cause some students difficulty when required to compose individually for the first time at KS4. Biasutti (2012) investigated the composing processes of a professional rock band through videotaping (p.343). Biasutti (2012) highlighted differences between group and individual composing, detailing how certain practices that would normally be an 'internal process' (p.351) in individual composing, became a 'social activity' (p.351) in a group context, such as revising the music. Unlike Fautley's findings, Biasutti (2012) did not find the *work-in-progress* phase to be as common (Biasutti, 2012), potentially highlighting differences between novice and expert composing in groups.

The differences between group and individual composing at KS3 and KS4 raise questions into the purpose and value of group composing. Fautley (2005) questioned if group composing should be viewed as a stepping-stone along the 'novice-expert composing continuum' (p.54), with individual composing being the ultimate goal? Similarly, Salomon (1993) commented:

> One should regard situations of distributed cognition[2] not only as ends in themselves but, more important, as means for improving mastery of solo competencies (p.135).

If processes significantly differ in a group composing context, compared to individual composing, are teachers preparing students to undertake individual composing for their KS4 examinations? And how does this influence students' experience and beliefs about composing?

2.2.4 The Role of Technology in the Composing Process

Technology has become fundamental to the practices of composers (Folkestad, Hargreaves and Lindström, 1998); however, it potentially 'opens up a very different

---

[2] Distributed cognition can support: 'Ideas and thoughts in a group which would probably not have occurred outside the group; thus, discussions in groups can lead to the acquisition of insights which no participants felt they possessed before taking part in the group discussion' (Rasmussen, 2001: 579).

kind of access to the composition process' (Gall and Breeze 2005: 430). As students in this study used technology, it is important to investigate if, and how, technology can alter composing processes. Folkestad, Hargreaves and Lindström (1998) tracked students' progress of composing using technology at different stages, outlining two composing strategies: *horizontal* and *vertical*. Students following a *horizontal* composing process separated the act of composing from arranging, and they often composed 'from beginning to end' (Folkestad, Hargreaves and Lindström, 1998: 88). The role of 'playing, listening and evaluating' (ibid.) was also vital. The *vertical* composing process described how composing and arranging were interrelated. Interestingly, Mellor (2007; 2008) found that students using composing software called Dance eJay, all used a vertical approach to composing. The role of technology in composing, and how it may alter what composing is, will be discussed further in chapter 2.4.

2.3 Assessment in Education: Concerns for Composing and the Arts

Very little research has been conducted into the assessment of composing (Savage and Fautley, 2011), therefore wider literature on assessment has been drawn upon for contextualisation, such as the affects of testing on students and teaching, concerns regarding subjectivity and bias in arts assessment, and changes in assessment policy.

Although assessment should be an integral part of teaching and learning, due to 'over-use' and 'misuse' (Gipps and Stobart, 1993), the term assessment has increasingly become distorted, with many teachers viewing it as independent from teaching and learning (Torrance and Pryor, 1998):

> Certification and selection are artefacts of our social and educational system: they, and the assessments which support them, are not central to the teaching and learning of the individual child (Gipps and Stobart, 1993: 18)

This has become more prevalent with the increased number of examinations and high-accountability measures placed on teachers, due to recent educational policy.

Although Gipps and Stobart, commented in 1993 that: 'pupils currently going through compulsory education in England and Wales will be among the most assessed the state education system has ever produced' (p.1), the amount and significance of assessment in education has continued to rise.

2.3.1 Raising Standards

One of the most significant education policy implementations for this study is the 1980 Education Act, requiring examination results to be published and available to the public. Believing that this would raise standards of teaching (Torrence, 1995), test scores could then be used as performance indicators, making schools and teachers accountable for failures (Gipps and Stobart, 1993). The 1988 Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT) disagreed that summative assessment in itself would raise standards, arguing that:

> Better formative assessment would be the key, and there was no point in providing assessments at 7, 11 and 14 unless they supported learning through links to formative practice (Black, 1998: 58).

The publicising of test results allowed the general public to make 'comparisons between schools and teachers' (Ball, 1990: 52). This neoliberal free-market model of education saw parents as customers and students as 'the product' (Ball, 1990: 68). Ball (1990) felt that the accountability system took advantage of 'concerned parents' (p.33) trying to do the best for their children:

> Those schools which produce shoddy goods, it is believed, will lose custom. And it would appear that in the government's view shoddy goods mean poor results in national test (Ball, 1990: 68).

Similarly, Broadfoot (1999) identified assessment as a 'vehicle' (p.64):

> …whereby the dominant rationality of the corporate capitalist societies typical of the contemporary Western world is translated into the systems and process of schooling (Broadfoot, 1999: 64).

Thus, outlining the role of assessment as a method of control of those in power. Due to education becoming viewed as a competitive marketplace, Moss (2017) argued that the predominance of test scores as an indication of a school's performance could be biased, thus reinforcing inequality:

> Children do not enter the school system on a level playing field. Without paying attention to the levels of disadvantage reflected in school catchments, a list of the best schools produces a list in which schools with more socially advantaged pupils dominate, rather than schools that genuinely represent the best in teaching and learning (Moss, 2017: 59).

Fautley (2017b) also emphasised how newspapers are often complicit with this and often 'name and shame the "losers"' (p.89).

Ramifications for schools who fall below expected standards can be incredibly high:

> The threat of schools being placed under new management if they do not meet benchmark standards is now enshrined in law (Moss, 2017: 62).

> Unpopular schools cannot continue to decline in numbers without severe implications for the standard of educational provision for their remaining students (Torrance, 1995b: 149).

Mansell (2007) commented that teachers are 'forced not merely to pay attention to results' but that 'they live and die by them' (p.14), which he termed 'hyper accountability' (ibid.). Ball (2003b) believed that this process could be used to change the behaviours of teachers, which he defined as 'performativity':

> A technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attribution and change - based on rewards and sanctions (Ball, 2003b: 216).

As this study took place within a high accountability landscape, assessment practices can be viewed as a form of control and a way of monitoring and changing teachers' behaviours. Ball (2003b) argued that high accountability has altered 'what it means to be a teacher' (p.217). One consequence of 'hyper accountability' (Mansell, 2007: 14) has led teachers to focusing exclusively on getting students to pass national examinations due to fear of adverse consequences (Moss, 2017), as also noted by:

Teachers have long complained that UK education policy relies too heavily on testing to hold schools to account, which fuels the need for teaching pupils to pass those tests (Vaughan, 2015, online).

When national policy encourages judgement of schools and teachers on the basis of the performance of their students on such tests, 'teaching to the test' becomes even more damaging to students' learning experience in school. (Harlen, 2007: 2).

…the fear of poor results, and the associated guilt, shame, or embarrassment, might lead to the desire for their pupils to achieve high scores in whatever way seems possible. This might lead to 'teaching to the test' (Alderson and Wall, 1993: 118).

Mansell (2007) critically questioned if test scores demonstrate school improvement, or if it signalled teachers 'getting better at playing the results 'game'?' (p.3). Torrance (1995) and Eisner (2005) have argued that this comes at a cost for 'real' education (Torrance, 1995a: 4):

The pressures towards accountability…are pressures that many teachers dislike…due to the uneasy feeling that…it doesn't quite fit the educational facts with which they live and work (Eisner, 2005: 53).

A system essentially geared to market accountability as the mechanism for school improvements, rather than improvements in teaching being brought about by improvements in assessment *per se* (Torrance, 1995b: 149).

Thus raising questions regarding the validity of the tests, and therefore the teaching. This helps to explain some of the pressures placed on school leaders to achieve targets and the repercussions for schools deemed as failing, and why funding streams may be directed towards subjects that schools are measured on, such as literacy and numeracy. The stress associated with high-stakes assessment (Gipps and Stobart, 1993) is also a cause for concern regarding stress levels for teachers (Fautley, 2016) involved in this study.

2.3.2 Assessment *of,* and *for* Learning

The TGAT was formed to promote a wider understanding of assessment practices, making clear distinction between assessment *of* learning (summative assessment), and assessment *for* learning (formative assessment), aiming to champion the use of formative assessment in schools (Black, 1998). Black and Wiliam (2003) stated that the terms formative and summative assessment, refer 'not to the assessments themselves, but to the functions they serve' (p.623). Summative assessment, or assessment *of* learning, is commonly conducted towards the end of study as a means of measurement and for certification (Torrance and Pryor, 1998). Results are 'used for reporting achievement *after* learning has taken place' (Harlen, 2012a: 88). The most frequent form of summative assessment is testing, which can range from high-stakes national examinations, through to small-scale classroom testing used to monitor attainment over time. Although the use of testing can be 'an invaluable guide to learning' (Black and Wiliam 2001: 8), there is a danger that teachers rely too heavily on grades and marks, which in isolation do not help students to improve.

Formative assessment, also known as assessment *for* learning, is an ongoing process and integral to the learning process (Fautley and Colwell, 2012). Black *et al.* (2005) commented that assessment can aid learning:

> …if it provides information to be used in feedback by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves and each other, to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes formative assessment when the evidence is used to adapt the teaching work to meet learning needs (p.2).

Fautley and Colwell (2012) expressed how formative assessment should be 'individualised and personalised', involving 'taking a specific learner or group of learners forward in their own music making' (p.481). Examples of formative assessment practices include: questioning, feedback through marking, peer- and self-assessment and the formative use of summative tests (Black *et al.*, 2005). Fautley and Savage (2007) commented that formative assessment practices were appropriate for assessing creative processes, such as composing. This because summative assessment often prioritises the finished product or score, but formative takes into account the

processes involved. A major concern is that due to accountability pressures on schools and teachers 'little genuine formative assessment' is taking place in schools (Harlen and James, 1997: 365). High-stakes assessments, such as those in this study, are viewed as 'not fully consistent with good formative practices' (Black *et al*., 2005: 56).

Although formative assessment has been a longstanding and integral part of music teaching, Fautley (2010) believed that it had become distorted and disrupted. Fautley and Savage (2011a) discovered that teachers were unclear about formative assessment practices for composing at KS3. When summative assessments are used to support students' understanding of their ability, this is termed 'formative use of summative assessment'; however some teachers use 'formative strategies to aid preparation for summative assessments' (Black *et al*., 2005: 53). Relationships between summative and formative assessment are complex (Harlen and James, 1997) and Harlen (2012a) questioned the dichotomisation suggesting that they should be thought of 'in terms of a dimension of purposes and uses' (p.88).

2.3.3 Consequences of Testing

The negative consequences of testing have been long debated. Over 50 years ago Wiseman (1961) summarised the key negative effects testing can have on students and teachers. In the US, the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing warned that testing 'can cause considerable harm' (AERA, 2014: 1). In this study, three main consequences of testing are considered for composing at KS4 and KS5:

1. Altering students' perceptions of learning and of themselves
2. Encouraging teachers to teach to the test
3. Encouraging curriculum washback

Altering Perceptions

Testing has been criticised as simplifying the learning process and 'dull[ing] the message about the means to improve, replacing it with information about successes

and failures' (Black *et al.*, 2005: 56). Similarly, research conducted by Harlen (2007) found that students became fixated on the notion of right and wrong due to testing:

> Students liked tests because they gave a clear-cut measure of progress based on 'right' or 'wrong' (Harlen, 2007: 42).

Boden (2001) identified students being focused on obtaining the right answer, and the right way of finding it, thus discouraging divergent thinking. This is problematic in a creative activity such as composing, where the concept of "right" and "wrong" do not exist in objective forms. Harlen (2012b) warns that students may start 'viewing their effort in terms of 'performance' rather than 'learning', thus focusing on 'shallow' rather than 'deep' learning (p.176). This can lead to a distorted view to the purpose of education, with students concentrating on passing the examinations rather than 'realising the usefulness and interest of what is being learned' (Harlen, 2012b: 173), and also lowering the perceived real-world usefulness of composing and instead viewing it as a way to pass the KS4 and KS5 music examinations.

Examination scores can influence how teachers, adults and peers think about students (Gipps and Stobart, 1993: 24):

> Tests transform people by assigning them to various categories (Hanson, 2000: 294).

Labelling can also have a significant influence on a young person's identity as they may 'learn to judge themselves by their grades' (Robinson, 2001: 51). This can have a detrimental effect on self-belief and motivation:

> …they expect to get low marks next time, and this is accepted as part of a shared belief between them and their teacher that they are just not clever enough (Black and Wiliam, 2001: 12).

A small-scale study by Reay and Wiliam (1999) investigating KS2 students' perceptions, discovered that performance in the tests was 'accepted and internalised' (p.346). This creates significant concerns regarding how students recognise their own abilities, self-belief, and confidence in composing due to the marking and assessment.

Teaching to the Test and Washback

As discussed extensively by Wiseman (1961) and Harlen (2007, 2012), testing can cause teachers to focus on transmitting relevant examination knowledge to students, to ensure that they 'excel in the purely examinable side' of education, thus diverting 'attention from those parts of education which cannot be tested by the process of examination' (Wiseman, 1961 in, Nuttall, 2017: 41). When testing and examinations dominate classroom teaching practices, the phrase "teaching to the test" (TTT) is often used. This term is commonly used in media headlines:

> UK among world's worst for 'teaching to the test (Vaughan, 2015: online).
>
> Pupils do better at school if teachers are not fixated on test results (Shepherd, 2010: online).
>
> Too many teachers 'teaching to the test' (Jozefkowicz, 2016: online).

Some researchers have also discussed how TTT may influence composing and composing processes. Francis (2012) commented that students learn how to compose examination pieces rather than being a 'freethinking composer' (p.166). Fautley and Savage (2011b) termed this 'examination composing' (p.149), with Francis (2012) warning that teaching may focus on a 'one-size-fits-all approach' (Francis, 2012: 166). This discussion raises questions regarding how examination composing may create a form of composing phenomenon that only passes the examination, but does not exist outside the classroom in professional practice. This in turn questions the validity of what is being taught and learnt.

Another practice found within this study was washback, also known as backwash. Washback takes place when 'teachers and learners do things they would not necessarily otherwise do because of a test' (Alderson and Wall, 1993: 117). Green (2013) also defined backwash as 'the impact that a test has on the teaching and learning done in preparation for it' (p.40). When teachers exclusively teach 'what that assessment measures and not teach other, untested skills and activities' (Gipps and Stobart, 1993: 24), this is known as 'curriculum backwash' (ibid.). High-stakes examinations often demonstrate a greater degree of washback (Alderson and Wall, 1993). Research in the field of linguistics and languages uncovered that testing can

lead to 'distorting' the curriculum (Vernon, 1956, in Cheng and Curtis, 2008: 9) and 'testing devices' can become 'teaching and learning devices' (Davies, 1968 in Cheng and Curtis, 2008: 9), thus limiting and narrowing the learning taking place. Recently many schools have introduced a three, and even four-year GCSE courses (Spalding, 2017: online). Daubney and Mackrill (2017) highlighted concerns with the number of schools only offering music as an option at year 9, increasing dramatically:

> In 2012/13 Year 9 Music was compulsory for all students in 84% of schools but by 2015/16 it had dropped to 67%. Then in 2016/17 it decreased further to 62% of schools teaching music to all students in Year 9 (p.2).

Thus, raising further questions into equality of opportunity and the purpose of music education at KS3.

2.3.4 Reliability and Validity

There are complex debates in education research regarding the reliability and validity of assessment and testing. Validity and reliability are crucial in examinations and both are interlinked:

> …no assessment can have any validity at all if the mark a student gets varies radically from occasion to occasion, or depends on who does the marking (Wiliam: 2001: 21).

Reliability in testing refers to 'consistency as a basis for comparability' (Gipps, 1995: 112), thus a reliable test should 'provide a sample of an examinee's behaviour on performance in a specified domain' (AERA, 2014: 33). Gipps and Stobart (1993) outline four areas where reliability should be considered when designing an assessment:

1. The designation of the curricular model of the area tested
2. Question design, standardisation and selection
3. Administration and marking
4. Interpretation of the score

(Gipps and Stobart, 1993: 21)

Ways to raise reliability in examinations include: improving the items included in the tests, making the marking more consistent, making the scope of the test narrower, and making the test longer (Wiliam: 2001: 19). However, Black and Wiliam (2012) warn that 'no test is perfectly reliable' (p.245), and 'no measuring instrument is perfect' (Wiliam, 2001: 17).

Validity is concerned with whether a 'test does indeed measure what it is intended to measure' (Broadfoot, 1995: 10) and the degree to which a test 'measures that it purports to measure' (Smith and Wright, 1926 in Sireci, 2016: 227). The Standards for Educational Psychological Testing state that validity is 'the most fundamental consideration in developing tests' (AERA, 2014: 11). However, there is a surprising lack of research in the validity of school testing, with A-level assessment being significantly under-researched (Gipps and Stobart, 1993). Even though A-level examinations have been termed 'narrow' and 'overly academic' they still act as 'the passport to university education' (Gipps and Murphy, 1994: 243). Some higher education institutions have now become aware of the lack of validity in national examinations:

> Universities are well aware that many students have spent years 'chasing grades... learned how to pass examinations rather than how to become independent learners... (Harlen, 2007: 45).

The introduction of coursework came about due to concerns about validity (Gipps and Murphy, 1994: 217), in an attempt to make examinations more 'practical, realistic and challenging' (Torrance, 1995a: 1). Research found that many teachers learned to 'bend the rules' (Mansell, 2007: 69), thus raising further issues into reliability and validity.

Types of Validity

There have been 'long debates about the meaning of validity' (Sireci, 2016: 226) and a considerable number of sub-categories and definitions have been produced (Newton, 2013). Fautley and Colwell (2012) outlined four types of validity in the

music classroom, of which construct validity and consequential validity are particularly important to this study:

- Consequential validity: refers to the consequences that assessment 'can have on learners, teachers, systems and society'
- Construct validity: refers to 'an abstract item…which should be understood and uniquely definable'

(Adapted from Fautley and Colwell, 2012)

The positive and negative effects that testing can have on teaching and learning can be referred to as consequential validity or washback validity (Messick, 1996). Some argue that examinations inevitably influence teaching; therefore, tests should reflect 'the full range of desired learning goals' (Harlen, 2012a: 88), and Messick (1996) believed that 'nothing irrelevant' (p.244) should be added to an examination, suggesting that many aspects of validity in a test need consideration.

Construct validity refers to how an examination reflects the construct or domain it is purporting to measure; therefore, low construct validity in a test 'fails to capture important aspects of the construct' (AERA, 2014: 11). Haladyna and Downing (2004) regarded 'defining' the construct as 'the most fundamental step in validity' (p.17); however, Daugherty *et al.* (2012) found that constructs were rarely 'critically explored or closely defined' (p.76). Sefton-Green (2000) highlighted that school subjects contain 'bounded knowledge of subject disciplines' (p.1):

> A key element of making sense of our education system then, is how subject disciplines define ability in their subject; that is to say, how a student's progress can be measured and recorded to demonstrate control of any particular field of knowledge (Sefton-Green, 2000: 2).

Embedded within all subjects is an assumption of what progress and knowledge should look like. Contradictory to this is that in the professional world, boundaries between subjects are commonly blurred and even disregarded:

> Much of contemporary art practice; however, is characterised by a lack of allegiance to a particular medium and a turning away from, or a mistrust of, craft skill…in spite if these quite profound changes in the outside art world,

art and design teaching experienced by many school children is still based on older pedagogies (Raney and Hollands, 2000: 20).

The quote above highlights how aspects valued in the professional art field are not always filtered down into the school environment, instead potentially relying on outdated teaching methods and beliefs. Another example of this was highlighted by Daugherty *et al.*, (2012) describing the separation between 'school mathematics', 'academic mathematics' and 'functional mathematics' (p.77), each with different perspectives, purposes, skills and knowledge. Questioning the real-world application of composing in the classroom is important in the context of this study as it influences the validity of the assessment and the usefulness of what students are being taught. Therefore, if *school-composing* and *examination-composing* contain very different practices to the majority of how professional composers work, students will be unequipped to work within the professional field. Thus, raising further questions as to the purpose of composing at KS4 and KS5?

2.3.5 Assessment in the Arts

One of the most prevalent questions asked in the arts is whether assessment can, or should, take place:

> There is a notion that everything that exists, exists in some quantity and can therefore be measured (Hickman, 2007: 77).

> Assessment seeks to objectify and define, and when applied to art, it tends to regulate and constrain an activity which is essentially autonomous and open-ended (Rayment and Britton, 2007: 41).

Some authors even considered assessment of creativity to be 'harmful' (Eisner, 2002: 178). Due to the subjectivity and high-stakes involved at KS4 and KS5, research also found that teachers actively discouraged students' from producing creative work and taking risks due to a 'suspicion that examination boards reward 'safe work' (Hickman, 2007: 83). Although Eisner (2002) argued that 'not everything that matters can be measured, and not everything that is measured matters' (p.178), a method of increasing the reliability has been to assess what is 'measurable' (Broadfoot, 1995: 10) and 'quantifiable' (Cantwell and Jeanneret, 2004: 2).

In terms of music education, research has found teachers assess aspects that are deemed easier to assess (Fautley and Colwell, 2012):

> …in efforts to increase reliability, it is all too easy to fall back upon things which are easily assessable, which, whilst probably reliable, are not necessarily valid in measuring aspects of musical learning (Fautley, 2010: p.26-27).

> …formal assessment has hindered and distorted work in the secondary classroom through laying too much emphasis on what is easily examinable, regardless of its relevance as musical experience (Aspin, 1986, in Spruce, 2002: 123).

Spruce (1996) and Francis (2012) raised similar concerns warning that music education can become distorted:

> …through its inevitable interest in what is measurable it can lead to a one-size-fits-all approach. The composition…is transformed into the product and evidence of knowledge (Francis, 2012: 165-166).

Similarly, Hickey (1999) recommended that use of both 'abstract' and 'concrete components' of composing should be assessed, thus encouraging students to think 'holistically' about their music making (p.28). This is important to this study, as what should be in the marking criteria for composing at KS4 and KS5 is commonly debated, with some teachers desiring more 'concrete' (Hickey, 1999: 28) and measurable criteria. However, Spruce (1999) warns that this can result in teaching and learning being skewed:

> …the main danger of an assessment model that is too rigidly criteria-related, is that the process will become fragmented…every mark can be justified, but at the cost of missing the point of the musical exercise (Spruce, 1996: 175).

Fautley and Savage (2007) comment that aspects that are viewed as more difficult to assess reliably, such as creativity, 'tend to be underrepresented in grading systems in public examinations' (p.70) with more 'straightforward' practices being preferred (Salaman, 1988: 5). Thus, having detrimental effects of the validity of the examination.

Process or Product

A key debate in arts assessment is whether the final product should be assessed, or whether the process is equally, or more important, and therefore should be included in the assessment. This is especially the case with composing:

> There is a long-standing dichotomy in music education as to whether the process of composing is assessed, or whether assessment is that of the product which results (Savage and Fautley, 2011: 146).

In the current English examination system, only the final product (score and recording) is marked. Currently only a couple of national examinations acknowledge the creative process to some extent[3], such as Art and Design (OCR, 2012a; AQA, 2015) and A-level Drama and Theatre Studies (OCR, 2012b; AQA, 2016).

Savage and Fautley (2011) collected the opinions of KS4 music teachers and found that there was a strong focus on assessing the final product due to it being perceived as 'easier to measure' (p.147). Similarly, KS3 composing assessments also excluded assessing the composing process, and instead were 'based on performance of the composition' (Savage and Fautley, 2011: 63). There was little enthusiasm for assessing the composing processes at GCSE as teachers were concerned it would increase their workload and the amount of written work for students (Savage and Fautley, 2011). This would likely be a an even bigger concern for teachers at KS4 and KS5.

Some teachers have argued that an emphasis on process can lead to the product being rendered as unimportant (Hickman, 2007), and Spruce (1996, 2006) commented that both process and product should be considered in assessment:

> …the aim of any process – and particularly a creative process – is the production of an artefact, and it is arguably naïve to attempt to remove this from the assessment equation (Spruce, 1996: 174).

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[3] In a recent draft specification for the new GCSE examinations, AQA (2015) proposed a maximum of 6 marks could be awarded to the process, through completing a composing log 'once at the beginning, at an interim point and once at the end' (p.28). This was taken out of the final version in 2016.

Subjectivity in Composing Assessment

Some argue that subjectivity is integral to the arts (Heyfron, 1986; Raney and Hollands, 2000). If subjectivity is inevitable in the assessment of composing at KS4 and KS5, more investigation is need to uncover how this may influence marking. External moderation was brought into GCSE with the aim of increasing reliability:

> …to monitor the quality of assessment and to ensure that it is fair, to see that procedures are adhered to, and to check on interpretations… (Radnor and Shaw, 1995: 124).

Simmonds (1988) conducted a study using consensual assessment techniques, asking a panel of music teachers to rate five different styles of music composed by students. The results showed that there was subjectivity in the marking with teachers relying on a 'gut reaction' (Simmonds, 1988: 25). The experiment discussed the difficulty of assessing a wide range of musical styles finding that 'the most traditional in style of the five compositions consistently scored the highest marks' (Simmonds, 1988: 29-30). Potential bias in testing may be due to cultural differences:

> Subjective judgments can be particularly difficult when the examinee and the markers do not share a common cultural heritage…Although training and monitoring of markers can help minimize threats of bias resulting from influence of irrelevant factors (Gipps and Murphy, 1994: 27).

Gipps and Stobart (1993) also commented that 'the distribution of examination success is persistently linked to social class, gender and race' (Gipps and Stobart, 1993: 8). As students come from a range of backgrounds and compose in different musical styles, bias within composing examinations is a major concern.

Cantwell and Jeanneret (2004) questioned if there are 'common elements' that make up a 'good composition' across different genres of music (p.3) such as the use of harmony, melody, or structure. Green (2000) considered two types of assessment for composing; first the use of criteria that are specific and tailored to a musical genre, and second the use of a universal set of criteria that encompass and cover all styles of music. The idea of universal criteria promotes the notion there is a set of ubiquitous rules that make music successful and these are measurable. Although UK examination

boards accept any style of music for composing, they are assessed against universal criteria. Green (2000) argues that using universal criteria does 'not provide assessment criteria for composition that are tailored to suit particular styles of music' (p.102). Instead she questioned the use of genre specific criteria where the composition would be 'considered in terms of how well or how poorly it represented that style' (Green, 2000: 102). It has been argued that certain styles, such as rock and popular music, do not contain the same degree of technicality or difficulty as jazz or classical music. Green (2000) questioned why compositions are not assessed 'according to the level of difficulty considered to be involved in its composition' (p.101), as with performance examinations:

> …criteria vary to some extent depending on the instrument played and on the particular genre and style of the music (Green, 2000: 97).

Green (2000) argued for use of 'style-specific criteria' as well as 'difficulty multipliers' that would allow students to stick to 'stylistic norms' (p.103) without being disadvantaged in the marking.

Group Composing

Although group composing is commonplace in KS3 music classrooms (Glover, 2000; Savage and Fautley, 2011), it is prohibited at GCSE and A-level. Interestingly, the English A-level Drama includes a unit requiring students to devise a piece of theatre and 'share corporate responsibility' (AQA, 2013a: 12) and recent reforms of the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) in New Zealand, have also allowed group and collaborative composing as a viable assessment option for candidates. Thorpe (2012) undertook extensive research into this, highlighting a number of challenges, including students not feeling confident that their teacher acknowledged their individual contributions.

Researchers have called for an increased awareness of collaborative creativity (Lucas, 2001; Craft, Cremin and Burnard, 2008) and an 'abandoning on exclusive focus on individual creative capabilities' (Steiner, 2009: 5). Oral (2008) argues that the focus on individualistic forms of creativity come from a 'cultural belief system' (p.5) based

on a westernised view of creativity rooted in the concept of the lone creative genius. Group and collaborative composing is also commonplace within professional music making, especially in popular music traditions (Green, 2002; Thorpe, 2012).

2.4 Debates in Composing Pedagogy

Classroom music education has evolved significantly over the last century (Spruce, 1996), altering the perceived educational purposes and value of music as a school subject:

> Music is one of the oldest of curriculum subjects but there has always been divided opinion over its educational value (Plummeridge, 2001: 29).

With the invention of the gramophone, music appreciation was commonplace, focusing on listening and analysing the works of Western classical composers. This aimed to impose 'a set of cultural values and practices' on pupils (Swanwick, 1988: 10). Due to the availability of cheaper tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments (Rainbow, 1996), there was a move towards practical musical engagement (Cox, 2001). This allowed students not to just inherit musical culture (Swanwick, 1988), but to actively participate in music making 'as musicians' (Mills, 2005: 1).

During the 1960s and 1970s there was a significant shift towards creative music making in schools (Mills, 2005). Composers such as Paynter, Dennis and Schafer promoted the 'practices of composers' (Finney, 2011: 53) and revolutionary teaching resources were published, such as: 'New Sounds in Class' (Self, 1967), 'The New Soundscape' (Schafer, 1969), 'Sound and Silence' (Paynter and Aston, 1970), 'Experimental Music in School' (Dennis, 1970), and 'Sound and Structure' (Paynter, 1992). These resources advocated for 'active involvement with music' (Paynter, 1992: 6). Their progressive views challenged traditional notions and beliefs about music in schools:

> Lessons which were once dominated by passive listening and the didactic imparting of information, are now characterized by the involvement of children in performing, composing and related listening and appraising.

Children now learn about music through actively engaging with it (Spruce, 1996: 1).

Thus, viewing students as 'musical inventors, improvisers, composers' (Swanwick, 1988: 14) in their own right:

Paynter and Aston's approach...focused on the belief that all children possessed the capacity to be as artists (Finney, 2011: 52).

A change of emphasis from children being instructed to children being placed in situations where they can learn for themselves (Paynter and Aston, 1970: 5).

These developments echoed the shift in educational policy encouraging a 'child-centred' approach to learning as promoted by the seminal 1967 Plowden Report.

These advancements made by composer-educators were 'crucial' (Laycock, 2005: 75) for embedding composing in schools. In 1988, composing became a required and assessed part of the music GCSE and a statutory part of the music National Curriculum, something Mills (2005) called: 'one of the most significant developments in the history of UK music education over the last century' (p.36). Nevertheless, composing in school had 'a rocky start' (Mills, 2005: 37), and teaching approaches were not 'universally accepted' (Spruce, 1996: 1). The introduction of composing into the music GCSE in 1988 was viewed as 'controversial' (Kratus, 1990: 33) and Swanwick (1988) described 'conflicting philosophies' (p.2) with creative composing in schools. Cox (2001) explained how opinions of creative music making varies:

On the one hand, there was a feeling of exhilaration in developing the innovatory ideas stemming from the Schools Council secondary music project, but, on the other hand, there was a mood of desperation (p.15).

Many teachers felt unable to support students with unfamiliar compositional techniques such as graphic scores (Laycock, 2005; Rainbow, 1996). As a result of these issues outlined, what Mills (2005) called 'bizarre practices' (p.38) of teaching composing developed. This resulted in many teachers feeling underprepared for teaching composing at KS4 and KS5.

2.4.1 Teacher Identity and Confidence

As discussed above, with the introduction of composing to the GCSE, many teachers felt 'daunted' (Mills, 2005: 37) about the prospect of teaching composing, believing they lacked necessary skills, knowledge and experience to teach it (Webster, 2003; Hickey, 2012; Winters, 2012). Winters (2012) found that composing was the 'least confidently facilitated and supported (and perhaps misunderstood)' (p.19) in school music teaching. Other researchers also raised concerns into the lack of composing experiences, skills and training amongst music teachers (Sheridan and Byrne, 2002; Mills, 2005; Barrett, 2006; Francis, 2012; Lewis, 2012; Winters, 2012). One explanation for this lack of confidence is that many classroom music teachers' musical experiences are based in classical performance (Odam, 2000; Sheridan and Byrne, 2002; Barrett, 2006). The National Association of Music Educators (NAME) discovered that very few teachers identified as a composer, feeling that they were 'unclear about the composing process' (2000: 8). Winters (2012) argued that the 'predominance of teacher identity as a performer' (p.21) could lower confidence and belief in their ability to teach composing (Lewis, 2012). The dichotomising of composers and performers may lead to a narrowing view of music:

> Western society generally pigeonholes the musician into separate categories (composer, performer and theoretical/historical expert) and this is promoted in an education system where these categories are so often taught as discrete and only loosely related subjects (Lewis, 2012: 153).

Current published literature also suggests that teacher-training courses are not fully able to support music teachers with limited previous composing experience:

> The multiplicity of skills needed by the teacher in teaching composing are not easily or quickly learnt and are very challenging to many trainees (Odam, 2000: 119).

The shortage of teaching resources was also a concern in the literature (Mills, 2005; Hickey, 2012). Francis (2012) reflected on how resources from examination boards could be 'enormously influential in the conception of what composition is in school' (p.164) and that teachers with limited composing experiences may overly rely on examination criteria as a teaching method, thus heavily influencing what students learn and experience themselves:

> Without much experience of composing outside examination courses, it might be easy to place the gaining of good marks according to generic assessment criteria as a primary reason for teaching composing. Perhaps, in these circumstances, it is unsurprising that so many students leave school not wanting to compose, not valuing composing for itself (Francis, 2012: 164).

Francis (2012) argues that these bad experiences of composing at examination level could be a reason why many students do not continue to compose out of school. If true, this is concerning as potential creative musicians and composers may be discouraged from composing in the future.

In this study, music teachers were required to support students through KS4 and KS5 composing, therefore a lack of previous experience or training of composing could be a serious concern for teaching and learning of composing. Although the lack of confidence reported by some music teachers in the studies published should be a major concern, caution in generalising these findings should be considered. Since the introduction of composing in 1988 many music teachers have gone through the current music education system where composing plays an equal part. Therefore, more music teachers have had experience of composing in school compared to teachers involved in the earlier studies investigating confidence and identity.

2.4.2 Theories of Progression

There are ongoing debates regarding progression of composers and of composing skills. Understanding how composers develop is important for teachers supporting students, and for examination boards designing marking criteria. Swanwick and Tillman's (1986) Spiral of Musical Development (see figure 14) is one of the few models of compositional development:
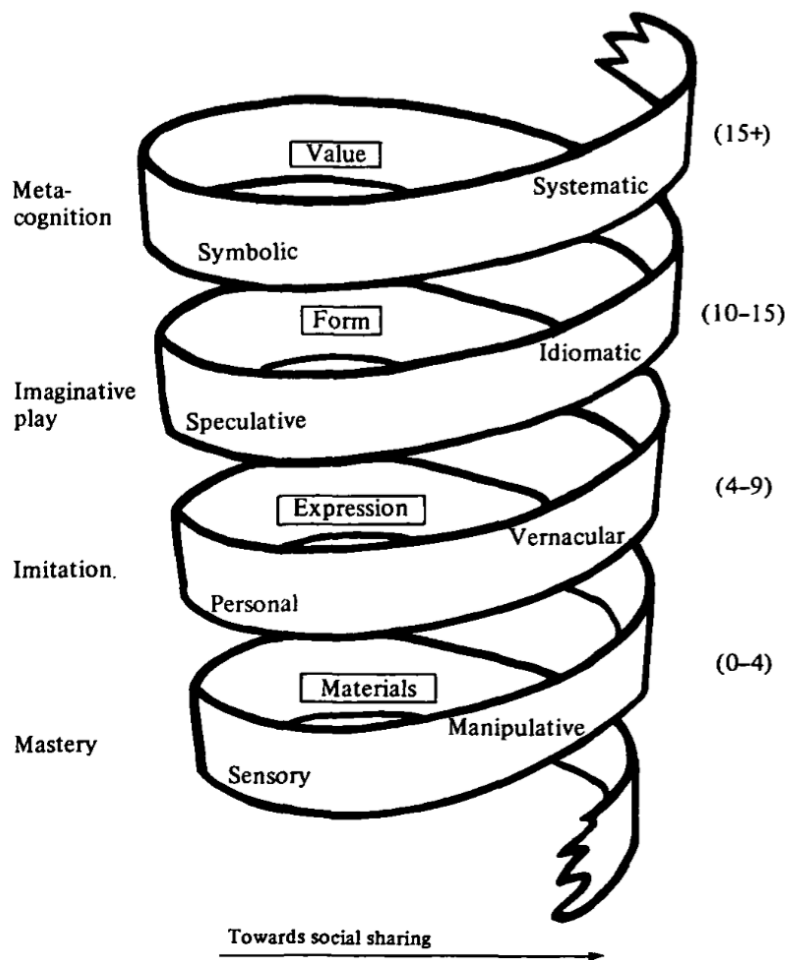
Figure 14: Spiral of musical development (Swanwick and Tillman, 1986: 331)

Swanwick and Tillman's (1986) research, rooted in developmental psychology, gave participants aged between 3-15, a series of compositional tasks to undertake individually or in a small group, using data from over 700 compositions to develop the spiral. Children moved up the spiral occurring to age, starting with the *sensory* stage where children experiment with sound, moving onto the *manipulative* stage once children gain more technical control. The *personal* and *vernacular* stages occur when children start creating more gestural music using patterns and repetition, something. The *speculative* and *idiomatic stages* signify students moving towards specific styles of music (Swanwick and Tillman, 1986) and the final two stages, *symbolic* and *systematic,* require self-awareness, thus reflecting 'the fully fledged musical person' (Swanwick and Tillman, 1986: 334). Not only does the spiral move upwards but it also moves from left to right:

…representing a move from the more individual and personal to the schematised and social, therefore those on the right are guided more towards musical conventions (Swanwick and Tillman, 1986: 334).

Kratus (1989) also investigated developmental stages by asking students aged 7, 9 and 11, to compose a melody on a keyboard starting with the note "middle C". Kratus (1989) then investigated and compared the amount of time the students took on various activities. The results present distinct developmental differences in how students composed, with younger students spending most of their time in the *exploration* stage, compared to older students who spent more time in the *development* stage.

Whilst much of this research aims to identify, isolate, and measure distinct stages, it may ignore musical learning in a broader sense. Swanwick (2008) argued that this psychometric view of musical development may have influenced music in schools, causing the curriculum to become 'atomised' (p.224). Swanwick and Tillman (1986) highlighted that issues in generalising the finding of one school to all children, and they commented that the original research did not have significant data from students aged over 11 or 12. Mills (2002) also warned against viewing the spiral model as bona fide, stating:

> …we should be testing the spiral, not using it as a frame of reference. We should also be open to other ways of thinking about children's composing (p.87).

From the research outlined, it is clear that there are still significant gaps in knowledge of composing progression. This may help to understand why teachers struggle to support students if there is a general lack of understanding into compositional development.

Instrumental Proficiency

There has been some enquiry into the relationship between instrumental skills and composing ability. Seddon and O'Neill (2003) found that there were differences in composing strategies between those who had received formal instrumental music

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tuition, and those who had not, finding those who had lessons spent less time exploring ideas. One explanation for this was that students with formal instrumental music tuition adhered more closely to the 'musical parameters associated with traditional notions of musical form and structure' (Seddon and O'Neill 2003: 132). Seddon and O'Neill (2003) indicated that instrumental lessons had influenced students' self-image and they may have felt under more pressure to conform. Similarly, Mellor (2008) observed how students with formal instrumental tuition seemed more reluctant to explore creative ideas:

> …the one participant who had received the most formal instrumental training not only produced the most convergent composition, he also held the most fixed view about 'dance music' not being a creative medium (Mellor, 2008: 468).

However, in a subsequent study Seddon and O'Neill (2006) found that students with instrumental tuition showed high levels of 'exploratory behaviour' (p.279) whilst composing, thus contradicting their previous research. Therefore, correlation between instrumental proficiency and composing skills still remain unclear.

Teacher Intervention and Task Setting

Lupton and Bruce (2010) asked 'can composing be taught?' (p.272), questioning the importance and role of the teacher. Traditionally composing pedagogies have been based on an expert-apprentice model of teaching, relying on one-to-one 'individual instruction provided by an eminent composer-teacher' (Barrett, 2006: 196). The roles and relationships between teacher and learner during the composing process are an important part of a composer's development. Webster (2003) argued against intervening in young peoples' composing stating it as: 'a violation of their rights as composers' (p.244), and warned it can result in students being 'told what to do' (ibid.), thus becoming too reliant upon the teacher. Others contend that teacher intervention is vital for young and novice composers:

> Imagine how anxious students would feel if they were asked to compose a piece of music, with no guidelines except that it be something good, knowing that is will be graded. This is not only unfair to students, but also difficult to do! (Hickey, 2012: 17).

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Kennedy (2002) acknowledged the role of teacher suggesting appropriate times for intervention, including during the start and end of the composing process. Towards the end of the composing process he suggested teachers should assist in 'crafting and revising' (Kennedy, 2002: 106). Contrary to this, Wiggins (2005) found that advice was not 'welcomed' (p.36) by students at the end of the composing process, especially when it implied they had 'not done the work properly or met the teacher's expectations' (ibid.). Fautley (2004) identified eight parts of the composing process and compared the frequency of teacher intervention against the different stages:
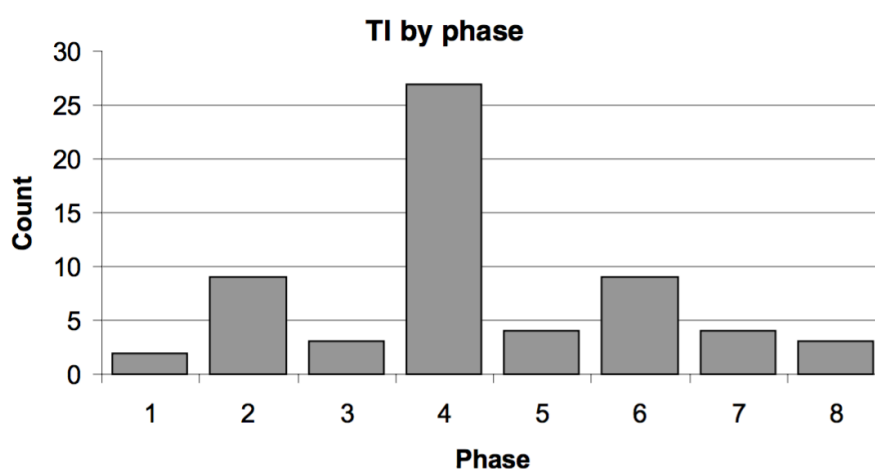
Figure 3 Teacher interventions (TI) in each phase.

Key to phases 1: ICP; 2: Generation; 3: Exploration; 4: Organization 5: WIPP; 6: Revision; 7: Transformation and modification; 8: Extension and development

Figure 15: Frequency of teacher intervention through the stages of composing (Fautley, 2004: 213)

The findings showed that teacher intervention was most prevalent during the *organisation* (stage 4) phase of composing. From the contrasting results of the studies discussed, it is unclear when teacher intervention is best placed.

Fautley (2004) analysed the discourses of teachers and logged the frequency of intervention strategies, discovering that *transactive questioning* was most frequent. Similarly, Barrett (2006) listed 12 possible strategies for supporting the teaching of composing, of which questioning was an important part. The role of questioning is fundamental in classroom teaching (Kinsella and Fautley, 2017). Wiggins (2005) recommended that questioning may help students to understand 'decisions composers and performers make' (p.40) Similarly, Webster (2003) promoted the value of

questions in supporting composing, stating that it 'might lead to some important insights about the musical workings of each child's mind' (p.245). However, Kinsella and Fautley (2017) found that much questioning by classroom music teachers was related to task completion.

Another debate raised in the literature was between providing freedom and openness, or creating restrictions and limitations for students' composing. This is an important aspect for composing in this study as students are required to composed to an examination brief in one of their two compositions. Breeze (2009) felt that limitations in composing tasks acted as an aid for students at the start of their compositions, stating they provide 'possibilities and opportunities' (p.216). Similarly, Lewis (2012) found limitations were 'an integral and vital part of the composing process' and an 'exciting challenge' (p.156) for students. Professional composers have also noted the benefits to setting restrictions:

> My freedom will be so much the greater and more meaningful the more narrowly I limit my field of action and the more I surround myself with obstacles (Stravinsky, 1970: 65).

However, imposing too many limitations may result in stifling creativity (Sheridan and Byrne, 2002). Lupton and Bruce (2010), Francis (2012) and Winters (2012), discovered that composing can become a series of technical exercises, taught in a "painting by numbers" approach, if it is too narrowly controlled. Salaman (1988) even took it as far as to argue that when composing tasks eradicated key decision-making by the composer, such as composing Bach Chorales using strict four-part harmony rules, it should not be classed as composing. Therefore, Salaman (1988) believed that effective composing teaching 'must lie somewhere between these two extremes' (p.5), and Webster (2003) hailed that the balance between 'dictating creative content and guiding creative discovery' (p.245) was the key to 'great teaching' (ibid.). However, Sheridan and Byrne (2002) warned that 'open-ended creative tasks' tend to be 'ignored' in examination criteria in favour of 'approaches that provide correct answers' (p.136).

2.4.3 Changes in School Music Ideologies

This study took place during significant change in beliefs and ideology in music education, therefore it is important to note they key changes that have influenced music teaching in the classroom in England to contextual composing at KS4 and KS5. The introduction of popular, world and digital musics into formal classroom teaching, signal a move towards an inclusive and socio-cultural understanding of music education. This was recognised by Green (2001):

> As we enter the new millennium, teachers have become quite accustomed to incorporating all sorts of musical activities into the classroom, involving everyone (Green, 2001: 47).

Rather than being perceived as a way to 'educate children' in music that 'had been written for the edification of an upper-class audience' (Rainbow, 1996: 16), music education was viewed as 'a living force that continues to drive and shape people's lives in so many ways' (Mills, 2005: 5). Green (2002) found that between 1982 and 1998 classical music 'lost its previously hegemonic position' (p.158) in the classroom.

These changes have been contested and labelled as 'a deterioration of traditional high culture' (Vulliamy, 1980: 180), with some claiming it was not worthy of formal study. This was echoed in 2014, when Conservative Schools Minister Nick Gibb, announced a 'more rigorous' GCSE to avoid 'dumbing down' (DfE, 2014, online):

> …the GCSE will be more rigorous…We have tackled that not by dumbing down the A-level, but by increasing the challenge of the GCSE. At GCSE, students now have to read and write staff notation. And at least 1 area of study must contain music from the western classical tradition, better preparing pupils for A-level study and beyond (Gibb, 2016a: online).

Thus presenting the view that classical music and Western Classical Notation (WCN), contain more educational worth and musical value than popular music. The past Conservative Education Secretary, Michael Gove, also held these ideological beliefs, stating:

> Richard Wagner is an artist of sublime genius and his work is incomparably more rewarding – intellectually, sensually and emotionally – than, say, the Arctic Monkeys (Gove, 2011).

This return to what is deemed as traditional forms of teaching and values can be viewed as a way of raising educational standards which Ball (1990) commented on how 'progressivism' can be 'linked to the decline of traditional values' (p.28). Finney (2016) comments on how these ideologies about western classical music continue to disadvantage other forms of music-making:

> …for it was high culture that continued to call the tune, claiming seriousness over the triviality of popular music and setting out the criteria by which all music could be judged. It was serious music that was believed to have transcendent qualities, enabling works of art to be moved to a special realm of aesthetic contemplation and beyond the social milieu of everyday life (Finney, 2016: 11).

Thus raising further concerns regarding the potential for bias in the assessments.

Symbol vs. Sound

The relationship between notation and composing[4] is a much disputed and contested debate amongst music educators (Fautley, 2017a). WCN is often viewed as fundamental to musical learning:

> …a deeply ingrained assumption that music notation is not only key to music learning, but central to music composition (Hickey, 2012: 20).

Mills and McPherson (2009) argue that there has been much misunderstanding of musical literacy as reading and writing WCN. Fautley (2017a) identifies this in the classroom as 'the need to teach western classical stave notation in isolation from other aspects of music' and that this must be done first in 'preparation' (p.123). In this view, many misconceptions have been formed which have influenced pedagogical practices:

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[4] The requirements for notation at GCSE and A-level are outlined in appendix 1.

> Because of this assumption, common mistakes in teaching music composition are to wait to introduce composition until students understand standard notation, or to have students compose only what they are able to notate in standard notation (Hickey, 2012: 20-21).

There has been a considerable drive to understand musical learning in terms of sound (Odam, 1995). Odam (1995) believed that: 'thinking in sound, imagining sound, constructing possible sounds in the head and improvising music' (p.4) should be the starting point of musical learning, with notation coming after. Similarly, Hickey (2012) contended that:

> Music is sounds, and notation provides a means for representing that sound, mostly for the purpose of re-creation by others (pp.20-21).

Price (2012) calls for a 'rounded musical education' in which WCN has a place but does not 'dominate' (p.14). The purpose and role of notation must be questioned as recent developments, such as computer technology, may blur relationships between score and sound.

Teaching Composing in a Digital Age

Wise, Greenwood and Davis (2011) commented that students 'are products of the digital age' (p.118). The developments of digital technology have dramatically transformed ways in which music is performed and composed (Savage, 2012; Green, 2002), re-situating 'musical practices within the world of the digital arts' (Savage, 2005: 331). In this study, the use of technology was prevalent and frequent for composing.

The benefits of using technology in the music classroom have been raised frequently in the literature, including helping to promote an inclusive and 'egalitarian' (Folkestad, Hargreaves and Lindström, 1998: 83) approach to music education (Kardo, 2012). Technology has enabled teachers to accommodate a wide range of music making, thus allowing them to 'meet the diverse needs of their students' (Wise, Greenwood and Davis, 2011: 131). One key argument raised in the literature comments that technology has allowed students who are not 'formally trained'

(Nilsson and Folkestad, 2005: 35), such as receiving instruments lessons, to be able to create their own music:

> …the computer makes it possible for the 'untrained' composer to create music in a similar way as the most skilful composers have done throughout history (Folkestad, Hargreaves and Lindström, 1998: 94).
>
> It can remove the barrier of technical musical skill and allow the children the freedom to draft, revise, experiment and play with his or her compositions in a new way (Reynolds, 2005: 239).
>
> Composition using technology opens up worlds of possibilities…you don't have to be an accomplished pianist to write a beautiful piano solo (Kardo, 2012: 149).

Thus, making previously held beliefs about the skills and knowledge, such as instrumental skills and use of WCN (Wise, 2016), needed to be a composer perhaps not as relevant.

The use of professional and semi-professional technology in the music classroom has enabled students to experience more 'real world' music making (Wise, Greenwood and Davis, 2011), and experiences that are 'culturally relevant' to them outside of the classroom (Gall and Breeze, 2005: 427). Thus, technology integrates music in school with the 'world outside' (Cain, 2004: 216). One of the main benefits of using computer software for composing is that students can listen to what they have composed; however, Ofsted reported disadvantages to this:

> …the particular timbre and characteristics of each instrument were not exploited and the music produced was extremely difficult to play on the instrument chosen (Ofsted, 2009: 35).

Prensky (2010) asserts that 'technology can either help or hinder the educational process' depending on how it is used (p.3). Although composing technology is prevalent in secondary schools, there is very little research into the 'educational practices' of these programmes (Savage, 2010), and their use has often gone unquestioned at GCSE (Savage, 2012: 178).

This drive to modernise has caused some unrest with music educators (Spruce, 1996). Seddon (2006) attributed the reluctance to integrate technology due to a lack of experience and training:

> Many secondary school music teachers are products of the Western classical tradition…These teachers may have difficulty understanding the need to use ICT in the classroom or may accept or welcome its use but not be comfortable to operate in a genre that is foreign to them (Wise, Greenwood and Davis, 2011: 121).

Some apprehension has also stemmed from the belief that technology may undermine fundamental concepts of music education (Cain, 2004; Wise, 2016), thus threatening 'the core values and principles of music education' (Savage, 2012: 178). An example of this in composing is in the use of digital audio workspaces with pre-composed samples or loops, that students can select, move, layer and manipulate.[5] Although commonplace in the professional music world, some educators have criticised this use of pre-recorded musical samples questioning if it constitutes as composing (Gall and Breeze, 2007):

> Does the term 'composing' include manipulating sound samples composed by other people? (Cain, 2004: 217).

Cain (2004) highlighted the difficulties of assessing compositions that use pre-existing samples and loops[6]. In his study of music teachers in New Zealand, Wise (2016) found that teachers were critical of using pre-composed samples, concluding that music teachers needed to 'reassess their assumptions about originality and borrowing' (p.292).

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[5] Students used technology to compose either in the form of a music notation software package, such as Sibelius, or a digital audio workspace (DAW), such as Logic Pro.

[6] Examination boards stated that compositions 'must be their [students] own' (Edexcel, 2013: 43) and 'use of pre- programmed loops or samples' (OCR, 2012c: 46) is not allowed. At A-level, AQA commented that 'where samples are used, it is expected that there will also be a significant amount of original material composed by the candidate' (AQA, 2013b: 9). Thus, highlighting ambiguity.

Some researchers have criticised use of technology in music education as 'conservative', which reinforce 'traditional compositional practices' (Beckstead, 2001: 47), and norms (Beckstead, 2001; Savage, 2012; Wise, 2016):

> The equipment adopted by most schools…is constructed simply to increase efficiency in the production of traditional acoustic music (Beckstead, 2001: 48).

Wise, Greenwood and Davis (2011) questioned the purpose of music technology, asking:

> Is technology a new means of serving traditional goals in music education or can it offer us something different? (Wise, Greenwood and Davis, 2011: 119).

Savage (2010) found that teachers felt they could judge the 'success' of the music when it 'reinforced a traditional approach to music education' (p.90). In light of this, Savage (2007a) defined two main uses of technology in the music classroom as *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*. Savage (2007a) defined an *extrinsic* approach as when technology functioned as a way to support teaching of more traditional musical tasks, viewing technology as an efficiency tool, whereas an *intrinsic* approach led 'to a greater exploration and engagement with sound itself' (Savage, 2007a: 144). Although an *intrinsic* use was more closely related to processes of experimental electro-acoustic composers, Savage (2007a) found that teachers preferred an *extrinsic* approach.

Although technology is commonplace within the music classroom, Ofsted (2009) reported a struggle for music teachers to keep up with the rate of technological advancements. Wise (2016) advocated new and 'radical pedagogical approaches' to accommodate technology fully into the music classroom (p.286), as currently music teachers are 'using the technology to do what they have always done' (p.286), with technology being viewed as a way to save time (Savage, 2007a). Henley (2011) recommended that more research and support, along with a national plan for music technology, was needed.

2.5 Literature Review Summary

As can be observed from the literature review, there is a substantial lack of existing research regarding composing assessment at KS4 and KS5; emphasising the need for this research. Although little published research exists, the literature review has illuminated a wide range issues and concerns relevant and important to the enquiry, helping to contextualise and explain the findings of this research in more detail. As outlined throughout the chapter, there are numerous considerations to take into account when assessing a complex and creative process such as composing. Although formative assessment was considered appropriate for the arts (Eisner, 2002; Fautley and Savage, 2007), research indicates that summative assessment strategies currently dominate (Fautley, 2010; Fautley and Savage, 2011; Fautley and Colwell, 2012), and teachers are unsure how to assess composing formatively and reliably (Fautley and Savage, 2007). The reliability and subjectivity of assessments in arts-based subjects is still under debate, and the validity of assessment practices in music and composing, is significantly under researched. However, there is an argument that subjectivity is an inevitable part of assessment in the arts (Heyfron, 1986; Raney and Hollands, 2000) and Gipps (1994) argued that 'assessment is not an exact science, and we must stop presenting it as such' (p.167). Thus, questioning if assessment in composing can be wholly reliable and valid.

As illustrated throughout the chapter, policy and practice are interlinked (Fautley, 2016) and reforms can have a profound influence on teachers and teaching practices. Colwell (2007) stated that 'policy can hurt as much as it can help' (p.5), which is evident in the recent cuts to funding, reduction in student numbers, and the lowing of the educational worth of music. Although there have been research and campaigns for the inclusion of creative subjects into the EBacc, government have yet to acknowledge any detrimental effects of the EBacc on the arts, to which Fautley and Murphy (2016b) criticised as promoting certain ideology over being 'evidence-informed' (p.131). Although the work of composers, such as Paynter, propelled the way for creative music making in schools, current policy documents and views expressed by politicians in power suggest a return to traditional education values with a focus on knowledge-based learning, thus signalling a move away from the child-

centred and creative pedagogies. With such significant change taking place in the English education system, this emphasises the need for this research to be conducted at this time.

The studies discussed above also outline how teaching practices can be rooted in ideological assumptions about musical learning, and musical value, and differences in composing processes exist based on musical experiences and background. Definitions and beliefs about creativity continue to change, and can mean different things to different people, thus making it a challenge to assess and research. Although research has outlined different types of creative contributions (Sternberg, 2003a; Boden, 2004; Eisner, 2005), and promoted a wider understanding of creativity as a process (Wallas, 1970; Craft, 2000; Webster, 2002; Burnard and Younker, 2004), Lamont and Maton (2010) found that many students still believed that musical talent came from natural innate talents. This is significant to this research as it may mean some teachers and students believe composing cannot be learnt and taught, therefore potentially influencing their own confidence in their ability to compose and teach composing.

3. Methodology

As this research sought to investigate events, behaviours and perspectives taking place in the social world, I drew ideas from interpretivist, constructivist and phenomenological paradigms. The methods used to explore how individuals attribute meaning through interpretations of their lived experiences included case study and survey research. This chapter outlines the rationales behind the research design and approaches taken during the study. Guba and Lincoln (1994) asserted that identifying one's own worldview was a vital part of research. They argued that the research paradigm, defined as a 'systematic set of beliefs' (Guba and Lincoln 1985: 15), guides research and presents the researcher's beliefs on the world, and 'the individual's place' within it (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 107). As 'the concept of truth is an elusive one' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 14), depending on the researcher's paradigm, different research methods and designs will be preferred.

3.1 Research Paradigm

Prevailing views on the nature of truth, reality and the purpose of research, have changed at different points in time (Lincoln and Guba 1985). For many years, quantitative research methods were viewed as the dominant form of research, with experimental research designs viewed as the 'gold standard' (Robson, 2002: 4). Researchers took a positivist and objective outlook on research (Tebblie and Tashakkori, 2009: 5), rooted in investigating cause and effect, as well as testing hypotheses and theories (Watkins and Gioia, 2015, 4). In contrast, qualitative research was viewed in opposition to this, and rather than attempting to find absolute truth and be able to predict behaviour, it attempted to explain the complexities of social life:

> Research cannot provide the mirror reflection of the social world that positivists strive for, but it may provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds (Miller and Glassner, 2004: 126).

These two contrasting views of ontology, continue to be debated as to whether reality is singular, external, and therefore measurable and able to be 'predicted and controlled' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 37); or if it is constructed and continually built from perceptions, actions and interactions (Bryman, 2012). In this study, an iterative approach to generating theory and data collection was taken with an aim to improve understanding, rather than find singular or objective 'explanations of human behaviour' (Bryman, 2012: 28).

3.1.1 Social Constructivism

This research took the perspective that multiple interpretations of reality can coexist, and that 'individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell 2009: 8). I upheld the worldview that reality is constructed by people rather than something that exists objectively 'out there' (Denscombe, 2002: 8):

> Reality can be constructed only by means of a conceptual system, and hence there can be no objective reality because different cultures and societies have different conceptual systems (Robson, 2002: 22).

This social constructivist viewpoint suggests that reality and meaning can be interpreted differently, by different people. This could mean that the reality of composing could vary depending on the individual; therefore, participants' meanings may be subjective (Creswell and Creswell, 2017):

> Realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructs, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 111).

The research sought to present various versions of reality, rather than uncovering the 'definitive' version (Bryman, 2012: 33), thus embracing complexity (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). The nature of reality in this research was viewed as constructed through interaction (Bryman, 2012: 34), and the participants helped to 'construct the reality' (Robson, 2002: 27). Therefore, the research methods aimed to investigate and analyse interactions. This in turn led to analysis as a way to uncover meaning and the creation of knowledge for the participants.

3.1.2 Interpretivism

Uncovering the diverse experiences, thoughts, beliefs and opinions of multiple participant groups was important to the research design in order to capture the complexity and different perspectives of composing in the classroom. This study included the voices of music teachers, composer-educators and students, allowing for multiple and diverse perspectives and realities of composing in the classroom to be represented. An interpretivist approach to data collection and analysis was appropriate in this study to help understand and observe the complexity of 'human action' (Bryman, 2012: 28) and their lived experiences 'from the point of view of those who live it' (Schwandt, 1994: 118). Interpretivism recognises the subjective nature of experience:

> Actions are interpreted by participants and researchers and therefore meaning is created through interpretation (Bryman, 2012: 31).

> ...certain elements of symbolism, meaning, or understanding usually require consideration of the individual's own perceptions and subjective apprehensions (Berg, 2004: 11).

This attempts to explain how a person's experiences can influence their perceived notion and version of reality, thus resulting in multiple realities co-existing within the study. Similarly, phenomenology considers how humans 'make sense of the world around them' (Bryman, 2012: 30), focusing on everyday and 'ordinary' processes (Denscombe, 2010: 95). Phenomenology encourages researchers not just to question *what*, but also *how* (Moustakas, 1994), and has been used widely as an approach in education research to investigate participants' views and experiences, explaining how 'social life is constructed' (Denscombe, 2010: 94, 96).

This research investigated how participants interpret their own lived experience to 'make sense of their worlds' (Denscombe, 2010: 96). Due to also being a part of the social world, the researcher can add a layer of interpretation. Creswell (2013) comments that the researcher should 'bracket' themselves out of the research through recognising, and making explicit their own 'personal experiences with the phenomenon' (p.78). The rationale for this is the hope that the researcher can set-

aside their own preconceptions on the research topic (Creswell, 2013), which will also be discussed in the subsequent chapter on grounded theory research. Although this study aimed to share and explain the experiences of others, it was not always possible to exclude my own experiences from the research. Therefore, an authentic account of the participants' experiences, in the strict phenomenological sense, was not achievable. In recognition of my own subjectivities, I hope that interpretations in the study are made visible to the reader and that my own experiences as a composer-practitioner also offer unique insight into the area of enquiry.

3.2 Methodological Design

To investigate the area of enquiry, multiple research approaches were taken, including case study research, mixed methods and elements of grounded theory. This study contains research in five case study settings involving classroom observation and interviews with music teachers, and focus group interviews with students. Two surveys were also conducted gathering both qualitative and quantitative data. This chapter will outline the decisions behind each research method and any notable limitations.

3.2.1 Case Study

The rationale for adopting a case study approach was to gather in-depth data in real-life, everyday settings:

> [case study research] allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2009: 4).

Each case study aimed to provide detailed context to help the reader orientate the case, referred to as 'thick descriptions' (Gray, 2014: 624). Stake (1995) wrote that case study approaches allow investigation into the complexities of an activity, which in this study included wider socio-cultural and historical influences on the activity of composing in the classroom. As this research focused upon the complex real-life

events of composing, within its natural setting of the classroom (Punch, 2009), I chose to adopt a collective case study approach, also known as a nested case study (Chong and Graham, 2013) and multiple case study (Creswell, 2013). This allowed rich data collection across different settings, which together constitute the whole case study (Patton, 2015), as illustrated in figure 16:
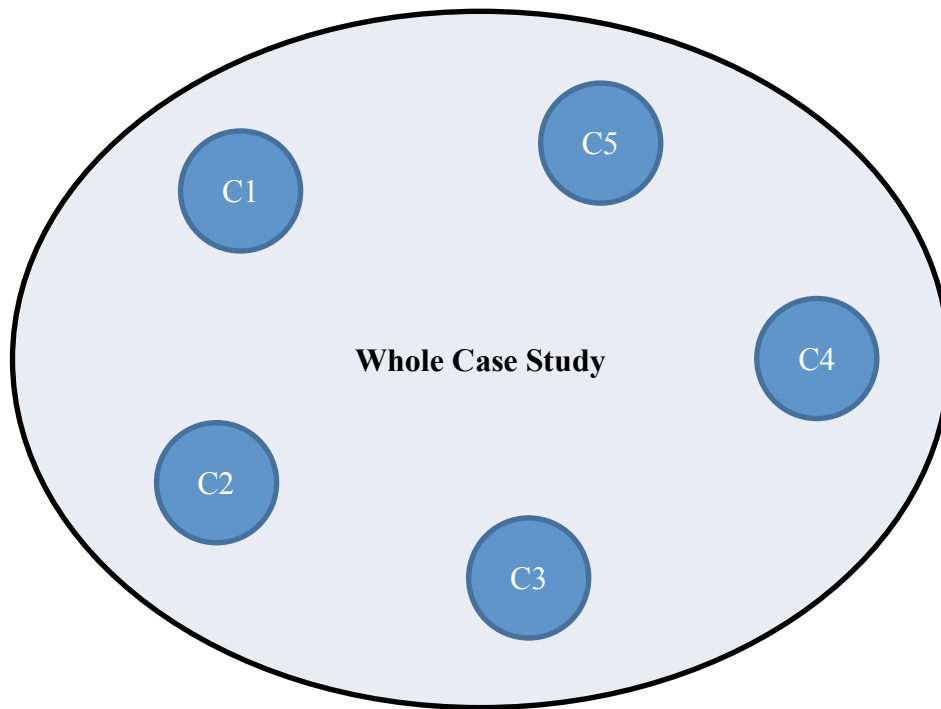
Figure 16: Nested case study design

Investigating what behaviours and issues are shared (Patton, 2015) between the five sites, and uncovering 'common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences' (Creswell, 2013: 76) is something of importance in collective and nested case studies (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yin 2003), however; conflict and inconsistency between cases is also an area for further investigation. Stake (2005) warned against comparison in case studies:

> I see formally designed comparison as actually competing with learning about and from the particular case (p.457).

However, he also advocated that multiple case studies can raise trustworthiness (Stake, 2005) in the study, thus making results more reliable. The selection of case

studies was important for understanding the phenomena being researched (Stake, 2008). Creswell (2007) commented that some case studies are selected to allow diverse perspectives on specific areas of enquiry, however finding cases that are representative allow more for the generalisation of findings (Creswell, 2007). This was a main consideration in deciding the school settings in this study. Within case study research, caution must be taken to ensure the amount of data is manageable (Mason, 2005): 'in larger studies, no one individual can handle the complexity' (Stake, 2008: 132). Creswell (2013) commented 'the more cases and individual studies, the less the depth in any single case' (p.101). Therefore, in conducting multiple case studies a balance must be achieved in collecting the in-depth and rich data attributed to case study research, but making it manageable in the timeframe. Five case study settings were agreed here, to provide rich amounts of data allowing for multiple perspectives and comparisons, as well as ensuring it was realistic and manageable.

There is some criticism of case study approaches to data collection and analysis. Bell (2007) highlighted that researchers will select and choose what they are 'reporting' (p.11), and Simons (2009) argued that choices made during data collection 'about what to observe' and 'what to record' (p.118) can skew the research data, raising concerns in subjectivity and bias. Questions of generalisability and representativeness are commonly raised with case study research, something that will be discussed in chapter 4.5.

3.2.2 Mixed Methodology

Although the research aimed to capture in-depth detailed experiences of composing in the classroom, the collection of quantitative data allowed me to investigate the extent of the issues and themes found in the case studies and qualitative data. The mixed methods approach allowed for the simultaneous collection of 'breadth and depth of understanding' (Johnson *et al.* 2007: 123). The two UK surveys enabled me to investigate the 'bigger picture' (Denscombe, 2010: 141) and extent of the issues raised. They also allowed me to gather more varied perspectives from across different school settings and locations in the UK. Gray (2014) believed that mixed methods

was of particular use when the topic was under-researched. Thereby, in bringing together two paradigms it was possible to broaden understanding around a single topic of investigation:

> The dialectic stance assumes that all paradigms have something to offer…contributes to greater understanding of phenomenon under investigation (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010: 15).

As the enquiry involved complex layers of behaviours, perspectives and understandings, I felt that using one research paradigm alone would not be enough to fully explain and understand the complexity of the situation (Creswell, 2009). Similarly, Greene (2008) commented that using both qualitative and quantitative approaches allows for multiple perspectives and unique insight into the topic that neither paradigm could discover in isolation. Mixed methods also allowed for the triangulation of data type enabling me to check the accuracy and generalisability of the findings (Denscombe, 2010).

Gray (2014) suggested that qualitative data was a useful way to inform the quantitative stage:

> The qualitative study then, explores, identifies and can provide clarity about the kinds of variables requiring further investigation (p.200).

Qualitative data collected from the case studies helped to inform the questions in the survey through initial analysis of key themes and concerns raised during the case studies. Qualitative and quantitative answers from the survey then directly influenced the follow-up qualitative data collection through telephone interviews with the music teachers. Creswell (2009) outlined this as 'sequential exploratory design' (p.211), whereby:

> [the] first phase of qualitative data collection and analysis, [is] followed by a second phase of quantitative data collection and analysis that builds on the results of the first qualitative phase (Creswell, 2009: 211).

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) also called this a 'sequential mixed design', when qualitative and quantitative data 'occur in chronological order' and 'emerge from or are dependent on the previous strand' (p.26-27), as illustrated in figure 17:

Figure 17: Mixed methodology sequential exploratory design

In reality, the clarity of research in discrete stages in practice was not possible. While the surveys were being conducted, the interviews and observations were still taking place due to practicalities of the research schedule. Instead, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) suggest a 'parallel mixed design', whereby qualitative and quantitative data are collected 'in a parallel manner' (p.26).

The importance and role of each data type were considered in the study. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) recommended viewing mixed methods as a continuum with the left side being pure qualitative research and the right side being quantitative:
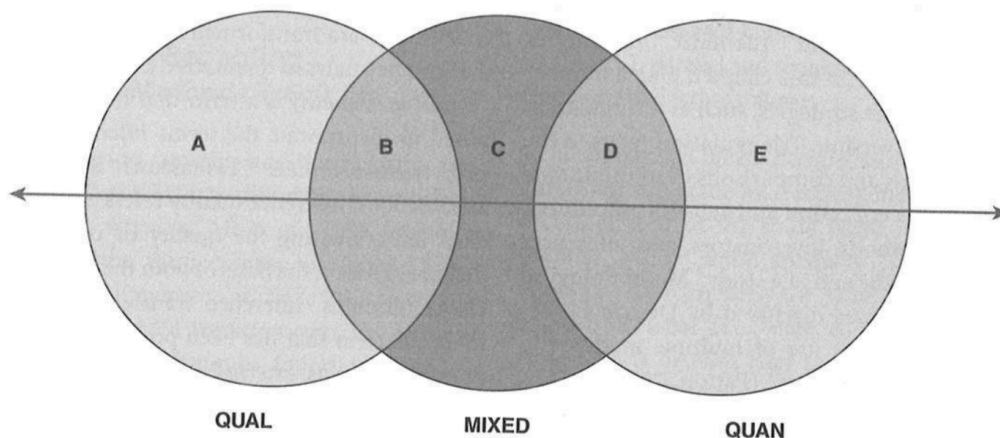
Figure 18: Methodology continuum (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009: 29)

Between these two extremes there are variants of importance and uses of data. At the beginning of this research, quantitative data collected was to act in a 'supporting role' to 'assist in the interpretation of qualitative findings' (Creswell, 2009: 211). Due to

the amount of data gathered from survey responses, quantitative data became a fundamental part of enquiry and data analysis, with case studies providing context and real-life situations to exemplify the statistical data gathered. Thus, quantitative data became more important than originally anticipated. I would place this research within zone 'B' of figure 18, where the main data type is qualitative but with some quantitative aspects (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009: 29).

Being a relatively new methodological approach, the positionality and opinions of mixed methodology are still contested. Denscombe (2010) argued that mixed methods 'do not allow for emergent research designs' (p.151). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue that it should be viewed as its own paradigm, whereas others contest that the mixing of two paradigms are 'incompatible' (Gray, 2014: 198). Gray (2014) argued that mixed methods often prioritised positivist thinking, something that has received 'severe criticism from within social research' (Robson, 2002: 21). Mixed methods is also often associated with a more practical and pragmatic approach to research (Denscombe, 2010) with Robson (2002) commenting that research taking place in the real world often contains an 'action agenda' (p.201):

> Their hope and intention is that the research and its findings will be used in some way to make a difference to the lives and situations of those involved in the study (Robson, 2002: 201).

Therefore, decisions regarding methods and paradigm tend to be based on what 'approach works best for a particular research problem at issue' (Robson, 2002: 43). Coming from a practitioner background, having a clear practical application of the research data was something I felt was important for, especially in the current socio-economic climate of music education. Taking into account the topic of enquiry, and considering a pragmatic approach, the use of mixed methods was considered a useful tool to illuminate the breadth and depth of the issues under investigation.

3.2.3 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory (GT), developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) for a systematic approach to data collection and analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1994), encouraged the researcher to move beyond 'descriptive studies' (Charmaz, 2006: 6). With roots in pragmatism (Denscombe, 2014) GT aims to generate theory 'grounded in data' and 'developed inductively' from data (Punch, 2009: 130). More recent developments in GT from key researchers such as Charmaz (2006), Clarke (2003), and Braun and Clarke (2006), have influenced and directed my own approach to GT. GT is viewed broadly as 'a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them' (Charmaz, 2006: 10). Therefore, I viewed GT more as a general 'research strategy' (Punch, 2014: 132) and a set of values, of which some tools were used in collecting and interpreting data to help understand the complex processes taking place in the study. These tools include the use of:

- Theories being 'grounded' in data
- Theoretical sampling
- Memoing
- Line by line coding
- Emergent, inductive and iterative research design

The rationale behind adopting a GT approach was due to a lack of pre-existing theories and substantial literature around the topic of enquiry.

Denscombe (2014) commented that GT was a 'voyage of discovery' (p.108) for the researcher, which was most effective when researchers approached 'the topic without a rigid set of ideas that shape what they focus upon during the investigations' (ibid.). As part of a GT approach, the researcher should attempt to start the enquiry with limited preconceived ideas; Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that literature around the topic should be 'ignored' so that 'emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts' (p.37). A social constructivist perspective acknowledges the role of the researcher, their past experiences and assumptions (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore, I took the perspective that it was impossible to start research wholly devoid of preconceived ideas: 'there is a difference between an open mind and an empty head' (Dey, 1999, in Charmaz, 2006: 48). Although the area of research

enquiry came about through reflecting on my own experiences and an initial literature review was conducted before data collection to identify common issues and gaps, in line with the GT ethos of openness and growth, I ensured I kept an open mind during data collection. This was also needed due to the changes in policy and practice over the time period of which the study was conducted. Over time my own assumptions changed, and the focus of the research became clearer as it was influenced by data. This change in perception is summarised in table 2, comparing the original research topics from the first literature review, with the final topics:

Table 2: Literature focus and emerging themes comparison

Initial lines of enquiry (2014)	Final lines of enquiry (2017-18)
Composing teaching and learning processes in the classroom	The affect of assessment on composing and creativity
Reliability of the composing assessment	Validity and reliability of composing assessments (bias and subjectivity)
Teacher confidence in composing and teaching composing	Teacher confidence in assessing composing
Technology in the music classroom	Influence of technology on composing/creative processes
Student/teacher identity in composing (such as gender)	Accountability and performativity: notions of power and control

Although pre-existing theories were also used within the data analysis stage of the research, this was done after data collection and the first two stages of data analysis. Theories were also adapted and expanded in order to encompass the complexities found within this research. To me, GT was a way to generate theory directly from the voices, actions and thoughts of those working and experiencing this area of enquiry, rather than from an abstract viewpoint.

One of the key aspects of GT that was taken during the study, was the simultaneous and fluid approach to data collection and analysis (Denscombe, 2010):

> ….the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his data and decided what data to collect

next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 45).

This emergent data collection method allowed the research to 'unfold as the research proceeds' (Robson, 2002: 5), and informed the next stages, with collection and analysis being ongoing and 'iterative' (Cohen *et al.* 2007: 492), as illustrated in figure 19
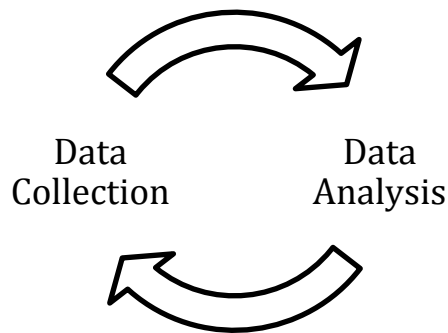
Figure 19: Simultaneous data collection and analysis

GT is still a deeply contested research method within the research field. Charmaz (2014) commented on the many misunderstanding and misinterpretations (p.320) of GT research. One main concern is that the approach came from a positivist viewpoint:

> Glaser imbued grounded theory with dispassionate empiricism, rigorous codified method, emphasis on emergent discoveries, and its somewhat ambiguous specialised language that echoes quantitative methods (Charmaz, 2006: 7).

The use of discourse in classic GT points to the idea of a pre-existing truth (Strauss and Corbin, 1994), which the researcher aims to uncover. Charmaz (2006) argued that 'neither data nor theories are discovered' (p.10), but instead they are constructed by the participants and researchers. This version of GT takes into account the researcher's own experience and ability to construct data, addressing 'multiple realities…about social life as a process' (Creswell, 2013: 197).

3.3 Methodology Summary

Although it appears that a number of approaches were taken, the methodological approaches share similarities and were compatible, allowing for both breadth and depth of data needed for this exploratory study and under-researched topic. Yin (2009) commented that use of case study within a mixed method approach is an effective way to 'collect a richer and stronger array of evidence' (p.62). Similarly, Strauss and Corbin (1994) comment on how GT can be used in 'conjunction with other methodologies' (p.276), and has been used in education research:

> Grounded theory methods can complement other approaches to qualitative data analysis, rather than stand in opposition to them (Charmaz, 2006: 9).

Throughout the research approaches, I felt I was able to capture a wide range of perspectives and experiences, addressing multiple realities, beliefs and perspectives that may exist regarding the teaching, learning and assessment of composing, whilst also being able to consider the pragmatic and practical issues of data collection (Denscombe, 2010).

4. Research Methods

To further investigate the gaps identified in the literature review I decided that the research design needed to investigate both breadth and depth, achieved through the use of case study research and mixed methods. Five case study schools were selected in which semi-structured interviews with teachers, focus group interviews with students and observations were undertaken. Physical artifacts and documentation from the schools were collected where appropriate and for contextualisation (Yin, 2009). Two online surveys were conducted as well as telephone interviews with music teachers. In addition, semi-structured interviews with five composer-educators were conducted. The total range of data collected during the study are shown in table 3:

Table 3: Total data collected from study

Data type	Total amount
Case studies: Teacher interviews	4.5 hours
Case studies: Focus groups	3.5 hours
Case studies: Observations	25.5 hours
KS4 Survey: Respondents	112 teachers
KS5 Survey: Respondents	71 teachers
Survey: Telephone interviews	8.5 hours
Composer-educator interviews	5.5 hours

Data collected totalled approximately 22 hours of interviews, 25.5 hours of observations, and 183 responses from surveys.

The final research design used to explore composing at KS4-KS5 is shown in figure 20. Data collection and analysis frequently took place simultaneously, meaning they often influenced each other, which was noted in the reflective diary. Robson (2002) felt this was important when studying real-world situations that are 'complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally 'messy'' (p.4). Although a flexible approach to research design was used, Yin (2009) commented that 'flexibility should

not lessen the rigor' (p.62). This research design and the methods used to collect and analyse data, will be discussed in detail in this chapter.
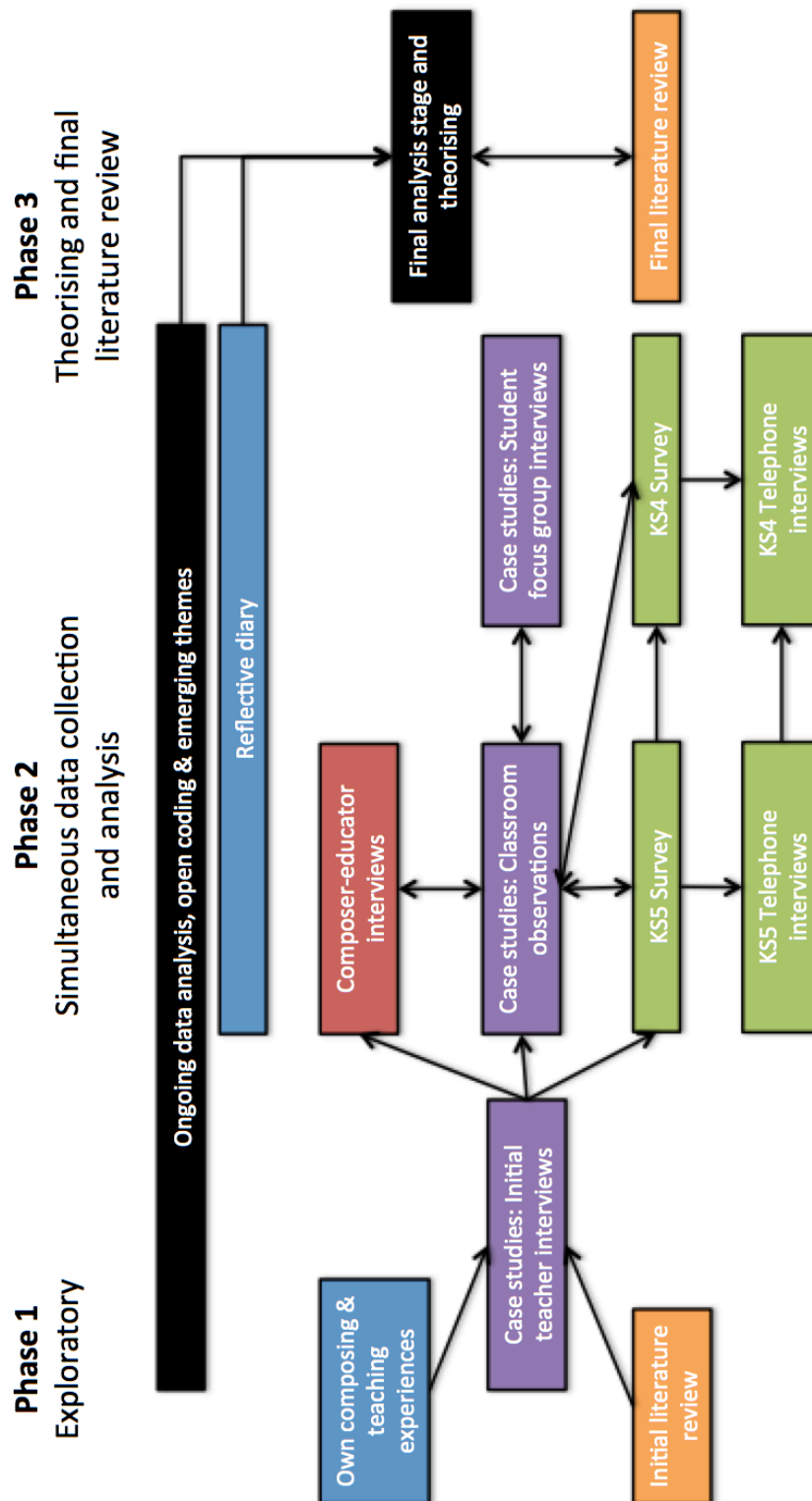
Figure 20: 3-stage research design

4.1 Sample Selection

In accordance with an interpretivist approach, and to gain multiple perspectives and experience of the activity of composing at KS4-KS5, research data were obtained from a range of schools and participants, allowing data to be multilayered (Patton, 2015). Selection of the sample had to be carefully considered. The notion of purposive maximal sampling, whereby the sample is selected not to 'ensure representativeness' (Simons, 2009: 30) but rather to be able to compare, explain and analyse similarities, differences and complexities, was important in this study. Participants were selected to find the 'widest possibility' (Seidman, 1998: 45) and cases that were 'information rich' (Patton, 2015: 264). This was achieved by selecting participants and case study schools of varying backgrounds. The concept of theoretical sampling, taken from GT, was also considered in the design. Theoretical sampling takes place when the researcher 'keeps on adding to the sample until there is enough data to describe what is going on in the context or situation' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 492). Therefore, the amount of data was mainly dependent upon theoretical saturation:

> Saturation means that no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the category. As he (sic) sees similar instances over and over again, the research becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 61).

> The sample evolves, and it continues to grow until such time as the researcher has sufficient information in relation to the theory that is being developed' (Denscombe, 2010: 36).

This approach to sampling goes against traditional and quantitative notions of attempting to claim an accurate representation of the 'whole target population' (Punch, 2009: 251), however:

> In qualitative research, the orientation to sampling is more likely to be guided by a preference for theoretical sampling than with the kind of statistical sampling (Bryman, 2012: 203).

Although themes and codes started to recur regularly during the study, true theoretical saturation was not possible as I had to also ensure data amount was manageable and realistic. In addition, data collection was in part dictated by case study settings and their availability. Punch (2009) also commented that convenience sampling was common within real world research: 'very often indeed the researcher must take whatever sample is available' (p.250).

4.1.1 Case Studies

Data were collected from five case study schools. The case studies took a purposive maximal sampling approach as the schools were selected in an attempt to reflect a broad range of school types, shown in table 4:

Table 4: Case study school information

Case study schools [7]	School type	Ofsted report	School size and population	Pupil premium (PP)
Middle England High (MEH)	Academy	'Good' (2014)	Slightly above average: majority White-British	Below national average
North City Academy (NCA)	Academy	'Good' (2014)	Slightly above average (over 1,000 pupils): students from ethnic minority groups below national average	Below national average
Midlands River Grammar (MRG)	Selective boys grammar [8]	'Outstanding' (2006)	Students from ethnic minority groups below national	Below national average
Central Metropolitan College (CMC)	Further education college	'Good' (2013)	Large (2,300 pupils): approx. 43% black & minority ethnic, one third Asian and Asian/British	Unknown
Green Forest School (GFS)	Academy	'Outstanding' (2008)	Oversubscribed (1,200 pupils): majority White-British	Unknown

In the schools, the teachers' teaching and musical experiences also varied, as indicated below:

---

[7] Schools and participants' names have been anonymised in accordance with the 2011 British Education Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines
[8] From September 2013 the school allowed up to 25% of the year 12 intake to be female

Table 5: Teacher information

School	Music teacher	Musical/composing experiences	Total years teaching	Examination board(s) currently taught
MEH	Susan Harper (SH)	Classical music degree, singer	7	OCR GCSE
NCA	Aaron Dixon (AD)	BA(Hons) in contemporary popular music, drummer	8	Edexcel GCSE
MRG	Alex Holmes (AH)	Classical choral musical tradition	11	AQA GCSE OCR AS/A-level
CMC	Colin Philips (CP)	Classical music degree at a London conservatoire, violinist	10	Edexcel AS
GFS	Abby Callaway (AC)	Classical music degree, oboe piano and composition	2	Edexcel AS

A limitation of the case studies was the amount of data collected from each varied as shown in table 6. In most settings observation took place with one class over time; however, in MRG I observed a number of different classes over one day.

Table 6: Case study data collection amount

School	Data collection period	Classes	Hours of observation
MEH	Nov 2014 - May 2015	Year 11	3
NCA	Nov 2014 - February 2016	Year 11	4
MRG	Nov 2014	Year 11, 12 and 13	3
CMC	Jan 2015 - Jan 2016	Year 12	9
GFS	April 2015 - March 2016	Year 12	6

This variation in data was due to the practicalities of teachers' timetables, making the data collection of the case studies opportunistic to some extent.

Focus Groups

Although the recommended suggested size for focus groups is between 6-8 participants (Krueger, 1994; Bloor *et al.*, 2001), I asked teachers to consider 3-5 students in their class for group interviews. This was due to the practicalities of the setting (Bloor *et al.*, 2001) and because most class sizes were relatively small. Originally I wanted to reflect a diverse range of experiences and opinions of composing to ensure 'sufficient diversity to encourage discussion' (Bloor *et al.*, 2001: 20). To achieve this I suggested that teachers recommended students that were both confident with their composing, and students that found composing challenging. In practice the focus group numbers varied depending on variables including:

1. Who wanted to take part
2. Who had brought back their consent forms
3. Who the teacher felt had the time to spare (i.e. students that were ahead of the class in their composing)
4. Who the teacher thought I wanted to hear from

Even asking for a wide range of students, some teachers commented on considering students who would be "good to talk to" (AD), "who would say enough" (AD), and who they felt were their "best" (AD) composers in the classroom. In CMC, I realised that although students used a mixture of composing programmes (Sibelius and Logic Pro), the teacher had only suggested students who were using notation software (Sibelius). Consequently, I asked the teacher if I could speak to students using sequencing software (Logic Pro). Another potential bias to note was that there was a higher proportion of male than female participants in the focus groups:

Table 7: Male to female ratio in focus group interviews

School	Male : Female
MEH	5:0
NCA	2:1
MRG	8:1
CMC	3:1
GFS	2:4
TOTAL	20:7

Explanation for the over-representation of males is that one setting was an all boys school at KS3-KS4 (MRG), and in MEH, the majority of the class were male were male dominated, with the one female student in the class having severe learning disabilities.

4.1.2 Surveys

Two UK online surveys were conducted, along with a total of 19 follow-up telephone interviews. The survey stage of the research design was split into two, KS4 and KS5, due to a perceived significant difference in experiences of these two examinations. This allowed KS4 and KS5 results to be compared. The aims of the survey were to reach as many music teachers as possible to explore the extent and breadth of the issues under investigation across England and Wales. The two surveys reached in total 183 music teachers from a range of school types and locations:

Table 8: Survey data

Survey	Data collection period	Number of respondents	Follow-up telephone interviews
KS5	05.05.2015 – 30.05.2015 (25 days)	71	9 completed *(1 no audio recorded by request)* Conducted between 14.09.2015 – 07.10.2015
KS4	17/11/2015 – 24/12/2015 (37 days)	112	10 complete Conducted between 16/02/2016 – 14/03/2016

Some of the case study teachers also took part in the online survey, due to data collection taking place simultaneously.

The online questionnaire was created and hosted on Bristol Online Survey (https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk) and accessible via a weblink. The choice of conducting the surveys online was that it suited the demographic of the participants. Online surveys have received criticism as they can exclude those without access to a computer or the internet; however, music teachers are expected to be computer literate as computer technology is often a part of classroom music, and they have access to school computers. The surveys were promoted online through social media (Facebook and Twitter) via existing forums, groups, and organised 'chats' on twitter, and through prominent organisation in music education, such as the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) who endorsed the survey. The survey was also directly emailed to music teachers who were then asked to share amongst their colleagues. Random sampling could not be employed in this survey due to its online nature, therefore data were collected from those who were available to undertake the survey and opted to participate. As a result, sampling may not be representative and may have some element of bias in the participants. Vaus (2002) comments that no sample can be 'perfectly representative' (p.70):

...issues such as sampling error and power relate only to a tiny minority of studies where a true and complete random sample is used (Gorard, 2010: 245).

Participation in the follow-up telephone interviews was voluntary through respondents providing an email address at the end of the survey. Therefore, there was self-selection bias, and with it issues of non-probability sampling (Floyd and Fowler, 2002; Gray, 2014). Out of a total of 183 participants, 47 teachers opted to take part in the KS4 interviews and 30 in the KS5 interviews. To ensure data would remain manageable, 10 from each survey were selected. Selection for this was through purposive sampling (Patton, 2015) with the aim of achieving maximum variation in the data. This was done through reading survey results from participants who had agreed to take part in a follow-up interview, and selecting 10 from each survey. Selecting attempted to reflect a wide range of answers, experiences, and opinions, alongside trying to encompass different locations and school types in the KS4 survey where that data was available. I was keen to talk to a range of participants who had:

- Positive experiences of assessment
- Negative experiences of assessment
- Strong/extreme views or experiences
- Reflected the average results from the survey

During the telephone interviews I collected more details about the participants including:

- Gender
- Location
- School type (additional information)
- Teacher years of experience

By collecting personal data about the participants I was able to confirm with more confidence that the sample reflected a wide range of music teachers' experiences.

4.1.3 Composer-Educators

The rationale for the composer interviews was to give different perspectives concerning composing in education. Five composer-educators were identified to take part in the research by myself and my supervisory team. The selection of this sample was defined in three ways: firstly that the participant must identify primarily as a composer, secondly that they must be working within the professional composing field, and finally that they had at least 5 years of teaching/educational experience. The teaching experience could be within formal school settings or informal out of school settings such as workshops. I was acquainted with all of the sample participants before the study due to working in the same professional field, and some had also taken part in a recent action-research project with Birmingham City University. Interviews with composer-educators were undertaken face-to-face depending on the availability of the composer, and one was via telecommunications application software (Skype).

Table 9: Composer-educators data collection overview

Composer	Interview date
DC	29.06.2015
FT	17.02.2016
KA (via Skype)	03.07.2015
SP	04.08.2015
SW	22.01.2016

Although there are considerations due to knowing all of composer-educators in some way before conducting the study, this was deemed relatively unavoidable as a result of working within a narrow and niche field, and with limited participants that would fit the requirements outlined above.

4.2 Data Collection Methods

A range of data collection methods was deemed appropriate to investigate the area of research enquiry and in keeping with the epistemological and ontological stances stated in the previous chapter. Punch (2009) commented that methods selected in research are based upon 'assumptions' about reality and 'what constitutes knowledge of that reality' (p.15).

4.2.1 Interviews

Interviews have long been a way for qualitative social scientists to uncover participants' 'perceptions, feelings and understandings' (Arksy and Knight, 1999: 19). Mason (2005) commented that qualitative interviews are commonly taken from the viewpoint that 'knowledge is situated and contextual' (p.62). Interviews collect stories from diverse experiences, and capture different 'interpretations of the world' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 349), directly from the 'point of view' (ibid.) of those currently teaching and learning composing. Using interviews as a means of understanding complexities of the processes involved allowed participants to 'symbolize their experiences through language' (Seidman, 1998: 1-3). Seidman (1998) outlined three stages to in-depth phenomenological interviews with each focusing on different aspects:

1. Focused life history
2. The details of experience
3. Reflection on the meaning

(Adapted from Seidman, 1998: 11).

It was not possible to conduct three separate interviews, therefore the three categories were condensed into one interview. Each interview started with a brief life history to provide context, as 'people's behaviour becomes more meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their lives' (Seidman, 1998: 11). The interviews then allowed participants to provide detailed accounts, or reconstructions,

of their own experiences, and reflecting on the importance and meanings of their experiences.

During interviews, Manson (2005) warns that events can only be 'constructed or reconstructed' (p.64):

> …interviewer and interviewee actively construct some version of the world appropriate to what we take to be self-evident about the person to whom we are speaking and the context of the question (Silverman, 2014: 172).
>
> Everyday realities are actively constructed in and through forms of social action (Holstein and Gubrium, 2011: 341)

Seidman (1998) commented that interviews are an active process of making-meaning:

> …selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them that makes telling stories a meaning-making experience (p.1).

Accounts of events could be altered, misinterpreted and subjective. Participants may also attempt to give the "correct" answers, thus skewing the results. Silverman (2014) questioned the purpose of interviews when researchers can 'examine what people actually do in real life' (p.169) through observation. Therefore, interviews and observations were used for within-method triangulation, and as a way to cross reference 'discrepancies between what people say…and what they actually did' (Robson, 2002: 310).

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews formed a large part of the data collection in the study. Each in-depth interview aimed to last approximately 1 hour to limit 'interviewee fatigue' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 349) and to fit around busy school schedules. Each was audio recorded and transcribed at a later date. Non-verbal cues were also noted where appropriate as they have to power to 'changing or even, in extreme cases, reversing its meaning' (Robson, 2002: 273). Each set of questions was piloted with two former music teachers to ensure clarity and flow, something Mason (2005) believed as

essential in the success of a semi-structured interview. Robson (2002) defined semi-structured interviews as involving:

> …predetermined questions, but the order can be modified based upon the interviewer's perception of what seems most appropriate. Questions/wording can be changed and explanations given; particular questions which seem inappropriate with a particular interviewee can be omitted, or additional ones included (p.270).

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility (Robson, 2002), but also allowed it to remain manageable. As this research took aspects from a GT approach, having space to develop and grow organically was important. In this study each interview had a series of core questions based around the topic of enquiry with a number of sub-questions to use as prompts (see appendix 2). Questions were open-ended and I encouraged the participants to talk freely. The flexibility required me, as the researcher, to adapt and ask further questions for participants to expand, allowing for deeper discussion into the complexity of the topic.

Focus Group Interviews with Students

Although the roots of focus group research are in commercial market research (Krueger, 1994; Bloor *et al.*, 2001; Wilkinson, 2004), focus group interviews are now a popular form of research method in education (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Punch, 2009), and social science (Wilkinson, 2004). Collecting young people's voices, and their 'perspectives, attitudes, beliefs, views and opinions' (Punch, 2009: 46) was of importance to me to gather holistic data on composing in the classroom, something that has not always been prioritised previously in social research:

> …children and young people have typically been positioned passively (Punch, 2009: 46).

When working with young people it was important that my role as researcher was not intimidating. I aimed for focus group interviews to be structured as an 'informal group discussion' (Silverman, 2014: 206). Similarly, Hennessy and Heary (2005) commented that young people:

...should not feel that he or she is being questioned by an adult but rather that he or she is sharing experiences with a group of peers (p.238).

The focus group setting aimed to feel more 'naturalistic' than one-to-one interviews (Wilkinson, 2004: 180), allowing for normative behaviours, and using the 'everyday language of the group' (Bloor *et al.*, 2001: 7).

Although I facilitated the discussion by asking questions, I was keen for students to engage in, and share experiences with each other, so that the conversations could flow naturally, and I could analyse their 'process of interaction' (Silverman, 2014: 218). Therefore, I had to negotiate a careful 'balance between an active and a passive role' (Robson, 2002: 287), viewing myself as a 'facilitator' (Punch, 2009: 147) and 'moderator' (Robson, 2002: 287) during interviews. Although I attempted to ensure that all participants had a chance to speak and be involved in the conversations, it was not possible for all students to contribute equally due to natural group power dynamics. Occasionally I would ask questions directly to a student who had not engaged as much in the group discussion to allow their voice to be heard. However, focus groups are 'a socially orientated research procedure' (Krueger, 1994: 34) and 'place people in natural, real-life situations' (ibid.), thus creating 'rich, flexible' and 'stimulating' data (Punch, 2009: 147).

Telephone Interviews with Teachers

The intention of the telephone interviews was to be able to expand on answers to the survey questions. This allowed me to gather more detail and to collect multiple options and experiences from a wide range of schools types and locations around the UK quickly (Creswell, 2009). The structure of the telephone interviews, although still semi-structured, was more standardised and ordered. The questions were constructed from survey results both generally from the overall results, and individually from specific survey answers from participants. It is suggested that telephone interviews should be kept short (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Although I informed each participant that the interviews would take around 20 minutes, many participants went over this, having a lot to discuss on the topic and I did not want to stop the flow of the interview and miss gathering rich data.

There were some limitations of telephone interviews to consider. Without having the participant present it was not possible to note any 'nonverbal communication' (Creswell, 2009: 397). Rapport and having a trusted relationship between the researcher and participants (Babbie, 1990) is also more difficult to build without visual cues. As there was significant time lag between the participant completing the survey and conducting follow-up interviews I decided to send the interviewee's results to them to help remind them of the overall topic, thus aiding their thinking and responses. I also trialled sending the interview questions to some participants before the interview; however, I found that they had significantly prepared the answers beforehand, thereby losing natural and intuitive responses. After this no questions were sent out before the interviews but survey results were still sent in advance.

4.2.2 Observations

Observation of KS4 and KS5 composing was undertaken during regular lesson times in the five case study settings. Cohen *et al.* (2007) commented that observations allow the researcher 'to gather 'live' data for naturally occurring social situations' (p.396). This allowed me to witness first-hand the experiences and interactions of participants rather than rely on second-hand recollections. I encouraged teachers to continue their normal lesson plans as I aimed to collect data in a natural setting. The observations allowed me to contextualise the interview data ensuring the accounts to be 'rich, rounded, local and specific' (Mason, 2005: 89). The observation data also supported and triangulated other data types.

Observations took an 'informal' approach, which was 'less structured' allowing 'freedom on what information [was] gathered and how it [was] recorded' (Robson, 2002: 313). I made extensive field notes on an iPad during lessons, typing them up in full on Microsoft Word (see appendix 3). I noted down key events, behaviours, activities, tasks and interactions (Cohen *et al.*, 2007), and where appropriate, timed lessons to keep a track of the duration of activities (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Both non-verbal and verbal aspects were noted and there were moments when I decided to transcribe interactions. Although on one occasion (in CMC) I decided to audio record and transcribe a peer feedback session to accurately capture the interactions, the rest

of the observation data were not audio recorded. This was to reduce the risk of overloading the amount of data collected. During observations, it was not possible to collect all accounts and details of the setting; therefore, what was recorded had to be considered (Mason, 2005: 892). I was particularly interested in the interactions between teacher and learners, noting how feedback was given and the types of discourse used. Some interaction between peers was noted; however, peer interaction and feedback were infrequent during the lesson observations.

4.2.3 Questionnaires

Surveying as a research tool is widespread (Gray, 2014) having a long history in social science research (Robson, 2002; Punch, 2003), as well as within educational research (Creswell, 2009). The choice to use online questionnaires offered numerous advantages including keeping costs low, and allowing for quick and relevant responses from the population. The speed of responses was something important due to the fast paced changes taking place in education during the research period. The survey data helped to 'identify important beliefs and attitudes' (Creswell, 2009: 388) as well as the 'distribution of certain traits or attributes' (Babbie, 1990: 51-52). This cross-sectional survey approach allowed me to pinpoint the issues, practices and experiences during 'one point in time' (Creswell, 2009: 388).

Each survey was kept as short as possible ensuring it could be completed quickly and easily. Researchers have commented that questionnaires should be 'no longer than is really necessary' (Vaus, 2002: 112), and that 'complexity' should be kept to 'a minimum' (Robson, 2002: 238), warning that interviews can become 'long and discouraging' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 321). Cohen *et al.* (2007) also warned that questionnaires are an 'intrusion into the life of the respondent' (p.317); therefore, it was particularly important to keep it short due to music teachers having heavy teaching commitments. The time of year when the surveys went live (May and November/December) was considered so as to not overload teachers, and also to ensure that assessment was still relevant and fresh in their minds. Consequently, the majority of questions were closed requiring participants to tick boxes or rank statements. Closed questions enabled me to 'generate frequencies' (Cohen *et al.*,

2007: 321) and make statistical comparisons. Likert scale questions were also used to enable quick comparisons, to measure attitudes, and to easily view 'frequencies' and 'correlations' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 327). Two former music teachers piloted the surveys to ensure that questions were worded carefully, understandable and could not be easily misinterpreted (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Punch (2003) also commented that piloting ensured participants can respond 'quickly, easily and confidently' (p.34), thus increasing the number of participants completing the survey.

In the first survey, investigating KS5 composing, no personal details about participants were asked. This was in order to keep the survey short, and causal relationships were not originally intended to be investigated. Due to the number of responses from the first survey, the second survey was extended to include more detail such as: school type, examination boards used, and the teachers' own personal experiences of composing. Variables and causal relationships could then be investigated further if required:

> Causal analysis is a common feature of survey research. That is, survey data are used to evaluate whether one variable affects another (Vaus, 2002: 7).

The two surveys shared some similar questions, enabling comparison to take place between KS4 and KS5.

Although many positive aspects of questionnaires have been discussed, the method is not without its criticisms. Robson (2002) commented that although they have the potential to generate 'large amounts of data' of responses can be 'of dubious value' (p.231). Robson (2002) goes on to state that participants' answers may 'owe more to some unknown mixture of politeness, boredom and a desire to be seen in a good light than to their true feelings, beliefs or behaviour' (p.231). There is also no way of telling if what they say is true (Robson, 2002), creating issues concerning reliability and validity of data. Cohen *et al.* (2007) also warned that use of scales in surveys may not have 'equal intervals' (p.327), and that participants may choose to select the middle of the scale rather than seem extreme in their views. I ensured there was considerable space for participants to make further comments on the questions by providing optional text boxes. The free text questions often asked participants to

elaborate on answers to the closed questions in order to gather data that had 'authenticity, richness, depth of responses, honesty and candour' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 330). Interestingly, both surveys had a very positive response from the population of music teachers, with many teachers contributing rich data in the optional free text boxes, which in itself highlighted to me the extent, urgency and necessity of the issues discussed.

4.3 Researcher Positionality

An important consideration during the research was to reflect and determine my own role as a researcher. I reflected on my own experiences and position within the field of composing in schools, questioning if my position was as an insider or outsider, and if I was to take on a participatory or non-participatory part in the research. As these could influence how participants viewed my role and how they interacted during the research, detailed reflection was needed.

4.3.1 Insider-Outsider Research

Humphrey (2012) defined insider research as 'conducted by people who are already a member of the organisation or community they are seeking to investigate' (p.572). One of the main benefits to being an insider is that rapport is more easily built with participants, potentially leading to deeper and more detailed data:

> This insider role status frequently allows researchers more rapid and more complete acceptance by their participants. Therefore, participants are typically more open with researchers so that there may be a greater depth to the data gathered (Dwyer and Bucklem, 2009: 58).

Although I had experience of teaching composing in schools I was not a qualified music teacher and had not taught full-time. This led me to view myself as an outsider to classroom teaching practices, and I was concerned with being viewed as an outsider by the participants. An example of this was when teachers in the study described in detail the examination board requirements having assumed I had not had

experience of them. Being an outsider also had some benefits as having some distance away from regular classroom teaching allowed me to question some of the norms and taken-for-granted practices within the field. When interviewing the composer-educators I was very much an insider and already a part of that field of work, knowing all of the interviewees before the study, due to working alongside them before the study.

Throughout data collection I realised that the dichotomy of insider and outsider was not as clear-cut. Given's (2008) definition of insider research is that the researcher 'is a part of the topic being investigated' (online). Similarly, Gray (2014) defined insider research as being 'a member of the social group or community she/he is researching' (p.191). In these definitions I was within the music education community, with a specific specialism in teaching composing, and within the professional composing community. Overall, I found that many participants did not view me as an outsider but as someone with specific expertise. For example, I had teachers asking me for advice on their own teaching and one teacher (CF) even asked me to help students with their compositions, thus raising some ethical concerns.

Similar issues that arose during data collection were how students perceived my role in the classroom. As I identify equally as a music practitioner, composer and researcher, I had to consider how to introduce myself. Although all participants were aware that I was conducting research, I decided to identify myself as a composer to them. The rationale for this was so that students would be aware that I understood the music terminology and that I had shared experiences, thus helping to create rapport. I preferred to identify as a composer rather than as a composition teacher, as to not confuse the situation by creating a 'dual role' (BERA, 2011). Researchers have since called for a deeper understanding of insider and outsider research. Dwyer and Bucklem (2009) argued that researchers exist within the gap between the dichotomy of insider and outsider:

> "Outsiderness" and "Insiderness" are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations that are differentially experience and expressed by community members (Naples, 1997: 71).

4.3.2 Participant-Observer

Although I originally intended to be a non-participant observer to reduce the effect of my presence on participants, specifically in the case studies, my role became more complicated as I reflected on the issue. Even though I avoided presenting myself as a teacher, as a consequence of identifying as a composer, some students asked for my opinion on their compositions and asked for help. Upon reflection, I decided that remaining as a non-participatory observer felt artificial and would cause rapport and trust to be negatively affected (Robson, 2002). Over time I moved towards a more participant-observer position and I was careful to try to make my feedback to students not so significant that it may alter their work; I either provided technical support regarding the software or instrumental techniques, positive supportive comments, or questioned students about their music. In doing this I was conscious of not creating a 'dual role' (BERA, 2011: 5), which Humphrey (2012) highlighted can create conflict. Robson (2002) commented that a dual role is 'not easy' (p.317). For example, I found that being more involved in teaching meant I was not always able to observe areas of interest because I was offering support to a student. An extreme example of this dual role was during one school visit where the teacher (CF) asked if I would split my visit; doing one hour as a visiting tutor supporting students, and the second hour for research. In this particular situation I decided it was unethical for me to work as a visiting tutor and turned down the offer.

Naples (1997) highlighted that this participant-observer debate was a 'false separation' and it 'neglects the interactive processes' (p.71). My role throughout the research was considered and renegotiated, attempting to find a balance between building rapport with participants to allow quality of data, and ensuring I did not significantly alter or influence the data, or create ethical concerns.

4.4 Data Analysis

As illustrated in figure 19, data analysis took place on an iterative basis. Stake (1995) argued that 'there is no particular moment when data analysis begins and Braun and Clarke (2006) commented how 'analysis is not a *linear* process' (p.16). Analysis of qualitative data has been heavily criticised as being non-systematic and non-replicable (Punch, 2014), due to the complexities and amount of data captured (Krueger, 1994). Language is viewed as a way for participants to 'construct their social world' (Alvesson and Sklödberg, 2000: 205); consequently, it offers constructed representations (Fairclough, 1995):

> The way language is used does not so much reflect person's inner, subjective world, as generate a version of this world that is in part a transient one (Alvesson and Sklödberg, 2000: 202).

In addition, analysis involves the researcher interpreting the data; thereby creating an 'interpretation of an interpretation' (Fairclough, 2001: 67). Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2006) commented that the researcher's role in data analysis is 'active' in constructing meaning (p.7), going against the idea of themes pre-existing and emerging from the data. As a result of these complexities, being explicit about the 'process and practice' of data analysis is an important part of ensuring trustworthiness and rigour (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 7).

Punch (2014) described numerous approaches to data analysis expressing how the methods can often be 'interconnected, overlapping and complementary' (p.168). He also highlighted the benefits of using different methods and tools to help illuminate the data in diverse ways (Punch, 2014). Approaches considered to be appropriate for the study included thematic and GT analysis. Data analysis took place through coding, noting down emerging 'themes or patterns' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 2), and memoing. Analysis also considered notions of power present in the discourse and interactions of the participants:

> …nobody who has an interest in relationships of power in modern society, can afford to ignore language (Fairclough, 2001: 3).

Some content analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994), involving counting frequencies of certain words, was used to highlight and illustrate specific themes. Quantitative data was treated as descriptive analysis indicating frequencies, rather than attempting to discover correlation and variables (Punch, 2014).

4.4.1 Thematic Analysis

Due to criticisms of qualitative analysis, Braun and Clarke (2014) debated the use of thematic analysis in qualitative research, calling for it to be considered a 'robust', 'sophisticated' (p.2) and a serious qualitative method. Thematic analysis methods involve 'identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 6). Thematic analysis allows for flexibility and considers the complexities of real world research; however, the approach has come under scrutiny due to its relatively short history and being criticised as being too descriptive (Braun and Clarke, 2014). The method's suitability for rigour has been questioned, with some feeling the method allows for an 'anything goes' approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 26).

Braun and Clarke (2014) contested this, calling for it to be considered as a method in its own right and outlining six steps:

1. Familiarisation with data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the final report

(Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006)

The first stage of *familiarisation*, recommended researchers immerse themselves in the data through reading, re-reading and reflection (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) comment on this as an 'active' process, as 'searching for meanings' and 'patterns' (p.6). They warned that formal codes should not be confirmed during this stage. Transcribing interview data was considered an important

part to help familiarisation (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The second stage involved the researcher coding 'for as many potential themes/patterns as possible' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 19). Punch (2014) defined coding as the process of 'putting tags, names or labels against pieces of the data' in order to index and attach meaning (p.173). Coding is often viewed as the 'foundation' of data analysis (Punch, 2014: 173). Coding took place through highlighting data sets, giving each code a number, and keeping a record of the codes via a laptop and comparing and adding as new codes emerged (see appendix 4). After a large number of codes were collected, they were collated and grouped into key themes and sub-themes. Post-it notes and hand drawn diagrams were used to draw together patterns, similarities and connections between themes.

There has been some debate as to what counts as a theme in qualitative research. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that a theme:

> …captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set (p.10).

They also commented that although a theme should recur in the data, the number of recurrences does not '*necessarily* mean the theme itself is more crucial' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 6). Therefore, deciding on what is important within and what is defined as a theme can be subjective. Two types of themes were considered including semantic themes, which express 'the explicit or surface meanings of the data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 13), and latent themes that go beyond description and 'identify…the *underlying* ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 13). In this way, latent themes are 'already theorised' (ibid.) of which Punch (2014) commented that 'higher levels of abstraction' (p.173) should be taking place as analysis progresses. Thus, codes and themes move away from descriptive 'specific' and 'concrete', to more 'general' and 'abstract' (p.178) codes over time. The fourth stage of TA involves creating a conceptual and 'thematic map' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 21) of the themes and codes.

4.4.2 Grounded Theory Analysis

As already discussed, GT procedures ensure theories are created 'from the ground up' (Charmaz, 2006: 51). Some aspects of grounded theory analysis, which are complementary to thematic analysis, supported the analysis in the study. Analysis started using a line-by-line, *open coding* approach, involving key 'identifying conceptual categories' (Punch, 2014: 180). Charmaz (2014) outlined coding as:

> …the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding, you define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means (p.113).

During the first stages of analysis some codes were *in-vivo*: 'using the actual words of research participants rather than being named by the analyst' (Corbin and Strauss, 2008: 65). This was because some of the words and phrases used by participants were emotive and stood out in significance. Corbin and Strauss (2008) warned against purely paraphrasing the data, instead viewing coding as 'interacting with data', 'asking questions' and making 'comparisons' (p.66). Thus, theorising and abstraction take place more centrally and earlier compared to thematic analysis. In GT, coding should take place from the data, or 'bottom-up' whereby: 'codes are suggested by the data, not by the literature' (Urquhart, 2013: 28). After open coding, *axial coding* (also termed theoretical coding) was used, allowing for connections and patterns to be found (Punch, 2014). The final stage of analysis, *selective coding*, involves the highest level of abstraction (see appendix 5).

GT recommends that codes are 'simultaneously' compared 'with the other events and social incidents' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 494) and are checked 'against new data collected' (Denscombe, 2010) for similarities and differences (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). This use of comparison of data and themes was conducted during the study. Memoing, defined as 'the act of recording reflective notes about what the researcher…is learning from the data' (Given, 2008: online), was undertaken. Punch (2014) commented that thoughts and memos may be 'substantive, theoretical, mythological or even personal' (p.177). Corbin and Strauss (2008) stressed how memoing should take place at the start of data analysis to aid researchers' memory,

keeping track of complex thoughts that can influence later conceptualisations and theorising. Similarly, they recommended creating diagrams as 'devices that portray possible relationship between concepts' (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 117). This was undertaken once substantial amounts of codes and data were collected, which helped me consider relationships and patterns throughout the data.

During the later stages of analysis in this study, pre-existing conceptual frameworks and concepts, such as Engeström's (2001) cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), and Bourdieu's (1984) notions of field, capital and habitus, were used as theoretical lenses to overlay the themes and codes. This was done after the grounded theory analysis using the nodes and theories from Bourdieu and Engeström to enabled a deeper understanding into the relationships and complexity of the themes at a 'macro' level (Daniels, 2016: 89), thus helping to provide explanations and generalise beyond descriptions of what was said or happened in the study. Urquhart (2013) commented that this approach can be of use to identify new relationships in data.

4.4.3 Themes of Power

During data collection and analysis themes of power and conflict were present between teachers and students, teachers and school leaders, and teachers and examination boards and/or examiners. Fairclough (2001), a key figure in the development of critical discourse analysis (CDA), commented that discourse and language are 'part of society, and not somehow external to it' (p.18). Therefore, language can play a role in 'maintaining and changing power relations in contemporary society' (2001: vii). Fairclough (1995) commented that ideologies and ways of behaving can become taken-for-granted and viewed as 'common sense', making them 'opaque' (p.42). He termed this 'naturalization' (Fairclough, 1995: 42). Therefore, I viewed language as a way to uncover deeper meanings, ideology and power relations (Fairclough, 1995). Fairclough (2001) commented that researchers must distinguish between 'what is said and what is meant' (p.8). A way of doing this is by noting things missing from the text (Fairclough, 1995) such as visual aspects: 'gesture, facial expression, movement, posture' (Fairclough, 2001: 22). Alvesson and Sklödberg (2000) also commented that: 'nuances, contradictions and areas of

vagueness are also worth noting' (p.206). Noting these aspects helped 'determine meaning' (Fairclough, 2001: 23).

In the study, power relations between participants were considered through observing turn taking and 'the contributions of non-powerful participants' (Fairclough, 2001: 38-39). I was able to consider interaction by noting if and when the following took place:

- Interruptions – controlling the contributions of others
- Enforcing explicitness – forcing participants to be unambiguous or break a silence
- Controlling the topic, nature and purpose of the conversation
- Formulation – rewording of that has already been said, or a wording of what is assumed to follow

(Adapted from Fairclough, 2001: 113)

Examples of these were found between teacher and student interactions and will be discussed further. Although the approach to recording these was not systematic throughout the study, they were recorded and reflected upon when it was as deemed significant.

4.5 Questions of Validity and Reliability

Researchers must consider the complex issues surrounding validity and reliability in qualitative research, with Stake (1995) even considering it an 'ethical obligation' (p.109) to ensure limited misrepresentation of data. Validity in research considers the extent to which the researcher can 'demonstrate that their data are accurate and appropriate' (Denscombe, 2010: 299), and that findings accurately describe 'the phenomena being researched' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 135). Two forms of validity of important: internal validity refers to if the research methods used to collect data actually measure what they purport to measure (Punch, 2009). External validity examines the transferability of the findings, questioning 'the degree to which results can be generalized to a wider population, cases or situations' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 136). Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the result (Punch, 2009:

244), and questions to what extent the findings could be replicated if the method procedures were followed accurately. Gray (2014) and Robson (2002) commented that ensuring reliability in real world social situations was a major challenge.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlighted how these concepts of validity and reliability are not separate, but are intertwined stating that 'an unreliable measure cannot be valid' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 292). Some argue that debates surrounding validity and reliability are rooted in positivist and quantitative enquiry, and are therefore inappropriate for qualitative research taking place in complex social settings (Denscombe, 2010), and the process of conducting research 'can alter the thing being studied – distort and alter its natural state' (Denscombe, 2002: 19). Although research cannot be guaranteed to be completely valid and reliable (Cohen *et al*., 2007: 133), steps were taken in to limit misrepresentation and maximise reliability and validity.

4.5.1 Generalisability

Generalisability in this research was taken to mean the extent the findings can be applied 'to other examples of the phenomenon' (Denscombe, 2010: 298). Yin (2013) described generalisations as 'transferring lessons' and the 'scaling up' (p.325) of findings. However, the concept of generalisability arguably comes from positivist and deductive paradigms, which aim to predict and find objective scientific explanation for understanding the natural world (Bassey, 2001; Cohen *et al*., 2011). Within this research, situated in real-world open systems (Robson, 2002), the aim was not to predict behaviour, but to explain the complexity of events.

The generalisability of case study research has been criticised; Stake (2008) asked researchers 'what can be learned about a single case?' (p.120). Janesick (1994) and Cohen *et al*. (2007) commented that case studies are valuable due to being unique:

> [Case study research] provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly' (p.253).

Thus in trying to generalise them, the research risks decontextualising the settings and individuals (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Researchers have since suggested alternative definitions and meanings for the concept of generalisation, more suited to qualitative research (Punch, 2013). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that research can create 'working hypotheses that describe a single case' (p.38). Bassey (2001) presented the idea of 'fuzzy generalisations' described as: 'if x happens in y circumstances, z may occur' (p.10), thus proposing that a statement may be true, but not in every case. Two criteria for fuzzy generalisations were proposed:

1. Findings can be judged by their trustworthiness
2. Predictions can be judged by the likelihood of general accuracy

(Bassey 2001: 19)

Bassey (2001) believed fuzzy generalisations enabled researchers to make 'predictions of value' (p.12) whilst being also useful to readers. Hammersley (2001) criticised the concept of fuzzy generalisations as:

…scientific generalisations that are not yet (and perhaps never will be) fully developed, in that their scope conditions are not specifiable (p.220).

Stake (1994) discussed the notion of naturalistic generalisations; when findings of research are relevant to the experiences of the reader; therefore, 'meanings come from encounter, and are modified and reinforced by repeat encounter' (Stake, 1994: 240). Stake (1994) argues that case study research directly influences the reader in that they interpret the findings in their own personal way from their own experiences. Similarly, the term transferability refers to how the reader uses the information and compares it with their own situation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended that the researcher 'should provide sufficiently rich data for the readers and users of research to determine whether transferability is possible' (p.219).

Another consideration of generalisability is in creating theory from the research data. Punch (2009) commented that the more 'abstract' a theory (p.12), the more generalisable the results. In GT, theoretical generalisations or abstractions (Denscombe, 2010) are an important part of the process. Glaser and Strauss (1967) outlined four main aspects required for the application of a theory including: ensuring

it is a close fit to the area in which it will be used, it is understandable by the people working in the field, it can be generalised and used in diverse situations, and that the user of the theory can retain control. Punch (2009) similarly termed this 'conceptualizing' (p.121) and Yin (2013) labelled it as 'analytic generalisations', believing this type of generalisation could 'be interpreted with greater meaning and lead to a desired cumulative knowledge' (p.327).

Bassey (2001) stressed the importance of generalisations in creating policy and supporting practitioners to 'inform decision-making' (p.12); however, Bassey (1999) also warned that fuzzy generalisations have 'little credence' (p.53) in isolation and should be 'read in conjunction with the research report' (ibid.). Debates continue regarding the purpose and use of generalising findings.

4.5.2 Credibility and Reflexivity

Reliability of the research data was considered in this study and precautions were taken to ensure good research practice (Bryman, 2012: 390). Guba and Lincoln (1985) highlight that credibility and trustworthiness of data are a vital and ethical part of qualitative research. Israel and Hay (2006) stressed the importance of integrity in social science research stating that:

> Poor practices affect not only our individual and professional reputations but also the veracity and reliability of our individual and collective works (p.5)

Similarly, Robson (2002) commented that poor research ruin schools and organisations working 'with other potential researchers' (p.1). The main concern regarding reliability in qualitative research is that the researcher is often deeply intertwined with the research:

> The researcher's identity, values and beliefs cannon be entirely eliminated from the process of analysing qualitative data (Denscombe, 2010: 302).

> Objective reality can never be captured. We know a thing only through its representations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011: 5).

> To make sense of what we observe or what people tell us, we may draw on the richness of our own experience, particularly if what we are studying we also have experienced (Hertz, 1997: xiii).

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) and Denscombe (2010) argued that researchers' past experience influence the interpretations of the research data; therefore researchers should be 'open and explicit about what they are doing' (Denscombe, 2010: 336).

Hertz (1997) commented that researchers needed to be conscious of their own thoughts, experiences and subjectivities, which Gough (2003) called a 'continuous endeavour' (p.25). Reflexivity formed a fundamental part of the research design with reflections being noted in a reflexive diary (see appendix 6) with the aim to log my thoughts and key decision-making points, as well as develop 'a critical attitude towards locating the impact' (Finlay and Gough, 2003: 22) of myself on the research:

> [the research diary]…acts as a chronological record of both sequence of events and development of thinking (Ballinger, 2003: 70).

> …to account for one's own position and subjectivity, and I believe that the writing of a research diary help to foreground these, making them more accessible both to the researchers and to her readership (Ballinger, 2003: 70).

An important aspect of achieving credibility and trustworthiness was through making my approaches and decisions visible to the reader. Corbin and Strauss (2008) recommend researchers 'should provide a brief overview of what their research procedures were' (p.309), allowing readers to openly critique and judge the credibility of the research. This took place by outlining the methodological approaches and giving biographical information at the start of the thesis. Similarly, Bryman (2012) recommended that providing an 'audit trail' (p.392) of key decision-making points was essential, thus, highlighting the importance of reflective practice in research.

Postmodernism take these ideas further by fully acknowledging the role of the researcher and how past experience, culture background, gender and class may influence research (Dwyer and Bucklem, 2009); however there is criticism with this:

> …if taken too far, it easily slips into self-absorption and leaves limited room
> for other people's views – which are only interesting in so far as they affect
> the author (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000: 242)

Resulting in the research becoming more about the researcher than participants. Therefore, I was careful to ensure that although I was open about my decision-making and reflexivity, it did not obscure the aims and outcomes of this research.

Triangulation

One method of improving the credibility and accuracy of the findings was through triangulation (Creswell, 2009). Triangulation involves the researcher using different methods and tools to ensure similar findings recur, as Berg (2004) described: 'a means of mutual confirmation of measurements and validation of findings' (p.5). It can also be used to 'identify different realities' (Stake, 2008: 133). Different forms of triangulation include: conducting the same research at different times, locations, with a different investigator, and using different methodological perspectives (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Using different data collection methods is often the most common form of triangulation (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). In this study, triangulation took place in various forms, as summarised in table 10:

Table 10: Triangulation methods in the study

Triangulation type	How is was implemented in the study
Location	Five different case study settings
Data collection tools	Interviews, observations, surveys
Data collection methodology	Mixed methods (survey and case study)
Participant groups	Teachers, composer-educators, students,

Conducting the same research in five different settings, along with a wide range of schools across England from the survey, allowed for similarities and differences to be observed within data collection. It also enabled me to generalise the findings beyond one school, and one school type.

The mixture of data collection tools, including in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, and observations, as well as varying the participants from teachers and students, to composer-educators, allowed for multiple perspectives on the topic under investigation. Using interviews and observations allowed me to observe any discrepancies between what was said in interview and what took place in the classroom.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Sieber (1993) defined ethics as an 'application of a system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful, and to be fair' (p.14). This study closely followed the 'Ethical guidelines for educational research' published by the BERA (2011), to ensure it was conducted in a 'responsible and morally defensible way' (Gray, 2014: 68), and that no physical or emotional harm was endured as a result of the research. As the research involved young people aged 14-18, safeguarding procedures were taken into account and the study had to gain ethical approval from the Birmingham City University ethics committee (see appendix 7).

Mason (2005) warned that even after ethical concerns are scrutinised, unanticipated and unexpected circumstances might occur in the field. Therefore, being responsive as ethical issues arose, and reflecting on the decisions taken, was important for maintaining a robust ethical standard. Researchers must carefully balance the 'harm' and 'benefit' (Israel and Hay, 2006: 95) of conducting research, with costs needing to be weighed against the benefits. These benefits include 'the knowledge gained from the study, and possible changes and improvements to situations or services' (Robson, 2002: 65). It was determined that the benefits of the research outweighed the potential harm.

4.6.1 Protecting Participants

A central part of conducting research ethically is that no physical or emotional harm is caused to participants:

> Researchers must recognise that participants may experience distress or discomfort in the research process and must take all necessary steps to reduce the sense of intrusion and to put them at their ease (BERA, 2011: 7).

Therefore, the safety and wellbeing of the participant was considered a priority over the collection of research data. Denscombe (2010) argued that participants should be left unaffected by the research:

> Those who contribute to research as informants or as research subjects should be no worse off at the end of their participation than they were when they started (Denscombe, 2010: 330).

The presence of the researcher can unintentionally influence the setting, but precautions can be put in place to limit this impact. The three main considerations in this study were that:

1. The research could be obtrusive into teachers' and students' already limited school and examination schedule
2. The information disclosed could have personal negative consequences for participants
3. The research could cause some psychological stress due to the nature of research topic

BERA (2011) recommends researchers must limit the 'bureaucratic burden' of research and 'minimize the impact of their research on the normal working and workloads of participants' (p.7). Precautions were put in place to ensure teachers were not inundated with extra work and I encouraged teachers not to alter their teaching schedule or lesson plans. Some of the teachers were concerned about allowing some students to be a part of the focus group interviews due to the limited amount of time remaining to finish their compositions, therefore this influenced duration of the focus group interviews and choice of sample.

Confidentiality of the participants was of paramount throughout the study and kept in line with the 1998 Data Protection Act. Anonymity was a concern for some teachers and students, with one teacher asking not to be audio recorded. To protect participants' identity all were anonymised and given pseudonyms. This was particularly important as some of the teachers' comments could have possible negative implications for their career if the school were to identify them.

The confidentiality of students was also important but also raised more ethical dilemmas (Hill, 2005). During the focus group interviews 'disclosures by participants are shared with all group members' (Hennessy and Heary, 2005: 239); therefore, I asked students not to disclose information to anyone else after the interview. Within focus group interviews there is also a danger of over-disclosure: 'when individuals get carried away in the heat of a discussion or debate' (Bloor *et al.*, 2001: 25). During the research some teachers enquired about the focus group interviews wanting to know what was discussed:

> …teachers believe they are entitled to know about any activity in the school (Hill, 2005: 76).

> Other people, organizations and government agencies may be keen to see what information researchers have gathered (Israel and Hay, 2006: 94)

Hill (2005) also commented that in some situations it 'may be unrealistic to expect that nothing will be said about what went on' (p.76). In one incident some students expressed not being supported by their music teacher for a number of weeks. This raised a considerable ethical consideration whether to disclose this information to the teacher to make them aware of the situation. In doing so I would have to break confidentiality; therefore, I decided against disclosing this to the teacher. An exception to this would have been if a student had reported anything illegal or that could cause harm to the student, this would have overridden the 'confidentiality agreement' (Robson, 2002: 71).

There has been much debate into anonymity in conducting research online (Denscombe, 2010; Cohen *et al*., 2007; Creswell, 2009; Gray, 2014; Silverman, 2014), with the main concern that the researcher cannot promise complete anonymity:

> …the research cannot claim that respondents will be anonymous, even if they are using pseudonyms since Internet Protocol addresses can always be traced back to individual computers (Gray, 2014: 88).

The survey participants could also volunteer for a telephone interview; leaving an email address at the end of the survey that could be easily identified and traced. This was also a problem with the composers-educators as most had high-profile careers and a number of their responses were very specific meaning the information could easily be traced back to them. In changing the details to protect their identity, this could distort the context of the information. Considerations into revealing their identity was considered:

> Participants may also wish to use their own name instead of a pseudonym. If the participants choose to use their names and have carefully weighed the consequences (Creswell, 2009: 240).

Although the information disclosed by the composer-educators was generally less personal than the teachers, with little chance of negative repercussions, upon reflection, and keeping in line with the ethical guidance, I decided their full identify would be anonymised. Therefore, some specific details were altered and kept vague to reduce the risk of identification. These examples highlight the importance of ongoing ethical consideration and reflexivity during research.

Sensitive Research Topics

Although the topic of enquiry was not considered particularly intrusive or sensitive, it was asking participants to disclose personal experiences, thoughts and opinions (Creswell, 2009). Lee and Renzetti (1993) defined a sensitive topic as:

> …one that potentially poses for those involved a substantial threat, the emergence of which renders problematic for the researcher and/or the researched the collection, holding, and/or dissemination of research data (p.5).

Affirming that 'any topic, depending on context' (Lee and Renzetti, 1993: 6) could be deemed as sensitive and all research 'involves some cost to those who participate' (p.4). A number of participants were significantly concerned about their future careers

in teaching due to assessment procedures of composing, and the changes in government policy. These concerns were clearly serious with a couple of teachers disclosing previous struggles with mental ill health, taking temporary leave, and quitting the profession altogether as a result of the situation and the topics in questions. Emotions felt by participants discussing a sensitive research topic may include 'guilt, shame, or embarrassment' (Lee and Renzetti, 1993: 5). Some teachers shared feelings of guilt and shame for students who they felt they had let down in the examination. Although some serious issues were discussed in the teacher interviews the teachers did not show significant signs of stress and many expressed their gratitude that the research was being conducted and their voices were being heard.

4.6.2 Informed Consent and Right to Withdraw

As expressed by Denscombe (2010) all participants should be informed of the research before giving consent to take part. Following the recommendations by Gray (2014), all participants were given an information sheet about the research that included:

- The aims
- Persons/organisations conducting the research
- The duration
- Requirements from participants
- How data would be kept and used

(Adapted from Gray, 2014)

Information given to participants also outlined their rights, ensuring they understood participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any point without them needing to give a reason. Information was given at the start of each interview and had to be signed (see appendix 8). Before the telephone and focus group interviews, participants were given additional information given verbally. Although a signature is not possible on the survey Denscombe (2010) commented that this approach:

> …allows the would-be participants to confirm their willingness to take part –
> a kind of proxy signature that, though it is not as good as a formal signature, at
> least signals agreement to take part (p.338).

A covering letter was presented before the start of the survey in which participants had to confirm they had read before moving forward in the questionnaire (see appendix 9c).

Research with Children

Issues surrounding informed consent, voluntary participation, and right to withdraw can be complex in an educational setting with young people. Informed consent with children is a hotly debated issue, with the main question asked: can children 'rationally, knowingly and freely give informed consent'? (Robson, 2002: 70). Israel and Hay (2006) argue that giving informed consent 'require participants to have high levels of literacy and linguistic ability' (p.62). Some researchers contest that the age and developmental stage of a child should be taken into account: 'children vary greatly at any one age and differ widely in their development between one age and another' (Hill, 2005: 63-68).

In this research, students were aged 14-18 years, I took the view from the (BERA) that:

> …children who are capable of forming their own views should be granted the
> right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, commensurate
> with their age and maturity. Children should therefore be facilitated to give
> fully informed consent (BERA, 2011: 6).

In addition, each school had to agree to the research taking place by written consent from the head or deputy head teacher, the classroom teacher, parents, and verbal and written consent from students taking part in the focus group.

In research involving children, there are significant issues concerning power and authority to be considered:

> Adults are ascribed authority over children, who often find it difficult to dissent, disagree or say things which they fear may be unacceptable (Hill, 2005: 63).
>
> Young people may view some researchers as part of government and believe they will be punished if they refuse to take part… (Israel and Hay, 2006: 62).

Cohen *et al*. (2007) raised concerns that students may 'feel coerced to volunteer' (p.55) by their school or teacher. Therefore, the researcher should 'ensure that volunteers have real freedom of choice if informed consent is to be fulfilled' (Cohen *et al*., 2007: 55). I required verbal consent from students before the focus group interviews, even if their parents and teacher had agreed their participation. This was to ensure it was their own choice and that they knew there would be no negative consequence to withdrawing, thus ensuring ongoing consent:

> Perhaps informed consent is seen best as a process of negotiation, rather than a one-off action (Silverman, 2014: 149).

A small number of students refused to take part in the interviews due to wanting the time to compose; thus giving me confidence that students felt they had the right to choose.

Israel and Hay (2006) commented that 'researchers may find it difficult to assess whether potential participants do have freedom of action' (p.64). This was apparent during the classroom observations as if a student wanted to withdraw from the study they would have to leave the classroom, something not possible due to it being their scheduled lesson time. Before starting the observations I informed the students that if anyone did not want to take part of talk to me during the lesson, to let the teacher, or me know beforehand.

4.7 Research Methods Summary

This holistic and combined research approach was appropriate to investigate the numerous possible realties co-existing within the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Being flexible and reflexive allowed me, as the researcher, to be responsive to events that occurred and for the theory to be grounded in data. I moved between 'multiple, shifting researcher-participant positions' (Finlay, 2003: 12) and had to reflect on a renegotiate my role in the classroom observations. Ongoing ethical concerns were also considered and reflected upon, as unexpected events can occur during real-world research. The purposive sampling and survey approach allowed me to explore the breadth and extent of the issues, whilst the case studies and in-depth interviews ensured depth and detail. Although still a contested issue in social science, this triangulation of methods allowed for greater validity and reliability of findings and generalisability of the theory

5. Theoretical Frameworks

This study took place within specific social, cultural and historical conditions and these must be taken into account in order to understand the data and findings:

> One must first understand the social relations in which the individual exists (Wertsch, 1985: 58).
>
> One must analyze the surrounding society and its social relation (Hedegaard, 2005: 227).

Social learning theorists argue that learning is 'socially embedded' (Hedegaard, 2005: 227); therefore, behaviours, actions and interactions observed during research need to be placed within the complex social settings, which are influenced by culture, rules and power relations. Music educator-researchers, such as Swanwick (2008), have advocated the 'need to understand the educational and social context in which a teacher works' (p.9). Similarly, Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald (2002) commented that 'musical behaviour must be investigated in all of the social and cultural contexts in which it naturally occurs' (p.4).

Drawing on this, key social learning theorists and theories were identified as relevant frameworks to critically reflect on the pedagogical practices and behaviours within the study, including: Vygotsky (1978) and Engeström (1993, 1999, 2012). Bourdieu's (1984) notions of field, habitus and capital were also used as an analytical tool to illuminate underlying areas of power and control within the settings. Engeström (1999) commented that 'human activity is endlessly multifaceted, mobile, and rich in variations of content and form' (p.20), and in combining the theoretical lenses described, we begin to uncover and explain some of the 'complexity of education' (Apple, 1996: ix), as well as illuminate behaviours, beliefs and values within in the music classroom at KS4 and KS5. This section will outline the relevant theories and ideas drawn from social learning theory, activity theory and field theory, used in this study.

5.1 Social Learning Theories

Soviet psychologist Vygotsky rejected prevailing biological reductionist and behaviourist views attempting to study behaviour in isolation (Wertsch, 1985). Instead, social learning theories consider a holistic view of learning (Moll, 1990), describing teaching and learning as 'complex processes' (Swanwick, 2008: 9). Vygotsky aimed to explain these complexities taking into account socio-historical and cultural aspects of teaching and learning (Wertsch, 1990) as without a wider understanding of the situation, learning can become separated into 'discrete, separable, skills and subskills' (Moll, 1990: 7).

Vygotsky (1978) was dissatisfied with education and psychological testing predominantly focusing on what students could already achieve. His concept of the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) allowed for the viewing of mental functionality 'in the process of maturation' (Vygotsky, 1978: 86), allowing for the prediction of 'future growth' (Wertsch, 1985: 67). The central idea behind ZPD is the belief that:

> …what children can perform collaboratively or with assistance today they can perform independently and competently tomorrow (Moll, 1990: 3).

In this view, by observing what students do collectively, it is possible to predict what they can do in the future individually (Newman and Holzman, 1993), promoting the notion that interaction and collaboration are integral to learning, development and maturation. Daniels (2016) termed ZPD as the 'space where the learner is brought into the 'knowing' of the other' (p.67) or with the aid of 'more experienced people' (Lave and Wenger, 2005: 149-150). Therefore, the *zone* in the ZPD is described as:

> …the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978: 86).

Much education research has focused on adult/child and teacher/pupil interactions (Moll, 1990); however, ZPD acknowledges the vital role of peer learning in cognitive

development (Tudge, 1990). ZPD can involve teachers scaffolding activities for their students, rather than simplifying classroom tasks: 'scaffolding involves simplifying the learner's role rather than the task' (Daniels, 2007: 317). Although ZPD has had a significant influence on classroom teaching and can help inform teachers of 'social and participatory learning' (Daniels, 2016: 56), ZPD has also been oversimplified into learning through instruction (Wertsch, 1985; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Resulting in 'atomistic, skills-based practice' (Moll, 1990: 8) rather than acknowledging complex and holistic relationships in learning and teaching. The concept of ZPD is important for this research as it is a way of explaining the benefits of group composing and peer support, but also highlighting the lack of diversity in pedagogical practice when it comes to teaching composing for examination purposes.

5.1.1 Legitimate Peripheral Participation

One of the core ideas underpinning social learning theory is that of 'legitimate peripheral participation' (LPP). According to Lave and Wenger (1991), LPP when *newcomers* to a community of practice become masters (or *old-timers*), after learning the necessary knowledge and skills to fully participate in the 'sociocultural practices of a community' (p.29). Unlike previous theories of learning which view knowledge as internalised, LPP views learning as 'increasing participation' concerning the 'whole person acting in the world' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 49). LPP is a way of analysing and understanding the learning taking place within a community of practice. A 'community of practice' refers to a group that shares similar 'characteristic biographies/trajectories, relationships, and practices' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 55). In this research, students and teachers were situated within music education and composing communities of practice.

Lave and Wenger (1991) used LPP to investigate how conflict and change can occur within communities of practice:

> In any given concrete community of practice the process of community reproduction – a historically constructed, ongoing, conflicting, synergistic structuring of activity and relations among practitioners – must be deciphered

in order to understand specific forms of legitimate peripheral participation through time (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 56).

Daniels (2016) highlighted how teaching resources can 'limit the meaning of what is learned' (p.72), explaining how constraints can be placed upon newcomers and their access to a community. As with ZPD (Moll, 1990) Lave and Wenger (1991) also warned against LPP being reduced to the teaching of skills in a linear fashion:

> …learning is never simply a process of transfer or assimilation: learning, transformation, and change are always implicated in one another, and the status quo needs as much explanation as change (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 57).

Teaching and learning are complex processes and social learning theorists sought to explain and understand behaviour as a socially situated process with theories such as ZPD and LPP. These ideas help to describe learning as socially bound, involving collaborative processes between teacher to learners, and learner to learners. This socially situated perspective of pedagogy has been adapted and developed widely (Blanck, 1990; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Daniels, 2004; Wertsch, 2007); however, caution must be taken when using the theories developed by Vygotsky to describe behaviour, as much has changed in society since their initial formation (Moll, 1990: 3).

5.2 Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

Activity theory, also known as cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), attempts to explain the 'complex interactions and relationships' (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999: 9), and how 'culture, environmental structures, and relationship' intertwine (Kinsella and Fautley, 2017: 26) within social settings (Daniels, 2016). With roots in social learning theory, CHAT has been used as an 'analytical lens' (Burnard and Younker, 2008: 60), and 'conceptual map' (Cole and Engeström, 1993: 8), to describe and understand the multifaceted aspects of an activity. CHAT has also been used and adapted internationally for research into teaching and learning processes (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999; Engeström, 1999). Kinsella and Fautley (2017) call CHAT a useful framework in helping to understand pedagogy, processes and practices within the classroom. Although CHAT has been used as a theoretical framework to analyse

the complex social and cultural situations of music education (Burnard and Younker, 2008; Henley, 2009; Thorpe, 2012, 2015; Fautley and Kinsella, 2015), it has not been used to investigate composing at KS4 and KS5, and the influence of assessment on teaching and learning. In this study the nodes of CHAT are used within the context of the data to consider complex relationships, connections and contradictions. CHAT was also modified in order to depict the nuances and complexities observed in the research.

5.2.1 Mediating Artefacts

Behaviour is guided by an object 'being acted upon' (Daniels, 2004a: 123), or goal. Leont'ev commented that 'activity is guided by a motive':

> To understand why separate actions are meaningful one needs to understand the motive behind the whole activity (Leont'ev 1978, in Daniels 2016).

However, Daniels (2016) warned that an activity is 'not reducible to actions' but instead developed over 'periods of sociohistorical time, often taking the form of institutions and organisations' (p.86). Vygotsky (1978) theorised that simple stimulus-response behaviour became more complex with the use of tools, or signs:

> The use of signs lead humans to a specific structure of behavior that breaks away from biological development and creates new forms of a culturally-based psychological process (Vygotsky, 1978: 40).

Vygotsky (1978) outlined a 'model of action' (p.40) taking into account how the behaviour of an individual (*subject*) interacts with artefacts to get to the goal *(object)*:
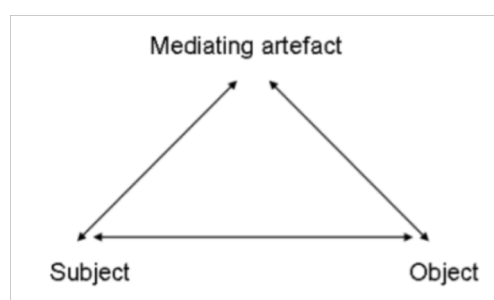
Figure 21: Model of action (Vygotsky, 1978: 40)

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In education the subject takes the form of the learner or teacher, and the object describes the learning-taking place. Artefacts mediate the learning outcome and can be 'central' to practice (Kinsella and Fautley, 2017). Mediating artefacts can take the form of physical tools such as pencils, computers, instruments, as well as aspects such as language, questioning and discussion (Burnard and Younker, 2008). Burnard and Younker (2008) explained how tools, such as a student's musical experience, knowledge and background, and the musical symbols used, can 'shape interaction' in composing (p.63).

Much research has highlighted the significance of tools, signs and artefacts for influencing behaviour and actions in human beings (Bandura, 1977; Cole and Engeström, 1993; Wertsch, 2007; Bakhurst, 2009; Daniels, 2016). Tools mediate how individuals interact with each other and their surroundings (Moll, 1990: 11) and 'order and construct' lives (Daniels, 2016: 21). They are ways in which humans understand the world (Wertsch, 2007: 178), 'represent events' and 'engage in foresight' (Bandura, 1977: vii). These tool are 'products of human cultural historical activity' (Daniels, 2016: 17).

> …the artefact bears a certain significance which it possesses, not by virtue of its physical nature, but because it has been produced for a certain use and incorporated into a system of human ends and purposes (Bakhurst 1995: 160, in Daniels, 2016: 21).

Therefore, their meaning is created, shaped and embodied by humans:

5.2.2 Rules, Community and Divisions of Labour

Cole and Engeström (1993) recognised the limitations of Vygotsky's model as: 'failing to account for the collective nature of human activities' (p.7). Early theorisations of activity theory did not consider wider societal and the collective roles of community (Engeström, 1999: 30). Thus, Engeström went on to expand the original model of action to include a total of six interconnected nodes demonstrating how individuals exist, interact and are influenced by wider social communities:
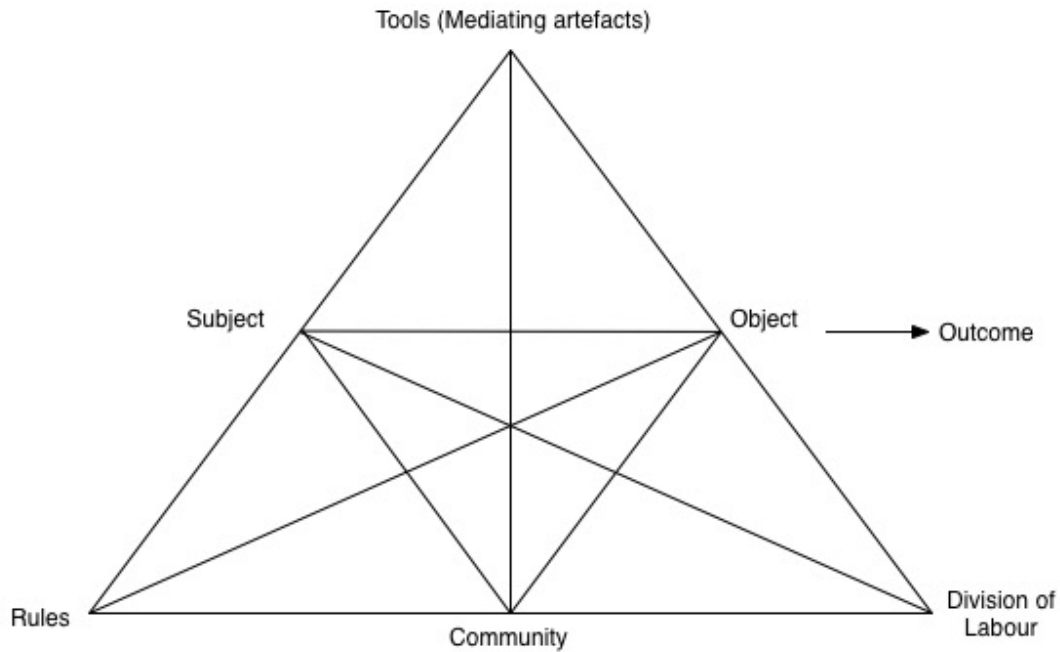
Figure 22: Structure of human activity theory (Engeström, 2001: 136)

The top of the triangle remained the same to represent the 'individual and group actions embedded in an activity system' (Avis, 2009: 158), but the additional nodes of rules, community and division of labour acknowledged wider socio-cultural influencers on an activity. This second generation CHAT model recognises the relationship between the individual and their community who 'share the general object of activity' (Avis, 2009: 158). The expanded model allows for the 'macro' (Daniels, 2016: 89) level of behaviour to be observed and integrated thus taking into account the wider historical, cultural and social structures in place, as well as the micro level of the actions of an individual and viewing human activity as 'multivoiced' and multilayered (Engeström, 1999: 20).

Engeström's model explains how divisions of labour, described as the role of power, responsibilities and the distribution of tasks (Cole and Engeström, 1993), between those involved in the activity, influence action. This can be both on a local and wider scale (Burnard and Younker, 2008). Cole and Engeström (1993) defined rules as:

> The norms and sanctions that specify and regulate the expected correct procedures and acceptable integrations among participants (p.7).

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Rules 'regulate action' (Avis, 2009: 158); thus, they play a crucial role in mediating the relationships between the subject and their community (Cole and Engeström, 1993). Rules can limit or constrain actions (Burnard and Younker, 2008) and in the classroom they can play a major role in directing the teaching and learning taking place. Kinsella (2014) commented on how 'performative and assessment regimes' can 'define teacher and learner behaviour' (p.123-124). The rules of an educational setting can also 'dominate practice and shape how activities are planned' (Kinsella and Fautley, 2017: 30). Although Thornberg (2008) stated that school rules should be 'clear' and 'understandable' (p.26), he found that they could be 'restrictive' and 'unexplained' (Thornberg, 2009: 394). Kinsella and Fautley (2017) described how rules could be both explicit, for example the rules of the school or examination board criteria, and implicit, such as unspoken assumptions and common cultural practices. Thornberg (2008) also identified different types of school rules, one of which was 'structuring rules' defined as: 'structuring and maintaining the activities that take place in school' (p.27). These activity rules regulate how individuals partake in activities, also termed the 'rules of the game' (Thornberg, 2008: 27). Investigating the explicit and implicit rules involved in composing at KS4-KS5 is particularly important for this study as it may guide the composing and composing teaching practices taking place.

5.2.3 Contradictions and Transformation

Engeström (1999) commented that contradictions and tension are a vital part of any activity system. These contradictions can develop internally, and from external socio-cultural influences, such as a new government policy (Kinsella and Fautley, 2017):

> When an activity system adopts a new element from the outside (for example, a new technology or a new object), it often leads to an aggravated secondary contradiction where some old element (for example, the rules or the divisions of labor) collides with the new one (Daniels, 2016: 94).

Cole and Engeström (1993) warned that once an activity system becomes 'institutionalised' and gains 'the status of cultural practices' (p.8) it can become

difficult to change. Once a practice is embedded and internalised (Vygotsky, 1978), it becomes a vital part in the 'reproduction of culture' (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999: 10). Thus explaining why many school pedagogical practices may go unchanged (Cole and Engeström, 1993). If unchallenged, contradictions can become 'rooted in practice' (Kinsella and Fautley, 2017), and practice can 'stagnate' (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999). In order to challenge 'established norms' (Kinsella and Fautley, 2017) the process of externalisation must take place: 'externalization is first a "violation" of cultural norms for the activity' (Moran and Steiner, 2003: 23), allowing us to question 'taken-for-granted practices' (Avis, 2007: 168). To do this, contradictions in an activity system must be 'questioned, challenged, and reflected upon' (Kinsella and Fautley, 2017: 35). Kinsella and Fautley (2017) used CHAT to promote positive transformation by allowing teachers to recognise their own compositional pedagogical practices through CHAT analysis.

Once social practice has been transformed a 'new model for the activity is designed and implemented' (Engeström, 1999: 34). Internalisation of this new system then takes place and becomes embedded; thus, highlighting the cyclical nature of internalisation and externalisation, which Engeström termed an 'expansive cycle' (1999: 34):

EXTERNALIZATION

INTERNALIZATION
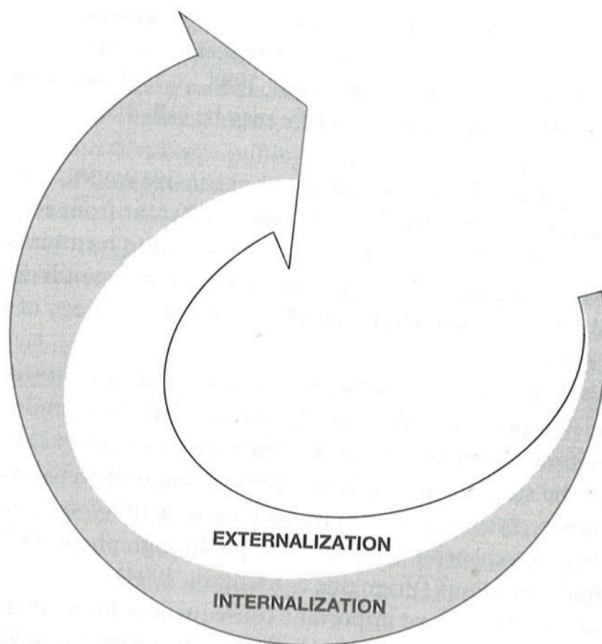
Figure 23: Expansive cycle (Engeström, 1999: 34)

In light of this, CHAT has been used as an 'engine for change' (Cole and Engeström, 1993). Engeström developed a third model of CHAT viewing activity systems within a 'network of activity' (Daniels, 2016: 91), rather than in isolation. The model is thus expanded from a 'single activity system' to recognise multiple 'interacting activity systems' (Engeström, 2012: 516), as shown below:
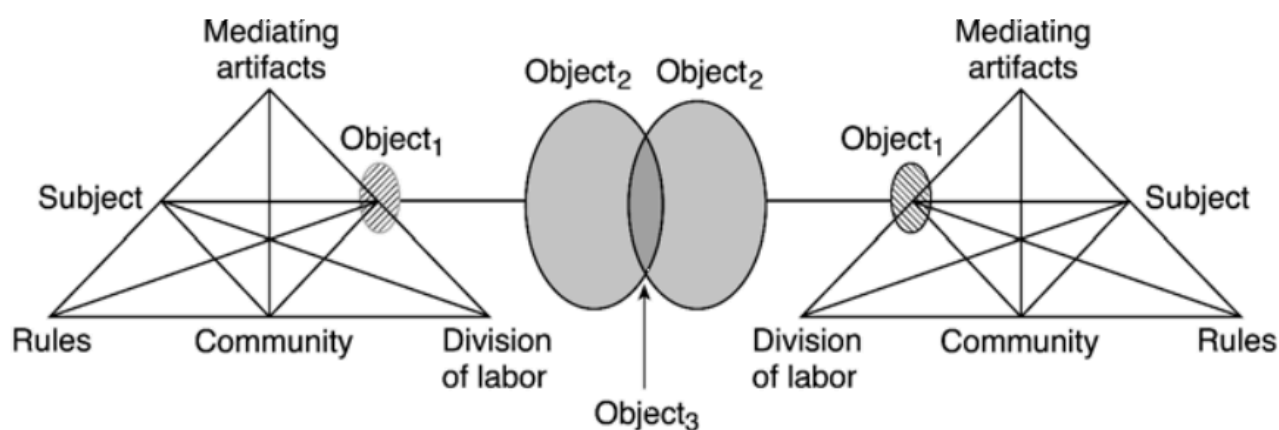
Figure 24: Third generation activity theory (Engeström, 2001: 136)

CHAT acknowledges that human beings have different lived experiences. Kinsella (2014) highlights how this is relevant in the art and design classroom:

> An art and design teacher therefore needs to consider the pupils' and their own educational histories and the effects these have on actions in the classroom. These different and varied experiences create a diverse and differentiated classroom, impacting subjectivity (Kinsella, 2014: 120-121).

Thus, a contradiction or change in an activity system may result in new activity systems being created, as highlighted in the diagram above. Third generation CHAT illuminated many contradictions in this study, helping to explain why certain behaviours continued to be replicated, which will be discussed in full in chapter 9.

5.2.4 Expanding the Theory

Thorpe (2015) used CHAT to discover significant differences in students' and teacher's perceptions of group composing. She found that students perceived group composing as *social jamming*, thus causing conflict:

> When social jamming and group composing are viewed as adjacent activities, third generation analysis reveals a number of contradictions and tensions (Thorpe, 2015: 212).

Thorpe (2015) highlighted this contradiction by representing teacher's and student's perceived object and outcome as conflicting, with the students on the left of figure 25 aiming to do 'social jamming' and the students on right needing to do their examination composing:
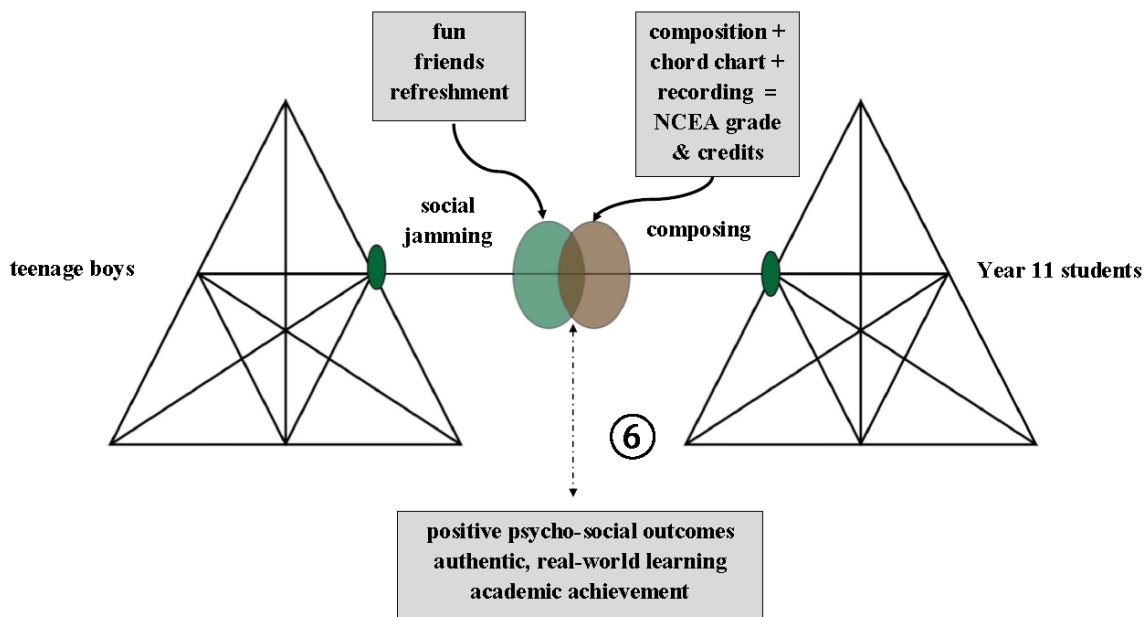
Figure 25: Social jamming and group composing as adjacent systems (Thorpe, 2015: 221)

By making the musical processes explicit Thorpe (2015, 2017) discovered that a new pedagogical space could be created with mutual benefits to teachers and students:

> …the development of shared conceptual understanding between teacher and students, supporting clearer communication between them (Thorpe, 2017: 317).

Instead of disregarding 'social jamming', the teacher encouraged students to use it as a tool for their group composing in the classroom (Thorpe, 2015: 258), thus creating a new CHAT system:

instruments & gear
soundproof space
stylistic knowledge

jamming

composition +
chord chart +
recording =
NCEA grade &
credits

Year 11 students

group composing

AS91092 **& composition task**
stylistic & musical conventions
NCEA assessment deadlines
school rules
school timetable

Year 11 Music class
school
musicians
[youth/music cultures
home & whanau
ethnicities]

instrumental & musical roles
skilled/unskilled player
critic
organiser
scribe

Figure 26: Social jamming as a tool for group composing (Thorpe, 2015: 206)

The adaptations from Thorpe (2015) are of interest to this study in how teachers and students perceive composing in the classroom.

Another adaptation to CHAT was by Henley (2009) who found that adults adopted different identities, such as 'learners, musician, non-musicians, master' (p.209), resulting in different activity systems. Henley (2009) found that these different systems could be layered up allowing researchers to see the movement between the systems, something she called constellations:
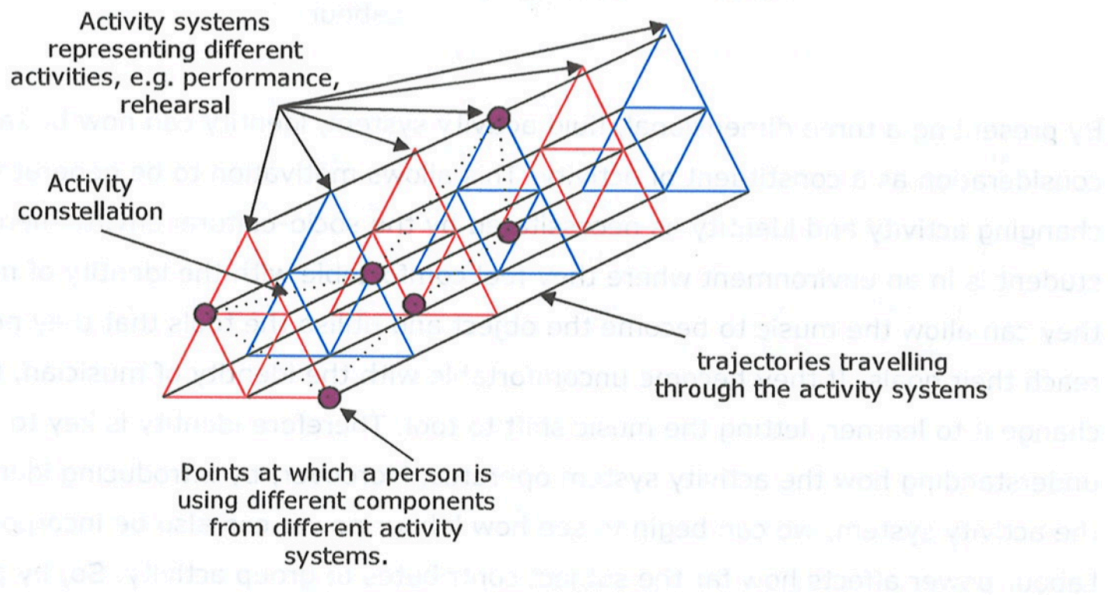
Figure 27: Constellations in the activity system (Henley, 2009: 209)

Within this, Henley (2009) developed a three-dimensional activity system model in which identity was of most significance and influenced the rest of the activity system:
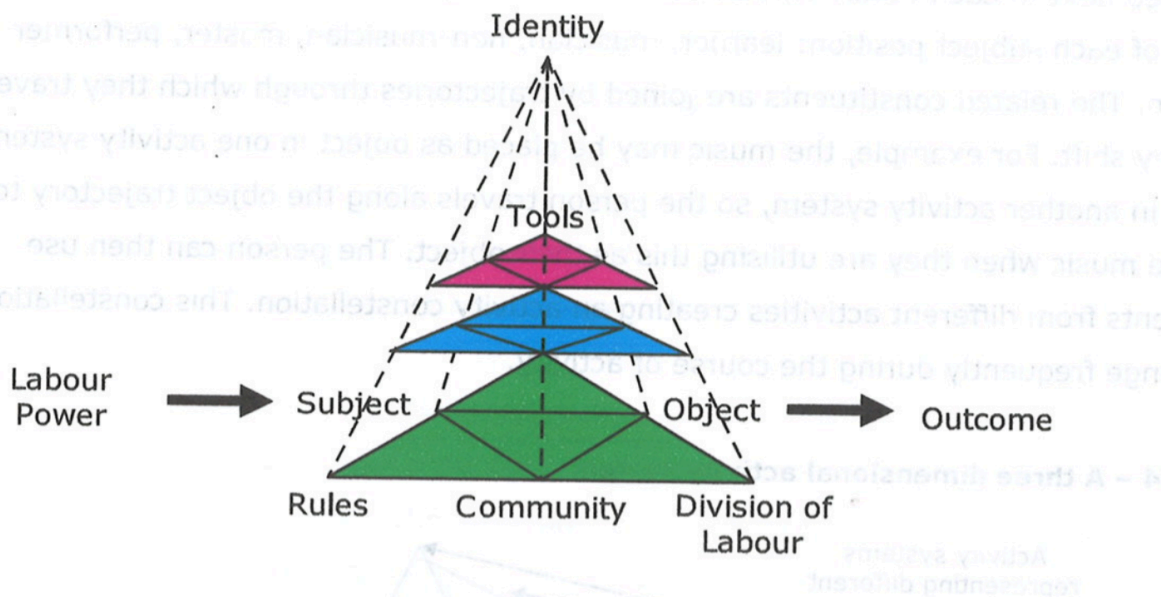
Figure 28: Identity as part of the activity system (Henley, 2009: 210)

Although identity was not specifically prominent in this study, participants' own perceptions of composers were considered.

CHAT as a theoretical and analytical tool is widespread and has been successfully adapted in music education research. The examples discussed demonstrate how CHAT is flexible and adaptable, rather than a fixed theory. CHAT is not without critics or criticism and Engeström (2012) warned against using CHAT as a 'superficial fad' or for theoretical 'decoration' of a study (p.518). Avis (2009) also affirmed that CHAT neglects 'wider social context' and ignores 'issues of power and social antagonism' (2009: 151). CHAT in this research was used an analytical tool to contextualise the individual behaviours and interactions within a wider and complex socio-historical and cultural landscape. CHAT also helped to integrate, as Daniels (2016) explained (2016), the 'micro' and the 'macro' (p.89) level of understanding and behaviour, and explore the multi-layered aspects of music education.

5.3 Bourdieu and Notions of Power

Alongside CHAT, conceptual tools developed by Bourdieu (1984) were used to uncover hidden relations in the findings regarding power and social class systems. These tools consider how a practice (such as composing) results from the interrelationships between the field it is placed, the forms of capital used to navigate a person's position in the field, and a their habitus:

[(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice

(Bourdieu, 1984: 101)

Bourdieu's field theory is a way to 'map objective structural relations' (Grenfell, 2008: 4); however in a field an individual's habitus and the various forms of capital they obtain can determine their place within the field. Bourdieu's theories of practice have been used and adapted widely, including for music education research, ensuring that the 'research focus is always broader than the specific focus of study' (Reay, 2004: 439). Music is viewed within a wider field of cultural production (Soderman, Burnard and Trulsson, 2015); therefore, Bourdieu's field theory is an appropriate analytical tool to deconstruct and question assumptions, notions of power, beliefs and practices in music, music teaching, and composing. Bourdieu's theories have been contested, received scepticism (Sullivan, 2002; Reay, 2004) and have been misused

(Bourdieu, 1989). By analysing the findings through a Bourdieusian lens I was able to uncover the complexities in power relations, which helped to explain the legitimisation of certain musics.

5.3.1 Field

The field is referred to as a 'structured system of social positions' (Jenkins, 1992: 85). Each field has its own set of rules, behaviours, beliefs and doxa (Soderman, Burnard and Trulsson, 2015). Bourdieu (1984) referred to the field to as a game in which implicit and explicit rules must be learnt in order to play, remain, and succeed. Habitus is interconnected to these rules, as it is behaviour, guided by a person's habitus, that determines if they are 'let in to the field' (Soderman, Burnard and Trulsson, 2015: 7). These unwritten rules often go unquestioned, resulting in certain dispositions becoming viewed as the 'natural' order of things (Burnard, 2012b: 116), as also raised by Engeström (1999).

At times the rules in a specific field can conflict with the habitus of the players. Lamont and Maton (2010) commented when the beliefs and experiences of a student do not match up with what formal education wants, calling it a 'code clash':

> A pupil's way of thinking and being…and that demanded by the educational context' leading to students feeling: 'this is not for the likes of me (Lamont and Maton, 2010: 67).

At times the rules may change, and when not made explicit can 'lead to loss of motivation, bewilderment and a sense that 'this is no longer for the likes of me' (ibid.). Lamont and Maton (2010) found that the codes at KS3 focus on acquiring 'musical skills and knowledge' (p.66) (a 'knowing code'), but KS4 requires students to have the 'capacity for personal expression' (ibid.) (an 'elite code'). This research was used to help explain the low uptake of students taking GCSE music (Lamont and Maton, 2010: 69).

5.3.2 Habitus

Habitus is commonly referred to as a person's 'dispositions' or 'attitudes' that are inherited and can be learned from parents and adults (Robbins, 1999). A person's dispositions are both an influence on, and influenced by, how we think and feel, what we choose to believe, and how we perceive the world, and evaluate the actions of others (Burnard, 2015). A person's habitus is embodied (Reay, 2004) and connected to the choices we make (Jenkins, 1992), consequently our habitus reflects our past, and influences our future:

> It captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this history into our present circumstances, and how we then make choices to act in certain ways and not others (Maton, 2008: 52).

Humans are not mechanical beings (Robbins, 1999) thus someone's habitus does not fully control every decision. From a social learning perspective, people are not just viewed as 'simply reactors to external influence' (Bandura, 1977: vii) but choice and behaviour is integrally influenced by numerous factors, such as environment. A person's habitus can change over time and education contributes to this change (Reay, 2004).

Habitus regulates behaviour not through 'explicit rules dictating such practices' (Maton, 2008: 50), but from internal and unwritten rules. Dispositions are developed in such a way that we are unaware of them, thus they appear to be 'natural' (Burnard, 2015). This is termed '*doxa*':

> A set of core values and discourses which a field articulates as its fundamental principles and which tend to be viewed as inherently true and necessary (Soderman, Burnard and Trulsson, 2015: 231).

As discussed in AT, Bourdieu also argued that everyday practices and behaviours can be overlooked and 'taken for granted' (Jenkins, 1992). Certain ideologies and ways of behaving can become viewed as 'common sense' and as a result 'opaque' (Fairclough, 1995), what Fairclough termed naturalization. This helps explain why societies have a norm/status quo and why history appears to 'repeats itself' (Jenkins, 1992: 81). In education, dominant teaching practices often go unchallenged in schools

thus becoming accepted as 'natural and legitimate', and viewed as *doxa,* or the 'regimes of truth' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002: 119).

5.3.3 Capital

The core concept behind the notion of capital lies in the belief that, in a field of social practice, there are inherent shifting power relations, struggles, competition and hierarchies that an individual must navigate (Bourdieu, 1993). What Bourdieu (1993) refers to as a constructed space of 'positions' and 'position-taking' (p.34):

> The structure of the distribution of the capital of specific properties which governs success in the field and the winning of the external or specific profits which are at stake in the field' (Bourdieu, 1993: 30).

> A constant struggle for legitimation, power and dominance (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007: 49).

Bourdieu (1989) outlined four types of capital accessible to individuals and organisations: economic (e.g. financial, assets), cultural (taste, knowledge), social (social networks), and symbolic (credential, education). Symbolic capital is referred to as a 'piece of universally recognized and guaranteed symbolic capital, good on all markets' (Bourdieu, 1989: 21). Cultural capital can also be converted into 'economic capital' and 'institutionalized' (Bourdieu, 1986: 17).

Cultural capital refers to specific skills and knowledge in a field, which Burnard (2015) calls 'being in the know' (p.199), and can be formed in an embodied state, such as a person's dispositions, an objective state as presented in artefacts such as books and paintings, and in an institutionalised state, such as qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital is particularly important in this study as music can be used as a strong form of cultural capital and 'marker' of social class (Apple, 1996: 23):

> Certain 'cultural capital', which has symbolic value in the way it 'buys' social distinction (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007: 44).

Class structure, social labelling and musical taste of French culture was investigated in detail in Bourdieu's seminal work La Distinction (1979; 1984). Although a person's social class is a 'multifaceted and dynamically evolving structure' (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007: 42), Bourdieu (1984) believed musical taste could signify a person's class. Soderman, Burnard and Trulsson (2015) state that in revealing one's own musical taste you 'tell so much more about yourself than simply discussing music' (p.2):

> Nothing more clearly affirms one's 'class', nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music (Bourdieu, 1984: 18).
>
> Markers of "taste" become the markers of people (Apple, 1996: 23).

A person's musical taste can create barriers that 'reflect and reproduce inequalities between social classes, ethnic groups, and men and women' (Reay, 2015: xvii). Musical preference can also be a significant factor 'by which we formulate and express our individual identities' and 'form an important statement of our values and attitudes' (Hargreaves, Miell and Macdonald, 2002: 1).

Although the value of cultural capital can vary depending on the field of practice, cultural capital often refers to 'highbrow aesthetic culture' (Burnard, 2015: 199). Western classical music is deemed as having high cultural capital value compared to popular music, which is viewed as 'low culture' (Soderman, Burnard and Trulsson, 2015: 2). In Trulsson's study (2015) of immigrant families in Sweden, Western classical music was viewed as necessary for acquiring the *right* cultural capital in the community:

> Having children play classical music sends a signal that the entire family is highly educated and holds a high level of cultural assets. Classical music therefore becomes a means for them to position themselves in relation to the surrounding community, where having a high level of cultural capital can open doors to social and economic assets (Trulsson, 2015: 36).

Cultural capital, therefore, can be a powerful tool for moving up the social ladder in society and for social mobility, of which music can play a significant part.

Earning capital enables advancement in a particular field and through social hierarchy structures. This can be referred to as social mobility; something the current UK Conservative government views education as enabling, as shown in the 'Plan for improving social mobility through education' (Greening, 2017). Education has been viewed as a way for students to earn certain types of cultural capital (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002):

> With the academic qualification, a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture, social alchemy produces a form of cultural capital which has a relative autonomy vis-à-vis its bearer and even vis-à-vis the cultural capital he effectively possesses at a given moment in time. It institutes cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986: 20).

5.3.4 Maintaining Power and Social Hierarchy

One fundamental question regarding education for Bourdieu was: does education promote 'social change…for less privileged groups' or does it attempt to retain 'existing social divisions' and disadvantage of certain groups'? (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002: 106). As Bourdieu (1993) outlined, a field players 'struggle to defend or improve their positions' (p.30). They do this through acquiring certain forms of capital that are recognised and legitimised by those in a position of power. When misrecognition occurs, certain groups of people may be discriminated against; this is known as 'symbolic violence':

> Social hierarchies and social inequality, as well as the suffering that they cause, are produced and maintained…by forms of symbolic domination (Schubert, 2008: 183).

Symbolic violence is not physical, but instead is often implicit and can be deeply embedded so that the victims are commonly complicit with it; viewing it as the natural order of things (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002). Grenfell and Hardy (2007) argue that certain myths and stories help to legitimise privilege (p.44):

> It assumes that the fundamental role of educational institutions is the distribution of knowledge of students, some of whom are more 'able' to

acquire it because of cultural gifts that come 'naturally' from their class or race or gender positions (Apple, 1997: 600).

These 'myths' may act as a form of symbolic violence, thus maintaining power and control through education.

Bourdieu (1993) argued that the 'legitimate mode of cultural production' is imposed and is 'inseparable from the struggle within the dominant class' (p.41). For Burnard (2012a) the western musical canon is an 'ideology' aimed to promote specific 'values', reinforcing 'class and status group distinction' (p.23). Similarly, Legg (2012) declared that the 'scholastic canon' acted as a gate-keeper reinforcing the 'cycle of reproduction' in music and excluding 'certain groups of students from higher education' (p.157). Whittaker (in press), revised Legg's study concluding that the 2016 A-level music reforms continue to promote the western classical canon. There is also a clear noticeable lack of female composers, something publicly highlighted in 2015 by A-level student Jessy McCabe (Khomami, 2016), as well as composers of colour and from ethic minority groups, are missing from the musical canon.

Cultural capital can take a significant time to gain (Bourdieu, 1986) and, depending on upbringing, some students are able to play the *game* starting with more capital than other children who were from a different social class. Grenfell and Hardy (2007) commented that when students enter formal education some are able to progress in the field more easily:

> Those not so culturally endowed found themselves already 'out of game', unable to connect with a world which was already strange for them (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007: 55).

Similarly, Yates (1985) argues that:

> Where the criteria of success and the norms of teaching and curriculum are still defined in terms of the already dominant group, that group is always likely to remain one step ahead (Yates, 1985: 212).

Spruce (2013a) believed that music education still 'privileges and promotes a relatively limited way of musical knowing…root[ed] in the practices of western classical music' (p.29, in Schmidt and Colwell, 2017). Resulting in students who already come with these forms of knowing, or cultural capital, being at an advantage:

> Success in the education system is facilitated by the possession of cultural capital and of higher-class habitus (Sullivan, 2002: 144).

This raises fundamental concerns regarding inequality and the role of education as reinforcing disadvantage (Yates and Millar, 2016):

> Social inequalities are legitimated by the educational credentials held by those in dominant positions (Sullivan, 2002: 145).

Therefore, music qualifications at KS4 and KS5 can be viewed as preserving social hierarchy, meaning that the myths surrounding composers 'sustain and legitimize the existing pattern of inequality' (Burnard, 2012a: 26), raising the question, who is music education for (Lamont and Maton, 2010)?

5.4 Enculturation and Legitimisation of Knowledge

Apple (1996) commented that 'education is deeply implicated in the politics of culture' (p.22) highlighting that education and culture cannot be separated, and should be considered together:

> Education and culture – should be regarded as two sides of the same coin (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007: 40).

Social theorists have considered the important role of formal education in the enculturation of young people. Vygotsky called schools a 'tool of enculturation' (Blanck, 1990: 49), and 'cultural laboratories' (Moll, 1990: 1). Lave and Wenger (2005) described LPP as encouraging 'production and reproduction' (p.149) of current cultural practices (p.154). Similarly, Giroux (1985) called formal schooling 'a device for economic and cultural reproduction' (p.xi). Enculturation of a child occurs

by teaching the use of cultural signs and tools. As with the tools outlined in CHAT, these can be physical objects as well as the use of language (Cole and Gajdamaschko, 2007), with speech being a vital cultural tool (Vygotsky, 1978). The creation and use of a cultural tool can significantly influence human activity, thus the relationship between making and shaping meaning is complex (Daniels, 2016):

> These forms of mediation, which are products of the sociocultural milieu in which they exist, are not viewed as simply facilitating activity that would otherwise take place. Instead, they are viewed as fundamentally shaping and defining it (Wertsch, 1990: 114).

Over time these cultural tools becomes internalised:

> A process whereby certain aspects of patterns of activity that had been performed on an external plane come to be executed on an internal plane (Wertsch, 1985: 61-62).

Due to internalisation, cultural values and beliefs can be transmitted to students through an implicit and unintentional aspect of formal education. In his study with preschool/infant children, Bernstein (1975) created the term 'invisible pedagogies' explaining how implicit rules are transmitted and 'impossible for the children to know or be aware of' (p.66). Another phrase commonly used is, 'hidden curriculum' (Giroux and Purpel, 1983) to describe 'educational situations that lie beneath the stated curriculum' (Graham, Graziano and Kelly, 2016: 29).

ZPD can be viewed as promoting 'mastery of and conscious awareness in the use of…cultural tools' (Moll, 1990: 12), and that collaboration with adults allows children to 'learn adult meanings, behaviours, and technologies' (Tudge, 1990: 156). Lave and Wenger (2005) took this idea further by defining ZPD as 'the distance between the cultural knowledge provided by the sociohistorical context…and the everyday experience of individuals' (p.150). Therefore, some education researchers and social theorists believe that the purpose of formal education is to teach children societal practices (Moll, 1990), reproducing 'culture in all its arbitrariness' (Jenkins, 1992: 105). Considering the importance of music in forming social and cultural identities, this is particularly important for this study. Some music educationalists argue that classroom music education can focus on handing down a specific historical culture

(Swanwick, 2012; Fautley, 2017a) to students. Swanwick (2012) argued that music education should be about engaging with traditions in a lively and creative way rather than just 'receiving' culture (p.27). This raises questions as to whose culture is being handing down to students (Shepherd *et al*., 1980) and why are certain forms of knowledge, and musical genres, promoted as more important than others in schools?

5.4.1 Legitimisation

Wertsch (1998) asked: 'why is it that certain knowledge is publicly available and openly taught while other forms or knowledge are not?' (in Daniels, 2016: 80). This is an important question for this study as it makes us questions what and why certain aspects are taught in music at KS4 and KS5 and how composing is assessed. As discussed by Bourdieu (1986), within fields of practice different types of capital become dominant. This is dependent on the 'legitimacy and value of the capital' in that particular field (Jenkins, 1992: 85). The form of capital has to be 'recognised by others' (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007: 44) in order for it to be of any worth, but Bourdieu (1993) asked 'who is the true producer of the value of the work' (p.76):

> Art is art because it is recognized as such by institutions with the socially acknowledged role of consecration…Value is consequently conferred and legitimated as one part of institution control over its sphere of influence (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007: 55).

Thus, calling for an understanding of the value of art as a socially constructed field. In terms of composing assessment, we must question who determines the value of a work and if certain musical genres or features are valued more than others.

Csikszentmihalyi (1999) highlights that creative contributions must be sanctioned by those with high status in the field, known as the 'gatekeepers' (p.315).

> …creativity does not happen inside people's head, but in the interaction between a person's thoughts and a sociocultural context (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996: 23).

Therefore, a work of art must be recognised and accepted by the 'appropriate community' (Gardner, 2006: 42). The term 'consecration' is used to explain when 'certain positions or practices within a field become endowed with a special aura and sense of distinction' (Soderman, Burnard and Trulsson, 2015: 231). Therefore, anything that lies beyond this sanctioned understanding, may be criticised, or in terms of composing assessment, marked down. In formal education specifically selected cultural, historical, and institutional tools are taught (Wertsch, 2007: 178). Shepherd *et al*. (1980) commented that legitimators in the field produce and define what musical knowledge should be. These legitimators can take the form of institutions such as concert venues, examination boards and schools (Burnard, 2015). Torrance (2000) comments that examination boards 'classify and standardize knowledge' creating 'legitimate knowledge in testable form' (p.177). Therefore, marking criteria produced by examination boards decide what is to be valued, and what is not.

Certain 'star players, legends and lore' (Thomson, 2008: 69) in a field help to legitimise certain types of capital, knowledge and behaviours in the field. Bourdieu (1993) highlights that the 'glorification of 'great individuals' (p.29), is commonplace within the art. In terms of music, the classical canon is an example of the *big names* in the classical music field (Burnard, 2012a). In music education, the music of the canon is often presented as 'perfectly formed', 'untouchable' and as the 'facts' (Burnard, 2012b: 114) of musical history. The canon reinforces the idea that 'music exists independently of the outside world and social life' (Soderman, Burnard and Trulsson, 2015: 1), the idea of 'pure art' (ibid.) that cannot be criticised. Although legitimators define what musical knowledge should be taught in school, Freire (1985) argues that knowledge is not static but is instead vast and changing:

> Disciplines are social in origin and changing and expanding over time (Yates and Millar, 2016: 299).

Sawyer (2006) criticised education practices which teach knowledge as something 'static and complete', that students 'consume' 'rather than allowing students to 'produce' their own' (p.42). This unquestioned assumption of classical music is problematic, as it does not acknowledge the canon as being socially constructed and

raises questions as to what type of musical composing is encouraged within examination systems and why?

Researchers have critically questioned the role of education in promoting specific political ideologies (Giroux, 1992), and maintaining class divisions and hegemony in 'which dominant groups in society come together to form a block and sustain leadership over subordinate groups' (Apple, 1996: 14), linking to Bourdieu' (1986) notion of capital and field. Apple (1996) commented that 'the curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge' (p.22), and Giroux (1992) discussed how education can be a 'technology of power' (p.128):

> Pedagogy is, in part, a technology of power, language, and practice that produces and legitimates forms of moral and political regulation, that construct and offer human beings particular views of themselves and the world. Such views are never innocent and are always implicated in the discourse and relations of ethics and power (Giroux, 1992: 81).

This opens up a debate regarding 'what is the important knowledge that pupils should be able to acquire at school?' (Yates and Millar, 2016: 298), who is defining this knowledge, and 'who benefits?' (Apple, 1996: 36) from these decisions:

> The decision to define some groups' knowledge as the most legitimate, as official knowledge, while other groups' knowledge hardly sees the light of day, says something extremely important about who has power in society (Apple, 1996: 22).

Divisions of value between different musical genres can be explained by Reay (2015) who argues that categorising music highlights inequality. Schubert (2008) explained how categorisation helps to 'make up and order the world and, hence, constitute and order people within it' (p.184). However, these categorisations of music are socially constructed:

> Political struggle is found in efforts to legitimize those systems of classification and categorization, and violence results when we misrecognize, as natural, those systems of classification that are actually culturally arbitrary and historical (Schubert, 2008: 184).

The influence of classical music as high value in terms of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) has potentially huge implications for music educators and examination boards determining what should be taught and learned in schools, and is something that will be discussed further.

5.3.2 The Importance of Reflection

Music teachers are part of a field of power who have their own set of beliefs, practices and tastes informed by their own habitus, which in turn influence pedagogic practices (Jenkins, 1992; Soderman, Burnard and Trulsson, 2015):

> Music teachers have most often engaged with the formal knowledge of their subject area for a number of years prior to or concurrently with their teacher-education program, and thus hold strong beliefs about what comprises valuable knowledge and skills in the subject area (Dwyer, 2015: 2).

These practices become internalised (Engeström, 1999) and doxa (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002; Soderman, Burnard and Trulsson, 2015) if unchallenged. Peshkin (1988) called this a teacher's subjectivities which are formed from 'the circumstances of one's class, statuses, and values' (p.17). Peshkin (1988) commented that subjectivity is 'inevitable' and can remain 'unconscious' (p.17) stating: 'one's subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed' (ibid.).

Savage and Fautley (2007) outlined two types of 'subjectivities': intrinsic, which is fixed; and 'situational', which is 'context-bound' (p.125) and may change. Through reflexivity teachers can become conscious of their own subjectivities. Education researchers have emphasised the importance for teachers to be reflective on their own teaching practice:

> Indeed, for some reflective practitioners it is the core of practice (Schön, 1983: 68).

> Understanding your own subjectivities is the root of educational understanding (Savage, 2007b: 201).

> Understand the root values that underpin our conceptions of education and their working out through our teaching (Savage and Fautley, 2007: 125).

Kinsella (2014) comments that 'contradictions' in teaching can become 'invisible' and 'taken for granted' (p.307) without the process of reflection.

Schön (1983) stated that teachers 'must be ready to invent new methods' (p.66) in order to suit their students' needs, arguing that teachers should reflect in-action: 'while they are in the midst' of teaching (p.62-3). This is something I was able to observe in the teaching and teacher interviews. Without reflection, pedagogies can become embedded and continue to be unquestioned:

> Through reflection, he can surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice, and can make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness which he may allow himself to experience (Schön, 1983: 61).

Shulman (2005) termed pedagogies that replicate 'in nearly all institutions that educate that domain' as 'signature pedagogies' (p.54). These signature pedagogies are rooted in 'personalities, disposition, and cultures' of the field' (Shulman, 2005: 52-53).

Although the importance of reflection has been articulated extensively, Schön (1983) highlighted some barriers to reflective practice:

> Many practitioners, locked into a view of themselves as technical experts…For them, uncertainty is a threat; its admission is a sign of weakness (Schön, 1983: 69).

Here Schön (1983) considered the role of the expert, where reflection in and on practice is viewed negatively. His description of a reflective practitioner highlights the uncertainty and willingness to learn and change their practice:

> They have allowed themselves to become confused about subjects they are supposed to "know"; and as they have tried to work their way out of their confusions, they have also begun to think differently about learning and teaching (Schön, 1983: 67).

Although practitioners must be comfortable showing insecurity and uncertainty, given the rise of accountability and performativity practices in schools, it is easy to understand why teachers may be anxious about this. Due to the high-stakes attached

to the examinations in this study, accountability pressures were high and therefore may influence the time available and role of reflexivity. Savage (2007b) identified the difficulties of finding time for reflection, specifically in music education, due to the culture of schools:

> As teachers and researchers we are faced with a range of competing demands on our energy and time. It is often too easy to prioritize badly and dwell on the insignificant at the expense of the significant (Savage, 2007b: 201).

Schön (1983) commented that change can take time and is not instantaneous. Savage (2007b) advised teachers to 'counteract the 'busyness' culture' of schools and ensure 'space' and time for reflection on their teaching (p.201). The lack of reflection witnessed in this study may explain why some teachers were unaware of their own biases, assumptions and pedagogies.

5.5 Theoretical Frameworks Summary

Bourdieu believed that in education lay the key to building 'emancipated structures needed in the new world' (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007: 40); however, education can be viewed as a process of enculturation of young people, ensuring cultural reproduction (Sullivan, 2002), and maintaining social hierarchical frameworks. Similarly, Bourdieu believed that education was a 'mechanism for consolidating social separation' (Robbins, 2008: 29) thus, a tool for continuing to reinforce social equality. This is an important aspect to consider for this study, especially in music education where concerns regarding inequality are common. Western classical music is also often views as high in value in terms of cultural capital, and is also used as a tool for social mobility.

In order to move forward with music education we need to recognise music as socially situated, 'a human construction', 'a product of culture' (Burnard, 2012a: 10). Burnard (2012b) urges us to critically ask *who* is making and promoting myths, and *what* benefits they gain:

> The challenge and goal for all music educators is to make compositional activities more relevant, in ways that give students faith in their own means of expression and the ability to distinguish between different kinds of music creativities that have the potential to be recognised and valued as real-world practice (Burnard, 2012b: 136).

By combining the theories and key concepts from the theorists outlined above, I aim to discuss and make visible the practices and relationships informing and controlling the teaching, learning and assessment of composing at KS4 and KS5.

Themes of power will be considered through the findings, including considering roles of community in the classroom, and rules involved in examination composing. Areas of capital, in particular cultural capital, and potential bias will also be observed, along with highlighting and exploring any conflicts or contractions that arise.

6. Case Study Findings

Although participants were asked similar questions during data collection, each of the case studies presents different perspectives on the teaching and learning of composing at KS4 and KS5. In the case studies classroom voice is dominant, viewing both teaching and learning as interrelated. Structuring the case studies by theme using observations and interviews simultaneously, allowed for a detailed and complex discussion; thus highlighting connections and comparison between teacher and learner. Detail regarding each case study school can be found in table 4, and basic background information on teach teacher in table 5, providing important context. Table 6 also highlights when data collection took place the amount of data collected.

6.1 Midland River Grammar School

Originally established in the 13th century, students from Midland River Grammar (MRG) largely came from areas of high economic wealth. The music teacher Alex Holmes (AH) who came from a classical choral musical tradition, had some experience of composing for ensembles and choirs during his own higher education. AH was the most experienced music teacher with 11 years experience and having taught for 9 years at MRG. The music department had two classrooms with keyboards, iMac computers and pianos in both rooms. The school hosted a wide range of extracurricular ensembles and choirs. Many of the music students were high ability multi-instrumentalists, as demonstrated in table 11:

Table 11: MRG student focus group

Participant	Sex	School year	Instrument(s) played
Student 1 (S1)	Male	11	Saxophone and piano
Student 2 (S2)	Male	11	Saxophone (grade 7), clarinet and guitar. drums
Student 3 (S3)	Male	11	Guitar, bass guitar, drums
Student 4 (S4)	Male	11	Piano, voice, trombone, bass guitar, double bass, saxophone
Student 5 (S5)	Male	11	Piano (grade 8), double bass (grade 7), bass guitar, voice, clarinet
Student 6 (S6)	Male	12	Choral music
Student 7 (S7)	Male	12	Instrument not given
Student 8 (S8)	Female	12	Piano and in a string quartet
Student 9 (S9)	Male	13	Voice

Observations of the year 11 and year 12 class took place over one day towards the start of the academic year. An interview was conducted with the year 13 student but no observations were taken due to timetabling. The year 11 students composed for their AQA GCSE examination with the brief of 'popular music of the 20th and 21st Centuries' (see appendix 9a). The majority of students composed using Sibelius with the music teacher giving one-to-one feedback and occasionally playing parts on the piano. The year 12 students worked on part of their AS OCR examination requiring them to compose Bach Chorales.

6.1.1 Pleasing the Examiner

What was significant about this case study was the extent to which students were conscious and concerned about the examination and the marking of composition, and achieving their predicted grades. AH mentioned that his students commonly considered the opinions of the examiner saying phrases such as: "I don't know if the exam board will like it" (AH). Students were mindful to work within the requirements

of the examination, which in this case meant composing a piece to pass rather than please their own interests. S9 was particularly aware of ways to the pass the examination:

> **S9:** It's got to follow the rules more than anything. And maybe that's one criticism I have of the composing system in schools is that a lot of it is very much about ticking boxes and not about what composing really is about…I've definitely had some truly terrible compositions full of musical features and "ah tick tick tick tick tick"…I mean for exam purposes I would say the most important thing is ticking boxes and that's the sad thing. That, you know, composers are composing to get the best marks in exams but as a result the composition may not be as good as it should be

Students were very aware of the differences between composing for enjoyment, and composing to pass the examination:

> **S1:** [I am] trying to come up with ideas for a piece that I'm pleased with but also get some marks in the exam because I'm sure they're examples of people that have written really great compositions but just haven't fulfilled the tick box mark scheme for the exam, but haven't done very well

It was clear that some students at MRG had learnt very clearly how to play 'the results game' (Mansell, 2007: 3) and how to pass the examinations (Harlen, 2007). AH also admitted to encouraging his students to compose towards the examination as much as possible:

> **AH:** [I make sure] that their processes match the ones that the exam boards want them to have

> **AH:** [I] make sure that it fits into the particular pigeonhole that it's supposed to fit into, especially at A-level

Similarly to the students, the teacher (AH) was also aware of 'the results game' (Mansell, 2007: 3). During the students' focus group interviews their discourse focused frequently on the marking of their compositions:

> **S9:** I still am aiming for an A grade in the composing part, erm, and err, my teacher didn't think it was, er, capable of getting an A

> **S2:** With composition in schools you really have to put something unique on the piece of paper if you want to get 26/28 marks for composition

Student (unidentified): Or 30
S2: or 30 yeah

S1: He got me down as 9/30 because I've got about five bars for one instrument just repeated over and over again
Student (unidentified): That got you 9 marks?
S1: That got me 9 marks
Student (unidentified): Did you put your name on it? That probably counted for a few marks [laugh]

Interestingly, much of the feedback given by the teacher was also in reference to the marking of the composition:

AH: It's not 30/30 for that

AH: Fundamentally there is some technical things that are missing from there and so he would automatically lose 5 or 6 marks which at that point is more than a grade

Thus confirming what Kinsella and Fautley (2017) found regarding feedback practices from music teachers being based on task completion.

6.1.2 Closed and Open Teaching Approaches

Students felt that the mark scheme was vague and did not provide adequate detail about examination requirements:

S5: The mark scheme doesn't help either, usually what they do is they give us a mark scheme but I look at the mark scheme and it just says "good sounding music"…but that could be, that could be anything, anything, it's literally up to interpretation

S9: It's got to be one examiner per piece, per composition. Um, and obviously that ends up with a more biased view one way or another

S5: When they [the examiners] mark the performance and the exam there is literally right or wrong answers, but for composition it's the only aspect where it's actually just up to your own interpretation

Similarly, AH was concerned about examination being too open-ended:

AH: It's not always clear what the examiner actually wants

AH: It's difficult to know exactly what do the exam board mean

AH: I just can't work out what they want really

Many students found the openness challenging calling it a "daunting task" (S4), a "struggle" (S3), and "a lot of work" (S3). Many students desired for a more objective assessment criteria, identifying this as more familiar from other school subjects:

S5: It's not clear in the mark scheme because there's nothing in it 'oh this, has he done and modulation? Give a mark there, has he done this? Give a mark there.' Especially like, with stuff like French, you can say 'oh he's done a complex structure there so he can get a next to mark' erm, and stuff like maths, you can get a clear thing

However, some students enjoyed the freedom and openness of the examination:

S1: That is one thing I like…I can just go into a corner in the attic and play my guitar for two hours

Feeling there were fundamental differences between music and other school subjects, with music and composing being unique:

S2: Do you not think the whole reason for taking music was that he needed that creative side to your work, and that it's not just something that can be marked from a sheet of paper?
S5: Yeah but even English can be marked from a sheet of paper
Student (unidentified): Yeah but this isn't English, this is music
S5: The way it is. This is music but it's the same with art, you don't get, I don't do art, I mean you do and you do, but it's about the quality of a piece of work and how it looks and the detail within it rather than, "oh they've used this material"
S3: Yeah you can tell it something sounds good and you can tell something looks good
S5: Yeah

Not all students were in agreement with how much support should offered by their teacher. The GCSE students questioned if, and how, composing could be taught:

S5: I'm not sure if we're meant to be taught

> **S3:** I'm not sure how you would teach it

> **S5:** I grant you it's very hard to teach how someone how to compose a piece because supposed to come from their head

Some students argued that their teacher was too prescriptive believing that composing should be learnt through experience rather than being taught by the teacher:

> **S3:** He's kind of used it as almost like an equation and the formula

> **S2:** He can be a bit *too* formulaic about it, rather than "oh it sounds good and it works" it's more "you need more stuff in it"

Feeling strongly that the composition and musical ideas must come from themselves:

> **S4:** It needs to be your own thing

> **S2:** Maybe that's down to us rather than him because he can't give us something, we have to do it ourselves

Other students viewed their teacher's role as solely to increase their examination grade:

> **S7:** He's there to improve our mark

> **S9:** Every student will just want their teacher to get their marks higher…I've handed in this piece which is composed in my compositional voice and, and he'll suggest what to do with it to make it exam worthy

These conflicts highlight the differences between students' preferences in types of composing tasks, as found by other researchers confirming that this balance between open and closed tasks in vital in teaching composing and creative subjects (Salaman, 1988; Webster, 2003; Breeze, 2009).

Differences Between the Key Stages

In the literature, music education researchers discuss the difficult jump between composing at KS3 and KS4 for students, often in relations to the move from group to individual composing (Odam, 2000; Fautley, 2005; Savage and Fautley, 2011). In this

case the difficultly was in the change from closed to open tasks, and the level of guidance. Upon further investigation it became apparent that the teaching at MRG KS3 differed from KS3 to GCSE. At KS3 the students' experiences of composing was through structured and closed composing exercises, focusing on theory and notation. The teacher outlined a typical year 9 composing task, which he called "very, *very* structured" and "filling the gaps" (AH):

> **AH:** They write an eight bar melody, another eight bar melody in the subdominant and then repeat the first eight bar melody and there you've got your 24 bars of and A section, and to B sectioned which has tonic and relative minor, again all based around 8 bar chunks of melody, and then you have a variation on the first section at the end and they have to do that melody first

The closed composing task presents a list of step-by-step instructions, leaving very little space for decision-making. AH believed that by providing a very clear structure at KS3, students could learn and reuse them at KS4:

> **AH:** There comes a point when you just have to let them, and some of them will flounder and some of them will have a disastrous fortnight and not write anything down at all or sometimes, and not really know what they're doing. But fundamentally they can always go back to the idea of coming up with a structure and filling the gaps, and that works

However, the focus group interviews revealed students had not considered this link; instead viewing KS3 and KS4 as disparate and unrelated practices, as shown in figure 29:

KS3	KS4
Structured, step-by-step technical tasks	Open and free composing tasks

Figure 29: Student perceptions between KS3 and KS4

AH mentioned in his interview that he was attempting to make the KS3 course more similar to KS4, due to the students' difficulties in transitioning:

> **AH:** We're trying to make year 8 feel a little bit like year 9…fundamentally that's what they'll have to do at the end of year 9, and year 10 and year 11, so

actually we are trying to move it to the GCSE way of doing it downwards

Thus alluding to curriculum washback as a result of the examination.

Students also raised a conflict between GCSE and A-level composing teaching. The perception of the GCSE students' was that A-level composing was taught properly, whereas GCSE was not:

> **S5:** Apparently in A-level they are actually *taught* what sort of stuff works and how to actually do a composition. Whereas with us he's just like "do this, just go on a computer and write stuff down"

Student 5 was clearly frustrated by the differences between KS4 and KS5, believing that technical tasks were essential to learning to compose, but not all students had the same opinion and others valued the freedom to be creative:

> **S4:** Oh no, because I went into one of their [A-level] classes and it was so dull.

Students in this study had different opinions regarding how composing should be taught and assessed, with the changes in pedagogical practices between KS3, KS4 and KS5 causing them conflict. This data exemplifies the complexities and personal nature of progression in composing.

6.1.3 Writing Music or "Messing Around"

In this case study the act of writing music was significant to the teacher. The words "write", "writing" and "written", dominated the teacher's interview, in contrast to words such as "create", "composing" and "compose", as highlighted in figure 30:
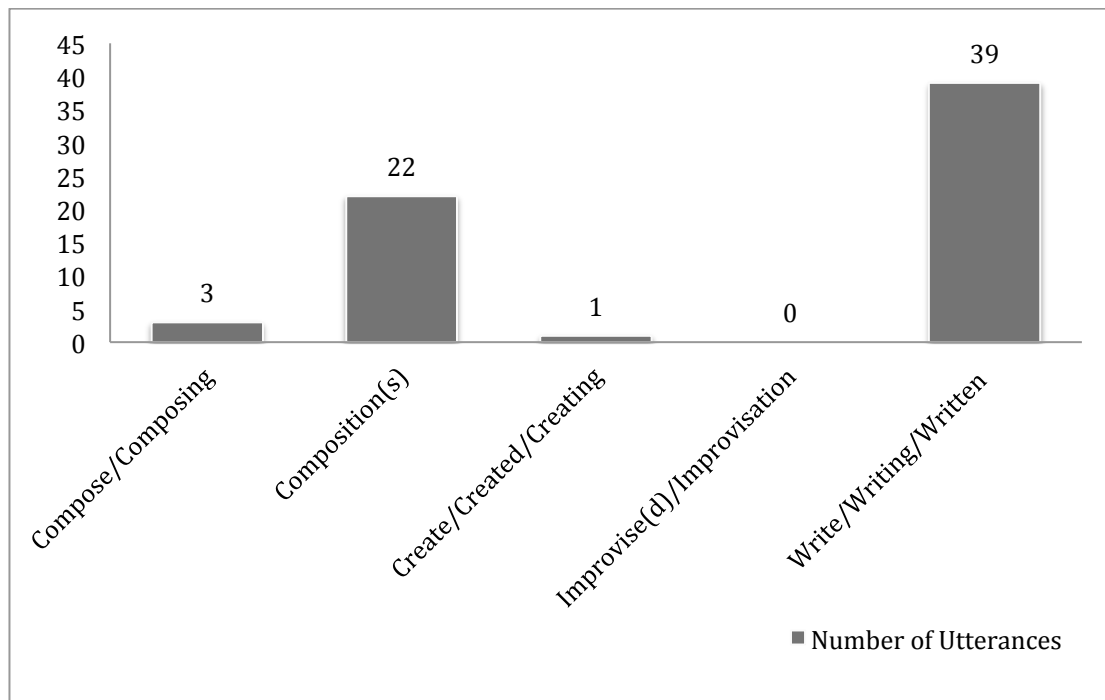
Figure 30: Common terms used by AH to denote composing

AH used the word "writing" interchangeably to mean the act of composing. For example:

AH: I think if you allowed him to do this he [a GCSE student] would consider *writing music* his first instrument

AH: It's beautifully written, it's all idiomatic writing

AH: He had written a really good but a simple chord sequence

Although the word "writing" was used to mean composing, it was often connected to the act of physically writing musical notation and creating a musical score:

AH: There they literally compose something and write it. Write it down, you know, that's what they'll end up with is a sheet of paper that they can say is their music

AH: Most of the time it's about them realising that they should just write something down

AH: You write that down, then you will have a little bit of a composition, then you need to have another idea and write that down

The word "composition" was also used to signal the final product, and often the written score:

> **AH:** So we now should theoretically have two compositions, which they can send off [to the examination board] by the end of this term
>
> **AH:** Just send the compositions off again [for re-marking]

AH's background in classical and choral music may give an indication as to the use of the word "write" as most of his musical experiences came from music that was notated.

Interestingly, the students regularly associated the word "composition" with the examination:

> **S6:** I had one of my GCSE compositions recorded by some members of the choir
>
> **S6:** So we were given various areas of study so harmony, texture, dynamics or whatever and you had to, in the composition
>
> **S1:** Another composition for our piece of coursework
>
> **S2:** If you want to get 26/28 marks for composition

But in comparison, students used the term "composing" to refer to their enjoyment of creating their own music:

> **S9:** I enjoy composing
>
> **S3:** Composing is just a way of like, making what I, like…conveying your ideas through a form of art
>
> **S8:** I don't compose that often but if I was, I would just do whatever. I wouldn't have to think about all of the chords and what I'm using, just do what sounds right

The year 12 music students had an interesting debate on the role of notation, assessment and composing:

S6: Erm, if you're going to have it performed or have it marked for school then you'd have to write it down obviously but if it's just for personal fun
S8: Yeah
S6: Just composing for your and enjoyment then I wouldn't necessarily feel the need to have to write it down I just.
Student (unidentified): Keep it in your head
S6: Yeah exactly

When asking students to discuss their composing practices outside of the classroom, distinct differences emerged in how they perceived composing. Students often described their outside school processes as "messing" or "playing around" on an instrument, and improvising:

S3: …like if I'm just messing about on guitar and then, you know, I kind of get something that I like I might just mess around with that

S1: To do that on piano, like certain ideas that I've messed around and come up with ideas

S7: …have a go at improvising and see if something sounds good and erm it's fairly free

S6: Yeah, so I just start off on the piano and then just mess about pretty much just with ideas and see what comes, and then occasionally I will stumble across something and think "oh that sounds kind of cool" and then just play it again and try and develop it into a piece…playing around with chords

S9: …unless I just happen to be messing about on a piano and an idea comes to me

S3: I get my ideas from just messing about on a guitar, which obviously won't have any structure

And they described composing out of school as less limiting:

S9: Didn't have to worry about "oh include this" or "have a rigid structure" anything like that. Just purely about how it sounds, how it sounded and what it communicated. So it made it much more easier. I have much more clarity of the vision of what the piece had in my head, which you don't get when you're just thinking about musical features

S2: I think that's composition in general because you don't feel as. It feels a lot more industrial when you're doing it [in school]…Whereas when you are on a roll [out of school] it's "I like, I'm going to put this in because I like it"

S6: I preferred doing it at home because I get more free-rein over it whereas

often in school as the set task you have to do whereas these technical exercises, these are kind of, they're not, I don't really see them as composing, I see them filling in the gaps

Students' home composing processes were more informal and improvisatory using performing, listening, and self-evaluation. The contrast between the teachers' concept of composing as "writing" and the students' out of school composing as "messing" and "playing around", highlights a potential conflict between the perceptions of composing.

6.1.4 MRG Summary

Three areas of conflict were discussed in this case study, including: composing to please the examiner or for enjoyment, assessment and teaching of measurable composing skills, or allowing openness and flexibility, and differences in composing practices between KS3, KS4 and KS5. There was a feeling that although the participants were unhappy with assessment practices, they could not change it. Therefore, they had learnt to work within the system in order to achieve and succeed in the examination:

> **S9:** …there's no better way of doing it, that's the problem. No better practical way of doing it. So it's just got to be done

> **S9:** That's just how it's going to be…that's the sad thing

> **S9:** The fact is composition at the end of the day is going to be subjective

This study also demonstrates how the students, teachers and examiners may have different perspective of composing based on their own experiences. Thus, highlighting the diverse perceptions and pedagogical complications of teaching composing at KS4 and KS5.

6.2 North City Academy

North City Academy was established in the 1950s and located in an affluent residential suburb. The teacher, Aaron Dixon (AD) had been at NCA for 4 years and came from a popular music background, but explained that he had little personal experience of composing. At school he was made to compose Bach Chorales and had used Cubase. The music classroom was a new building with iMac computers and midi keyboards attached, installed with Logic Pro, GarageBand and Sibelius. Nearly all students used Logic Pro to compose. Observations of one year 11 class of 22 students took place over 3 sessions with one focus group interview:

Table 12: NCA student focus group

Participant	Sex	School Year	Instrument(s) played
Student 1 (S1)	Female	11	Violin, piano and voice
Student 2 (S2)	Male	11	Piano
Student 3 (S3)	Male	11	Piano and drums

Students were required to compose their second composition for the Edexcel GCSE music examination in which they had to select an Area of Study (AoS) from the list, ensuring that they did not compose two compositions from the same AoS (see appendix 9a). The teacher ensured the set works and analysis were directly linked to their composing, and they studied the set works before composing in that style. Students worked independently with the teacher giving one to one feedback.

6.2.1 "Creating" Music

AD rarely used the words "compose" or "composing" during the interview, instead substituting them for "create", "created" and "creating":
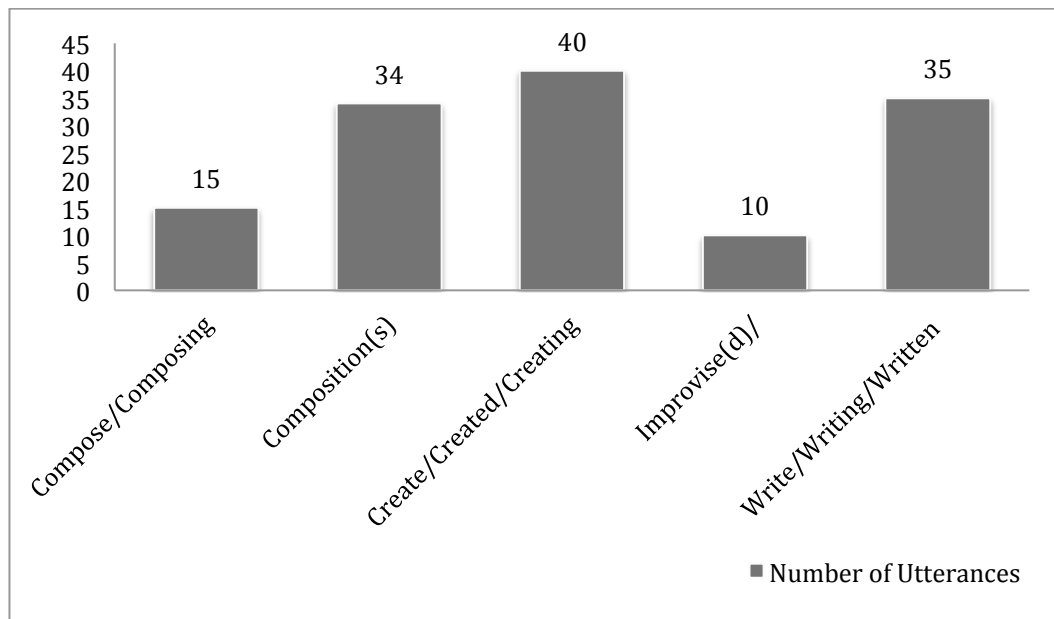
Figure 31: Common terms used by AD to denote composing

The word "create" was commonly used in connection with allowing students the freedom and space to compose. He repeated the phrase "go create" in reference his students composing independently:

AD: I'm almost leaving them to see…what can you create?

AD: So I've given them a major and minor chord sheet, go create

AD: Right what can you go and create?

Similarly, students regularly used the word "create" with students defining composing as "just creating music out of ideas" (S2) and "creating your own music" (S1). In contrast, the teacher used the word "composition" in connection with assessment and the rules of the examination:

AD: So it was teaching composition, it was an AQA course

AD: The chief examiner for composition

AD: You're teaching A-level composition get on a [CPD] course

AD: There are books the exam board recommend, composition books

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> **AD:** Bach Chorale, so the harmony and just following the rules and creating composition exercises and composition techniques…nothing kind of creative aside from just the composition technique

Interestingly, when the teacher discussed a student who composed regularly at home he used the terms "create" and "creating", but when he referenced the examination he changed the term to "composition" in the same discussion:

> **AD:** One student, a year 10 student…i've got about five tracks that he has created and it's all dance stuff…You know he's creating some interesting stuff but he's doing it off his own back but I guess feeling inspired by what we do here to go away and recreate kind of stuff, at home…And that's what he'll do is first piece on in his composition and hopefully get a really good mark because that's what he does all day at home and stuff

Similarly to the music teacher at MRG, "writing" music was also mentioned significantly throughout the interview; however, AD did not feel his own musical experiences related to "writing music":

> **AD:** Not composition wise, no, I mean I've been in bands and stuff and obviously I've played drums in kind of various different things but I was never really involved with the writing, composing and putting that together… but I've not actually sat down and written kind of chords and structured it in a song sort of sense

AD did not stipulate use of western classical notation and encouraged most of his GCSE students to compose using Logic Pro. Therefore, perhaps the term "create" felt more applicable and relevant for the activity.

6.2.2 Genre Based Composing

Students at NCA were required to select two specific genres/styles of music from the four 'areas of study' produced by the examination board (see appendix 9a). AD created a list of five main musical styles that the students had previously studied through the set works, including minimalism, dance, blues/Jazz, Indian raga and African music. During the observations I noted how students selected their genre. Although the teacher declared that the choice was up to the students:

AD: It's entirely up to you; it's your call. I don't want to influence you too much

In practice the teacher was very dominant in their choice. AD asked each student: "so what are you going to do, African, Indian or minimalism?", thus limiting the decision further into three styles. AD also commonly signalled "easier" composing styles:

AD: [African] should be straightforward. Using repetition and loops

AD: [Minimalism is] easy to do, well when I say easy, I mean easier

AD: You can't go wrong on this [minimalism]. It's going to get you marks. Have you got the sheet with the minimalist techniques on?

AD commented in the interview that most of his students would select "the easiest" styles. He expressed that as a student progressed through the year more styles, such as classical, folk and musical theatre were added to the list:

AD: So they have a choice of five in year 10. And as we study more pieces like Jeff Buckley…There's a folk piece in there as well…There's a classical

However, he rarely offered them as a viable alternative option, and if he did, he called it "tricky". The teacher also made general statements and assumptions about the musical interests of his students and their musical interests, stating that most were only interested in popular musical styles:

AD: Very few will do classical because I guess the nature of the kids if they're not a classical musician then they're going find that, the prospect of writing a string quartet or a piano piece… they don't like the classical. I guess the nature of the school as well, it's quite a contemporary school

AD highlighted that those interested in the classical style were students that already used musical notation. AD signalled his own strengths and weaknesses in musical knowledge, expressing a lack of classical music experience:

AD: but my degree, my recent experiences of music aren't classical. So therefore you play to, I play to my strengths

In addition he mentioned that he offered less support to students doing classical:

AD: We had a great violinist that wrote a string quartet…[who] used Sibelius for that but I sort of left them

Curious to see if students felt restricted composing in the five musical styles I asked students their on whether they felt that they had enough freedom:

S1: It's a blank canvas when you get on it

S1: Sometimes…it's too much freedom because you're "like what do I do"? Because it's just blank

S2: There's so much to pick from. You could do as much as you want

Upon asking students why they had selected specific styles, I found they struggled to answer:

S5: I did dance music last time so doing the older, minimalist one. I found the dance one easier

The students appeared to make their decisions not based on their musical interests, but by following the guidance and advice from their teacher on what was the easiest style.

As a drummer, AD talked about his university degree focusing on "session styles" and "playing in certain genres" (AD). Therefore, the learning of techniques and features from different musical styles was an important aspect of his musical experience. This could indicate why he taught composing in a very genre ordinated way with a focus on learning musical techniques. Teaching genre specific techniques and 'stylistic norms' (Green, 2000: 103) is discussed in the literature as an approach to teaching composing. In Swanwick and Tillman's spiral of musical development (1986) 'conventional' and 'idiomatic' (p.332) music making are also stated as important stages to establish before moving up the spiral.

6.2.3 Chords and Harmony

One recurring theme from the case study was the predominance of chords and harmony. AD expressed how chords were a major part of his musical training:

> **AD:** I remember like just playing some chords and stuff

> **AD:** Thinking back to school…so I played a chord sequence in

AD emphasised the importance of chords to the students calling them the "basis of the piece", stating that composing was "always about the chords" (AD). During the classroom observations feedback to students frequently referenced the chords:

> **AD:** let's play a C progression. Blues in C, F and G

> **AD:** You're writing a dance composition, structuring it around the chord sequence because that's the set work, it's A minor, E minor, G and D. The whole composition is based around six chords so that's how I'm approaching it with them

> **AD:** right I want you to pick four chords, play it in, and then see what you're going to do with it

> **AD:** right play me what you've got, great you've got a chord sequence, okay great so where are you going to go with that?

AD expected students to start with chords when composing and found it was a useful composing method:

> **AD:** Once they got a chord sequence to work with, then they're okay

AD also handed out a chord sheet at the start of the term for students, and referenced it in the lessons (see appendix 10a).

Similarly, the students expressed that chords were an initial and important step in the composing process:

> **S2:** I think like if you have a set of chords I think you can develop on it easier than starting with something then adding the chords and afterwards I just

think. If you have chords it starts the main idea for you

S3: Yeah I just think it's just easier to create chords and then go on from there

Throughout the observations, it became apparent that starting with chords disadvantaged some students in the class. In the first GCSE composing lesson the teacher expected students to create a chord sequence by the end of the lesson. One student struggled with the task feeling that his ideas were "rubbish" (S4). The student had been struggling to find the right sound/instrument for his musical idea and went on to talk about the structure and ideas of his piece; demonstrating on the screen the musical events that would take place: "the bass guitar would come in here" (S4). When I left the student, the teacher asked S4 to play his newly composed chord sequence; however, the student had nothing recorded on the computer:

AD: Play us the chord
S4: I don't have a chord
AD: Play what you have
S4: I don't have anything

In terms of physical and audible musical notes the student had nothing on the screen, but he had ideas and a structure in his head; however, in the eyes of the teacher, the student had made very little progress during the lesson. As a result S4 was deemed to be "low ability" by the teacher after the lesson. In contrast, another student in the same class had composed a chord sequence. However, when I asked her more general questions about the piece she, unlike S4, struggled to answer:

KD: where is the music going next?
S6: I need to end back on the original keys.
KD How do you want it to end, what sort of feel?
S6: Don't know.
KD: Where would you want this piece to be performed?
S6: Don't know.
KD How do you want your audience to feel?

This example highlights a lack of understanding by the teacher into the different tools and processes a composer may use to compose, confirming that composition is still 'the least studied and least well understood of all musical processes' (Sloboda, 1986: 103) for some teachers.

6.2.4 Step-by-Step Composing

In the interview, AD talked about his own composing education being "step-by-step". Composing step-by-step and following clear rules were observed in his own teaching approaches, and for each style of music AD had a very detailed and step-by-step approach for students to follow:

> **AD:** I have given them A minor, E minor, G and D. They've played that in, and they've put a drumbeat behind it, put a bassline in, put a tune in, now what else can they do? Right can you improvise melody?
>
> **AD:** Minimalism is a good one, right, the three notes ostinato, right now what are you going to do, let's use *all* the minimalism techniques so augmentation, diminution, put a drone behind it, you know, phase shift it, added notes in addition, note subtraction all that sort of stuff
>
> **AD:** I mean African music, someone will build up a simple ostinato, one bar pattern, right put djembe pattern in, put a simple pentatonic scale, right some octaves with that, right let's put a bass note, let's put some vocal harmonies, play some chords using the vocal sounds, you can create a piece that way

He described how certain styles were easier than others due to having clear rules to follow, such as minimalism:

> **AD:** Some of them [students] find that easier because they just follow, almost like a set of rules I guess

Even though the marking criteria and specifications do not explicitly state the procedures outlined by AD, the teacher made very clear guidelines and a 'one-size-fits all approach' (Francis, 2012: 166) for the students to follow. As raised by Francis (2012), the processes of composing became about evidencing the 'knowledge' (p.166) of a specific genre, such as with AD encouraging students to 'use *all* the minimalism techniques'.

Interestingly, in the focus group interviews students mimicked AD's step-by-step discourse in response to their own composing processes:

S3: Well normally if I'm going to create a dance piece by I'll go like making chords and then make a drum beat to it, and then try and add, and melody to that

S2: Yeah like [in] classical you start off with chords, and then you will go down to breaks and section, and then you'll go back to your main chord sequence where you develop it. Development of ideas, that sort of thing

It was surprising to see the degree of similarity between how the teacher described his own education, how he taught composing, and how the students described their own composing processes as a result.

6.2.5 Examination Pressures

As observed in the other case study schools, AD's teaching was heavily determined by examination:

AD: You work to the requirements that are set down by exam boards

AD started each lesson I observed by signalling the little amount of time left for the students to finish their compositions:

AD: We're running out of time basically

AD: Very quickly, we need to get cracking today

AD: Get logged on guys…four weeks, not a lot of time in reality

This placed an atmosphere of apprehension and pressure on students to complete their composition, also signalling the pressures of the examination.

The teacher was fully aware of the pressures placed on him to achieve the predicted grades of his students', and had thus developed a way of ensuring specific grades:

AD: You know there's a way of writing which hopefully will give them the best chance of getting an A, you know, a decent mark because ultimately that's what we're looking for. That's what I tell them. The school tells me the target, you've got to get a C grade, so therefore you've got to create something that's

going to get you a decent mark and if you look at the criteria you can see what needs to happen with that

AD: So I know what a C grade is, I know what B grade is, you know, I have enough experience. But you get used to an exam board and you know what they look for and therefore what the kids create you can tell them roughly "you're going to get that kind of grade"

Although AD was aware that students may not always naturally want to compose in line with the mark scheme, he directed them carefully:

AD: Yeah it is quite difficult because obviously they [the students] may say: "well I want it this way", but then I've got my sort of my markers hat on and I'm thinking "right okay, what's going to get you the best mark?"

This corresponds with the teacher's interactions with the students when offering feedback:

AD: I'm thinking how I'll mark this rather than...It does look like a lot. I could mark it in other ways. It's a little bit, muffly
S7: it's supposed to
AD: [interruption] yeah but I think we need a clear. It doesn't look a lot. I'll probably mark it on dynamics…and rhythm - I can hear that rubato, intended expressiveness

AD: I understand you might want to compose 4 min piece but we have to obey the rules of the exam board

In the example above, even though the student's intentions were different, AD carefully directed student 7 in order to meet the examination requirements. Much of AD's feedback was influenced by the marking criteria using phrases from the specification such as:

AD: Needs to be varied, needs to develop. The criteria say use of development of ideas. Needs to go somewhere

AD: I'd mark this in dynamics and I don't normally, I don't tend to use dynamics very much, with dance music it is often harmony…but this uses crescendos and contrast. I'd mark this on dynamics

His feedback was also very prescriptive at times, also focusing on 'task completion' (Kinsella and Fautley, 2017):

AD: Lose the harpsichord so it sticks with the classical [style]

AD: So you want to change you chord here, you want to change the basis of the pattern

AD: You want to finish on the tonic chord [listens] whatever chord you start with. You don't really want that. Just fade out

AC even went as far to alter and change students' compositions in the lesson via the computer, editing chords, rhythms and melodies:

Field Notes (22.11.16)**:**
[Teacher actively moving, looping and altering the student 1's music on the computer]
AD: I think what you need to do is bring this section back in. Section A again with slight variation - ABCA. **S3:** like and octave higher or lower? **AD:** yeah or like [*selects whole lines of music and moves them - quantizing the strings for the student]*
AD: *[Teacher adding bits in and changing it]* Change the accompaniment, change the rhythm here, here, here… **S3:** and finish it like that? **AD:** Yeah I would
AD: [*Playing the chords in the computer]* something like that. Shorten some of the notes

Field Notes (08.02.16)**:**
AD: My suggestion is to stop that. You have a bit of melody, change the second note [teacher edits Logic Pro file]

Figure 32: NCA field notes

There was very little discussion between the teacher and the student with the teachers leading the conversation, taking on a more traditional 'master-apprentice' role and admitting that:

> **AD:** You make suggestions and 9/10 cases they [students] will go with it because they think, bow to our better judgment and think "well yeah that will actually make sense"

However, in the interview AD stated that he was not "too prescriptive" when giving feedback:

> **AD:** I let them do what they want within sort of reason really but again within the premises of what they're working to, to the brief if you like

> **AD:** it's down to them if they feel like that something they wanna (sic) try

This highlights a contradiction between what is said in the interview and what took place in practice. Although the teacher was very conscious of examination expectations, the students in the focus group did not feel it effected or limited their composing, compared to MRG:

> **S1:** Also people have so many different opinions of music in general like it's hard to play a piece that you think the examiners are going to like
> **S2:** Like it, yeah
> **S1:** And you like it, you think what are they going to think? So.

Concerns over the marking of the composition was more of an after thought for these students and they felt positive about the composing teaching:

> **S2:** Yeah I think sir is one of the best teachers. If you are stuck for ideas he will come over and listen to your piece and tell you what's good, what you could improve on and hopefully sort of add ideas on
> **S1:** Yeah like he can't do anything but is there and he can say *try* and add, he can hint but he can't do anything. But it helps a lot because you want that other person to listen to it. You want that confirmation that "yeah it's okay" but what can you do to improve

It is important to note that although student 1 mentioned above that the teacher could "hint" at ideas but "can't do anything" to the score; in the observations there was evidence of the teacher editing the music on the screen, presenting a contradiction.

6.2.6 NCA Summary

What was striking about this case study was the extent to which the musical experiences of the teacher directly influenced his teaching of composing. The teacher's musical background in rock and pop, a form traditionally based on performance and aural skills rather than notation and analysis, may signal why he preferred the terms "create" and "creating", over "composing". AD's background infiltrated through most of his composing teaching with it being orientated around genre and reliant on chords and harmony. Compared to the other school observations, AD's step-by-step teaching approach was one of the most prescriptive and interestingly, students often mimicked their teacher's discourse and procedures, demonstrating cultural replication practices. Ethical issues were also raised as it was possible that AD's practices potentially disadvantaged some students, and advantaged others. There were also conflict between what was said during interviews, and what took place in practice. During the observations I ensured there was an open dialogue between myself and the teacher, creating a reflective space post lesson.

6.3 Green Forest School

Green Forest School (GFS) labelled as having a 'very rural quality' (Ofsted, 2008: 3) was based in a village in the Midlands. In 2006, the school was awarded High Performing Specialist School Status. The music teacher, Abby Callaway (AC) was the youngest and least experienced teacher in the study having only taught music for 2 years, and had only been at GFS for 8 months before the interview. At university she specialised in composition. The music classroom had an open space with a drum kit and recording facility at the back of the room, and computers with keyboards attached around the sides. Some of the students had attended a different school for their GCSE examinations therefore the class had mixed experience of composing and musical experiences:

Table 13: GFS student focus group

Participant	Sex	Year	Instrument(s) played
Student 1 (S1)	Female	12	Flute, piano and voice
Student 2 (S2)	Male	12	Piano and saxophone
Student 3 (S3)	Male	12	Guitar
Student 4 (S4)	Female	12	Violin
Student 5 (S5)	Female	12	Organ
Student 6 (S6)	Female	12	Clarinet and saxophone

Observations of three AS composing lessons took place over a period of 5 months from their initial composing lesson to working on almost complete pieces. All students were working towards the Edexcel AS syllabus with the 'instrumental music' composition brief in which their piece had to be titled: 'Darkness into Light' (see appendix 9b). Three separate lessons were observed in total, outlined below:

Table 14: GFS lesson overview

Date	Outline	Additional information
12.10.15	Given the 'darkness into light' brief. As a whole group mapped ideas and created a group composition	Two hour lesson
16.11.15	Started own individual compositions. All using Sibelius to compose	Given shortened version of the mark scheme
14.03.16	Finishing of their individual composing. All using Sibelius to compose	

The first observed 2 hour lesson involved the students using the brief (see appendix 9b). Three to compose and collaboratively and perform it on their instruments as outlined below:

Table 15: Lesson 1 outline (12.10.15)

Minutes into lesson	Task	Notes
Start	Teacher setting the group composing task	Mentioning assessment criteria – coherence. Students can use their own instruments Mapping out structure. Teacher discussing how will they structure it, the instruments, the roles. Apply the listening and coming up with own ideas
	Planning the "composer's notepad"	Teacher left the room
6	Gone to get instruments	Teacher comes in and questions
11	Starting ideas on instruments	Basing it around cadences
19	Get into groups of roles (chords and melody)	
34	Trying piece out twice	
40	End of 1st part of the lesson	
60	Recap of last lesson	
1h 2	Play the whole piece again	New chord sequence discuss Changing to instrumentation roles
1h 12	Run through whole piece	Refining and reducing the music
1h 18	Refining and editing	
1h 25	Teacher returns	
1h 35	Playing and recording	Consider using other tech sounds
1h 37	Listen to recording	Evaluation
1h 40	Teacher ask for feedback to improve it further or extend it	
1h 52	Record final performance	

This was very different from the subsequent lessons that involved students composing at the computer individually with one to one teacher feedback:

Table 16: Lesson 2 (16.11.15) and lesson 3 (14.03.16) outline

Minutes into lesson	Task	Notes
Start	Printed shorter version of the mark scheme for student to fill in their composing goals	
	Discussion with whole group of who prefers melody or chords	
23	Using Sibelius until the end of the lesson	All have a couple of bars of music

Minutes into the lesson	Task	Notes
20	Students using Sibelius until the end of the lesson	Two students helping each other with technical issues with Sibelius Students listening to each other on midi keyboard. Teacher giving one to one feedback

6.3.1 The Teacher's Role

In her interview, AC discussed at length her own uncertainty regarding how much support and guidance to give to her students during composing:

> **AC:** Many people compose in different ways and have different starting points and different influences and it's trying, to take that on board when you're trying to, teach them without, without guiding them too much and given that freedom

She herself had very little guidance for her own composing in school saying she was just "left to it" (AC), and composing was "very much experimental" at university. AC reflected on how her open composing experiences influenced her own thoughts on teaching composing. AC was worried about restricting students' creativity as a result of "over teaching" (AC), feeling anxious about imposing her own personal views on her students:

> **AC:** students are experimenting with their own ideas and it's trying to be as creative as possible…one of the challenges for me that the barrier of not trying to, to guide students based on my own compositional practices

In the interview AC reflected on the feedback she gave to a student whose piece did not have an obvious melody:

> **AC:** It was a load of really interesting kind of ostinato layers. But there wasn't a main tune so that's the first thing that I said I said "oo is there a tune, is a melody?" But it was still a beautiful piece of music so, I suppose I was thinking it needs a melody because, that's what I would do

She was concerned that her own personal judgements, due to her own musical experiences, might hinder her students' creativity. AC discussed trying to find a balance between offering them the freedom and space to compose, and also providing support for her students:

> **AC:** To help them retain their own musical, compositional identity whilst still learning how to manipulate ideas and create something that they are really proud of and that's really their ideas rather than my ideas

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This balance between freedom and guidance is also debated in the literature. Webster (2003) argued that teachers should not impose their own views on students' composing, but Hickey (2012) commented that not providing any support could be detrimental to students' learning. Students reported that they felt supported, but not overly restricted or directed by their teacher:

> **S3:** You can't really ask anyone else for help because it's your own composition. Although you, Miss does help, like she does help you like she bounces ideas off you
>
> **S2:** We get a lot of help from the teacher as well

AC considered her own role as supporting and providing guidance, rather than traditional notions of teaching:

> **AC:** I think sometimes you want to be inspiring as well and encouraging, and telling them to go, and be as creative as possible but, sometimes it's just knowing how to do that, to get the best outcome from every student as well

During the first observation the teacher supported the group at the start by helping them to brainstorm ideas but then she left them to create their music without intervention, even leaving the room on several occasions. Half way through the lesson the teacher suggested different ways to develop and refine. After the lesson she discussed informally that she felt that the students were "daunted" (AC) by her presence in the room, therefore she decided to leave the room to reduce it. Even after AC made it clear to the student that there were "no right or wrongs answers" (AC) and interestingly, the students questioned what their teacher was expecting whilst she was out of the room:

> **S1**: I don't know what she is expecting, like orchestral style?

This confirmed that some students did feel their teacher's influence regarding their composing to some extent.

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Giving Feedback

AC used questioning as a pedagogical tool for students to help them evaluate their own work and make progress without being instructed. This useful method is also backed in the literature (Kennedy, 2002; Webster, 2003; Fautley 2004; Wiggins, 2005; Barrett, 2006; Kinsella and Fautley, 2017). Some examples of questioning from AC during lesson 1 include:

Table 17: AC's use of questioning

Teacher's feedback	Lesson observation
How did you find it?	1
Did you find it a restriction?	1
How do you feel after you have finished it?	1
What next?	1
Is there a link between the sections?	1
Did you find it useful as a group?	1
Are you using any other instruments?	1
I like it! Do you?	3
So what have you done to it?	3

Questioning was a significant part of the teacher's pedagogical method, particularly at the start of the academic year. On a handout produced by the teacher, she outlined a number of "questions to bear in mind" for lesson one, including questions on how to structure the music, instrumental techniques, resources, and coherence in the music. Although questioning remained a significant part of the teacher's practice, she also started to instruct and give more specific suggestions to the students over time:

Table 18: AC's use of suggestions

Teacher's feedback	Lesson observation
I feel like it is very "samey". Textually you've changed it	3
…perhaps developing it more harmonically,	3
…it's still coherent, change the direction, going down instead of up.	3
Could you put it up the octave? I don't want you to lose marks for writing out of range	3
You could have a section in your piece where you do a chords first	2
Nicely phrased. That is like your 'A' section. Chords wise...it could modulate?	2

As the examination deadline drew closer, the teacher's feedback practices became more dominated by the language used in the marking criteria:

> **AC:** Use these ideas, how we can up your marks…mature and sophisticated compositions
>
> **AC:** What does competence mean?
>
> **AC**: It is still coherent, change direction going down instead of up
>
> **AC:** Aim for the top bracket, outstanding all of you
>
> **AC:** Three criteria are compulsory, the examiner will choose the top highest marks but you should be thinking of all of three

This change in feedback practices suggests a relationship between how assessment pressures can alter teachers' teaching practices, what Ball (2003b) referred to as changing 'what it means to be a teacher' (p.217).

6.3.2 Examination Pressures

Although AC expressed in her interview that her personal pedagogic intentions were to allow her students the freedom to explore their own ideas, she, like many teachers in the study, felt the pressure of the examination. She admitted that the criteria were very present in her mind when working with her students:

> **AC:** [Deep breath out] It's meant to be a professional judgment as well because, I've got the exam criteria in the back of my head and I'm thinking about how they can achieve you know, maximum marks based on what they are assessed on. Erm, [Long Pause] I think, yeah, that's the main thing I'm concerned about

Although in the first composing lesson she allowed her students to work freely and make their own decisions, in practice the students and teacher were guided by the restrictions of examination. Students in the focus groups discussed the conflict between composing something that reflected their interests and something that would pass the examination:

> **S4:** On the one hand you want to compose something that you like and that sounds, that you enjoy as a piece of music, then that might not necessarily get you the marks

The students expressed their desires for composing, and the final composition, to be enjoyable to them:

> **S2:** I'd rather enjoy composing and listen to it and get good marks for it rather than something that's just for a tick box and just gets the marks

> **S3:** I didn't want to start a composition that I didn't like as I know I wouldn't enjoy it and I knew I wouldn't be able to carry it on because is no point in doing it if you don't enjoy it

However, they admitted that the examination had too many "rules and restrictions" and dominated their composing:

> **S2:** You feel like coz (sic) you're composing towards getting a grade, towards going into an exam you kind of like writing for the sake of it rather than composing because you want to compose

> **S3:** Yeah it's like tick the boxes of composing,…you've done this for texture, you've done this for structure
> **S1:** Yeah
> **S2:** Yeah, you do it so you get the most amount of marks and you follow loads of different rules

Similarly to students at MRG, student 3 described "hunting for marks" when composing and trying please the examiner rather than creating a piece that reflected his own musical interests:

> **S3:** You feel like you've been forced, writing what they [examiners] want to hear rather than what you want to compose

> **S3:** I mean you have your own ideas but you have to write certain things to get the marks. We have to add loads of different techniques even if you don't want them

Students commented on focusing on the different marking criteria when composing:

> **S2:** Because you've got like for different bands and stuff so you have to think about everything separately, so like melody, structure and harmony and stuff…Especially the structure to make sure sections are equal and stuff. It's like you have to think about that

> **S5:** You've got to think of like continuity and stuff…So you've got like the different bands and stuff so you have to think about like everything separately, like melody and structure, and like harmony and stuff

However, some found this task difficult and an unfamiliar way of composing:

> **S1:** When I'm composing I don't really think about it so I don't how to kind of, how to develop harmony. Like competence, I think of melody then chords underneath

Rather than viewing composing as holistic, students were asked by the teacher to consider the marking criteria, making the process seem for 'fragmented' (Spruce, 2002: 123) as a result.

AC appeared to be conflicted between allowing her students the freedom to compose their own music, but also getting them students to pass the examination:

> **AC:** I think sometimes you can be too pressured into trying to teach a syllabus…and not giving enough scope for experimentation sometimes. But that's kind of, I suppose it's kind of a time restriction as well

This conflict is illustrated in figure 33, below:

Students'
intentions/interests

Examination
requirements

Figure 33: Balancing students' interests and examination requirements

Although AC admitted that the examination influenced her teaching it was clear from the pauses, exhaling and expressions used during the interview that she was unhappy and uncomfortable about it.

6.3.3 Use of Instruments and Technology

Out of the five case studies, AC was the only teacher to regularly and actively encourage students to try out musical ideas on their instruments, or to have their compositions performed live where possible. This might be due to her own experience of hearing her compositions performed live:

> **AC:** I think the fulfilment comes when it comes to the performance

> **AC:** So I think it's really important to always hear it back as well

During individual composing, AC suggested a balance between notation and performance, which students also picked up on:

S3: I think Miss brought up a really good point last lesson with, that you should record your own ideas whenever you hear something always just play like a demo or just an example or write down what you are thinking about, writing in words rather than the music and just like

When students were working on the computer AC advised her students to try out their ideas practically:

S1: I've been working on it at home but I don't have Sibelius. It's quite helpful to write it down
AC: Have you played it on your flute?
S1: Yeah

Even when the student did not play a specific instrument she would encourage them to listen to recordings or find a musician to play it:

S5: I need to check the range of the bassoon…my friend plays it so I'll print it out and take it to her

AC proposed that performance of the student's compositions could be brought into the examination:

AC: If it was possible somehow to bring in that sort of workshop element into every specification so a student could hear a piece of music that they had written… every student had the opportunity to hear the composition performed

The use of instruments and considering live performances appeared to be a useful tool and something Ofsted (2009) commented as lacking in some schools when technology is used for composing.

As mentioned above, the first composing lesson at GFA involved students collectively composing and performing a short piece together. The majority of students reported in the interviews that this process was invaluable for helping generate ideas:

S2: That really helped because we got some sort of ideas of what we going to do and how different people think

S3: Yeah it's really helpful like you can't go straight, if you're given a brief you can't just go straight into it I think you need to do a bit of background knowledge on it

S3: Just do a little bit of research just do a little bit of practical or both to do, to get through the starting stage to start the ideas flowing

However, when students started their individual composing they felt the transition was difficult:

S1: It's easier isn't it, because you bounce off each other's ideas.
Independent composing for A-level
KD: Have you felt, are you still able to bounce off ideas off each other or is it more sort of thinking for yourself?
S3: Not as much really I would say.
S2: It's very solo
S1: yeah because everybody puts their headphones on and then it's just

During the observations all students composed using a notation software programme on the computer, Sibelius, and used headphones. Therefore, peer support and live music making were very limited. Students seemed to distinctly notice the differences in practice from the first lesson to the subsequent lessons.

When asked about the limitations of using technology the student interviews revealed many of them found the computer "limiting" (S4):

S5: Like some of the rhythms I will have one of the rhythms in my head and especially in Sibelius is like, I'm like how do I put this on to a score? In Logic I could just play it, play it and it would just can add it as a thing but . I find it quite restricting. I don't know what to do

They also disliked the midi sounds of Sibelius, calling them "fake" (S1):

S6: Sibelius sounds are like really horrible

S5: Sibelius doesn't sound very good

S1: Yeah it sounds quite regimented, and electronic

S4: Yeah I find like on the computer it kind of loses, you don't really have any emotion in it. Obviously that comes when you're actually perform it with like live players, but that sometimes I have to think about how good that actually

sounds on real instruments

S2: It's weird but it doesn't really sound like *music* as such because it's not what it would sound like if someone played up

The students expressed wanting to enjoy the music they composed by the sound quality quickly demoralised and demotivated them; this was especially the case with student 4, a high ability violinist:

S4: It's kind of hard to do composition because on the one hand you want to compose something that you like and that sounds, that you enjoy as a piece of music, then that might not necessarily get you the marks.

S4: I just find it really irritating because I want, because I have it in my head like and I want it to sound amazing but then you listen to it on Sibelius and you're like oh my god, it's like awful [laugh]

S4: The sounds don't really help but then it's frustrating having ideas in your head and then not being out to get it down properly. So right now I don't like my composition

This concern was also raised by Beckstead (2001) who commented on the limitations of midi instruments. It is interesting to note here that very few teachers or students in the study commented on the limitations of technology, reinforcing Savage's (2012) comment that technology in the classroom rarely criticised or scrutinised.

6.3.4 GFS Summary

Although AC was relatively new to the teaching professional, she reflected and re-negotiated her role when teaching composing. Throughout the observations she swayed from taking a subtle and student-led approach using questioning, to a more directed, instructional, teacher-led approach. AC attempted to keep a balance between offering support and freedom for students, although much current research on this issue is limited and contradictory in the literature (Webster, 2003; Fautley, 2004). The conflict within the teacher in wanting to allow her students freedom of choice, but also wanting them to pass their examinations directly influenced her teaching. This was most noticeable in how she gave feedback to her students throughout the academic year. The data described three distinct influencing factors students face

when composing for examination; student's intentions and interests, teacher's personal experiences, and examination expectations:
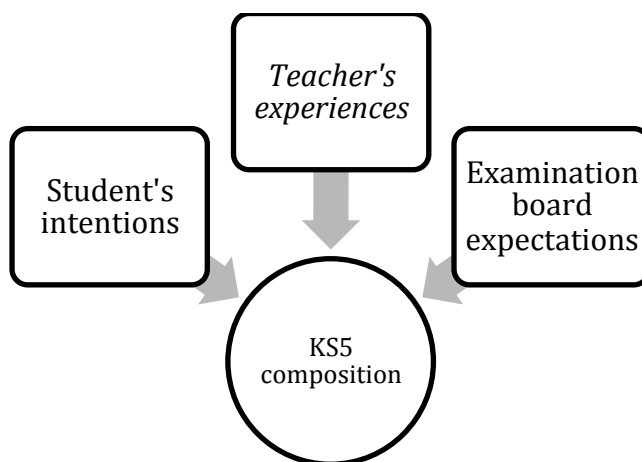
Figure 34: Three influencing factors

AC aimed to keep a balance between the student's intentions and the examination board requirements, whilst trying to refrain from imposing her own opinions or views on the music. Although AC intended for a balance between the students' intentions and examination board requirements, from the observations and student focus group interviews, it is possible that in practice the examination board requirements dominated towards the end.

6.4 Central Metropolitan Sixth Form College

Central Metropolitan College (CMC) was a large further education college. The music teacher, Collin Philips (CP), had taught there for 5 years with a total of 10 years teaching experience. CP felt he was a confident composer having had extensive composing lessons at a junior conservatoire as a teenager. The music department in the school included a main teaching classroom and computer room containing iMac computers with midi keyboards attached. The iMac computers had Logic Pro, GarageBand and Sibelius installed. All music students were completing Edexcel A-

level music. Edexcel A-level music technology was also provided, but the students were not included in this study. The AS-Level music class of 9 students had come from different schools and had a mixture of musical experiences, including classical and popular music styles. Two focus group interviews were undertaken with two students using Sibelius and another two students who were using Logic Pro:

Table 19: CMC student focus group

Participant	Sex	School year	Instrument(s) played	Computer program used
Student 1 (S1)	Male	12	Violin and piano	Sibelius
Student 2 (S2)	Female	12	Voice and piano	Sibelius
Student 3 (S3)	Male	12	Violin	Logic
Student 4 (S4)	Male	12	Guitar and Drums	Logic

This was to ensure all composing methods were reflected in the focus group interviews as well as to uncover their intentions when using the program and highlight any comparisons between the two mediums. Similarly to GRS, students were composing to the Edexcel AS brief 'Darkness into Light' (see appendix 9b). The teacher prepared composing tasks before stating their main examination composing, then the rest of the lessons focused on the students working independently with some peer feedback:

Table 20: CMC lesson overview

Date	Outline	Additional information
15.10.15	Given melody writing task – given opening by Mozart and asked to complete the next two bars	Completed on keyboards/piano with notation
20.11.15	Discussed the about the marking scheme: "creative and imaginative". Students work on their own compositions	
27.11.15	Students work on their own compositions. Peer feedback on selected compositions in the main classroom	
04.12.15	Student demonstrated techniques on the violin. Students work on their own compositions	
22.01.16	Students work on their own compositions	Less peer feedback, with students very focused

6.4.1 Unreliability of Assessment

Similarly to AC, CP was conflicted between allowing students freedom to compose and providing set-by-step guidance. He described his own composing education as "pretty open" (CP) and admitted that he took a very open approach to teaching composing when he first became a music teacher:

> **CP:** When I first started teaching it, I thought it more important, from the point of view of music and my own composition work that I've done or I have studied, when I studied it. I was just, we would just play it listen to it talk about it, feedback. And I think that was good

However, CP expressed concern about unreliable marking, outlining bad experiences of the examination:

CP: I've seen things get better grades than I think they should and I've seen things get worse grades than I think I should. Sometimes there seems to be no differentiation between the different levels and sometimes it seems to be too much

CP: I've taught GCSE where you mark it and then it's moderated and at least then when you've marked it, I once had a GCSE class where they moderated the whole class down and we complained and they put them all back up again

CP: It is assessed in subjective way. I think it's very difficult to assess it

This directly lowered his confidence teaching composing:

CP: So I think one's confidence sort of fluctuates. When you get it right you feel quite confident, and then when people do worse than you hope you feel a bit less confident

CP: I suppose I feel confident in terms of teaching composing, but I feel less confident in terms of being sure about the grade that people will get

As a result CP felt his teaching had become more prescriptive and task-based due to the pressures of assessment:

CP: I think the way that these things are marked, one does need to know the criteria and actually be prepared to sort of keep presenting it to the students

CP: When I first started teaching the A-level I used to give them all the choices because I felt it wasn't my right to decide. But I've just found that so hard for me and actually harder for them…And a lot of teachers that are more experienced than me tell me a similar story that they, they restrict it…I think that's the right way merely, you know, a bit more prescriptive in AS

CP decided to select the briefs best suited to his year 12 class, also admitting not allowing students to select all the options:

CP: I cheat a bit in AS, don't give them a choice of brief because I think it's just easy if we just work on the same one

CP: I won't let them compose a, I don't tell the AS [students] they have a choice but there is usually one about writing a song

Although CP was aware this was not the best for all his students, he believed this approach was necessary for getting the grades:

> **CP:** Now I think there be some people, some people who teach music who would say "that's really bad that you don't give the singers in the class the opportunity to write a song because that's their strength" but I've *had* singers write songs and there is a danger, they write songs in the same style that they like, you know, they're singer piano players, so they sit at the piano, invent a few repeated chords, put a tune over the top, and then it ends. And sometimes something that sounds like quite a nice song sounds like Adele, you know, doesn't get a good mark…I found people who write songs struggle to get a good mark… I used to feel bad

These examples demonstrate how CP became more aware of how to secure more reliable grades and play the examination game (Mansell, 2007). During the interview, CP commented that his teaching had not always been so prescriptive and had changed following an incident of receiving poor examination grades.

Interpretations

CP felt there was "subjectivity in the way the examiners mark" (CP) and admitted he was conscious of the opinions of the examiner asking "what will the examiner like"? He shared his experience of examination board training finding ambiguity in the way it was assessed:

> **CP:** The guy, who was one of the lead examiners, said something to the effect of: "oh that just doesn't sound like an A grade composition" which worried us because we said but you're meant to mark with the criteria, and you've just gone on your instinct…It sounded like he'd just taken kind of just an immediate reaction: "it doesn't sound like an A grade" that's not how you want them to mark it because, you don't think they're going to mark it like that

This also was raised by Simmonds (1998) in his research showing teachers used a 'gut reactions' (p.25) when deciding composition grades. As a result CP worried that the examiners "may struggle to understand" the musical intentions of a student:

> **CP:** I would say is it is intention isn't it. If you do it deliberately, if you intend it to not, to be a bit difficult or weird on that instrument then that's fine, but if you've just written it because you couldn't think of anything else

CP: They should assume that it has been done with logic and sense rather than an immediate reaction, which is just it doesn't sound great to them

Another main concern raised by CP was the way the music teachers interpreted the criteria:

CP: [examination boards] make comments like one said "it's nice and a relieved to hear someone managing dissonance for a change" or something like that, which implies to me that they don't like, they might feel less happy with an atonal piece than one that, fits the rules, you know, I do think they probably do prefer something that's harmonically and tonally, make sense you know, in a traditional one

The final aspect of interpretation was how students interpret the feedback and advice given to them by their teacher. CP was conscious that he did not want to instruct the students what to compose, offering suggestions instead:

CP: You're trying to find a way of improving that's piece, which, you know, where you can make it clear what you mean but without telling them what to do, you know

CP: Sometimes my feedback will consist of suggestions which involved the students interpreting that to some degree because you can't tell them what to do

However, he acknowledged that interpreting feedback could be challenging for some students as many just wanted to be told what to do for their examination:

CP: And that's hard and that's a high-level skill because, and I find the brightest and most able students do that. You tell them a few things, they go away, they revise it, and they've understood

CP: You get the worst cases where you start to say "that doesn't quite work" and they start to try and change the notes on their Sibelius file as you're talking…if you say "that's rhythmically not that exciting" it's very, it is easy for them to then produce absolutely awful but very interesting but incoherent rhythms by just clicking. That's the worst case. That interpretation is real high-level skill that you're asking for

CP was very aware of the potential for different perspectives, thus creating complex layers of interpretation, as illustrated below:
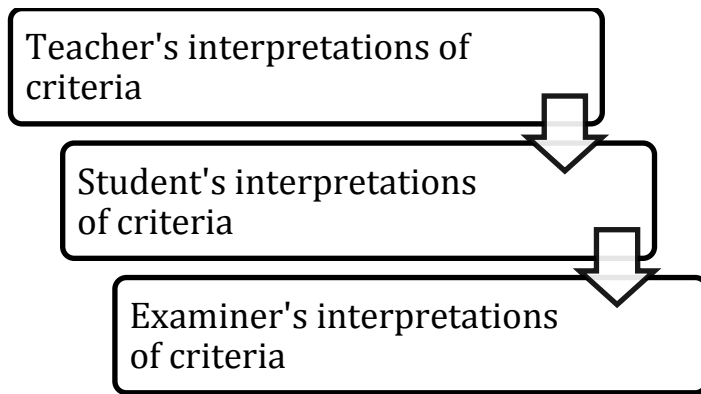
Figure 35: Three layers of interpretation in KS5 Examinations

6.4.2 Teacher and Student Feedback

Compared to the other case study schools, peer feedback was prominent at CMC. Although all students composed using computers listening through headphones, they regularly listened to each other's work and gave peer feedback. The teacher would present one piece each week for the whole class to give feedback on. In the focus group interviews the students expressed how and why they give peer feedback:

> **S2:** We tend to just listen to each other's really and advise each other as we go along… so we can just sort of nudge each other and say "can I have a listen" sort of thing, rather than it being like competitive or whatever, it's not. It's just nice to get feedback and say like, this will be good if it was lower or even…The support is really nice…it's just a really good atmosphere when we compose which is nice

During the early observations students gave feedback about what they enjoyed about other students' compositions:

> **S1**: I quite like the drop out
>
> **S4:** That was sick, I'm not even lying, it drew me in. It sounds like film music
>
> **S7:** I like the sequence
>
> **S8:** I like the pause

In contrast, when the teacher gave feedback he commonly referenced the marking criteria:

>**CP:** In the criteria it talks about ambition and creativity

>**CP:** I don't find it amazingly coherent. It's a shame you don't develop this idea. I could change it a bit, melodic inversion?

>**CP:** …lots of coherence

>**CP:** I'm not sure if it's the changing time signature. If you can find ways to develop this material, it will be more coherent

>**CP:** I think we need to work together making it a little more sophisticated

>**CP:** Are we using the instruments creatively?

>**CP:** We are trying to show creative and imaginative use of our forces.

The teacher commonly used the same terminology as the marking criteria, words such as coherence and imaginative:

>**CP:** It's worth referring to the criteria and saying "the rhythm of your accompaniment is all semibreves, where do you think you come in the criteria for that?"

Similarly to AC, in the lessons he discussed the meaning of the terms with the class, asking them to highlight how and where they were achieving them in their compositions. In group feedback CP directed students to use "words from the criteria" (CP) rather than their own personal opinions:

>**CP:** We will listen to some peoples at the end and see how we might mark it

>**CP:** It is getting them to think in exam terms. Yes they might like it but will it pass the exam?

>**CP:** …we are composing to satisfy the examiner

During the observations I overheard some students starting to use the terms from the criteria and when I told CP this he replied with: "it is great they are using words like continuity", suggesting that this is something he deemed important.

6.4.3 The "Rules" of Composing

CP was critical of an open and creative approach to composing teaching, believing that students would create music that was "absolutely incoherent and awful". CP felt that students must first learn the "rules" and skills of composing before being given freedom to be creative:

> **CP:** Knowing the rules the students feel more confident to make something up because of having a structure. I do think we should, I think we need to know…the basics of music, you know, about how to write it and how to play things really to compose well

CP had a range of composing tasks for students with the purpose to learn the "rules" of composing, certain key skills and "tools" before independent composing could take place. During the first classroom observations, CP set a short composing task for students to complete the next two bars of a Mozart melody after being given the first two (see appendix 10c). Although he told students that there is "no right or wrong way" (CP), there was a strong sense that there are some answers deemed better, or more correct than others. Anything perceived by the teacher as uncommon, for example a 3 bar phrase, was criticised and called out as being against the norm:

> **CP:** Did it feel uncommon? Or unusual?
> **S7:** No I liked it
> **CP:** Personally I might question making my phrase 3 bars

In this lesson CP commented that it was "valid to break the rules", but he encouraged the students in the lesson to follow "logical guidelines and rules" stating that they must be aware if they are "doing something less expected" (CP). The original recording was then played at the end of the lesson revealing the "right" answer. It was evident that CP had a clear expectation of the outcomes of this task, presenting it as an open task when in fact it was a closed task with limited answerers. This example shows how, as Harlen (2007) and Boden (2001) commented, students can become fixated on trying to find the 'right' answer in schools.

6.4.4 CMC Summary

This case study demonstrated how a teacher's practices might change over time due to their confidence and experiences of assessment, as illustrated in figure 36:

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        "Open" approach to teaching composing        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          ⤵
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Receive unpredicted results            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          ⤵
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Knock in teacher confidence            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          ⤵
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Restrict freedom & teach closer to the examination/test   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          ⤵
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                More reliabile grading               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
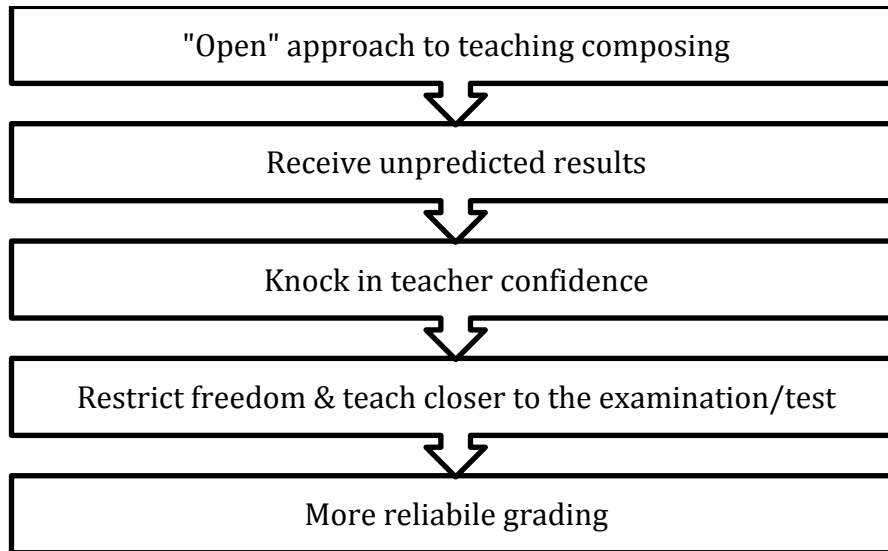
Figure 36: CP's changes in teaching practice

In the interview, CP discussed a specific incident of receiving unexpected low examination grades that had significantly influenced his teaching ever since. CP also deemed the assessment subjective and highlighted three areas for interpretation by teachers, students and the examiners. As a result CP developed a teaching approach that was closely directed by the examination involving closed composing tasks, limiting student choice, and feedback dominated by discourse from assessment criteria. Although teaching in this way secured more reliable marks, it was directed towards the teaching of composing skills and rules, thus limiting the possibility for student creativity.

6.5 Middle England High School

Middle England High School (MES), was located in a large village on the outskirts the West Midlands. Although new to MES, Susan Harper (SH), had taught for a total of 7 years. Her personal experience of composing was said to be mixed having received formal training through composing Bach Chorales and composing in a contemporary classical style; however, she felt she "struggled" with composing, was "anxious" about it. The music classroom had keyboards and basic percussion with the GCSE students using Logic Pro, GarageBand and Sibelius to compose. The musical abilities of the students were not extensive but the majority of students played popular music instruments.

Table 21: MEH student focus group

Participant	Sex	School year	Instrument(s) played
Student 1 (S1)	Male	11	Violin
Student 2 (S2)	Male	11	Drums
Student 3 (S3)	Male	11	Guitar
Student 4 (S4)	Male	11	Bass
Student 5 (S5)	Male	11	Guitar

Two interviews were undertaken with the same focus group of students, once at the beginning of their composing, and once at the end.

The teacher commented that she wanted the students to spend time developing their composing skills and confidence before working on their OCR GCSE pieces. The first two observed lessons focused on more general composing with practical activities away from the computer. The final observed session had the students in the computer room working on their examination pieces:

Table 22: MEH lesson overview

Date	Outline	Additional information
03.11.14	Discussion on the words "composing" and "composition" and Craft and creativity. In groups asked to explore the process of composing with peer feedback	
17.11.14	Individual composing from the "composers notebook". Presented work and discussed develop an idea	Wanting students to get used to working independently
10.01.15	On the computers composing	Use of Logic Pro and Sibelius in the group

6.5.1 Skills Before Creativity

The balance between teaching the techniques and skills of composing, and allowing space for creativity and individual exploration was a key theme in SH's interview. At the time of the interview SH described allowing students the space for creativity and freedom at KS3:

> **SH:** I felt I went from composing very creatively [KS3] to then, suddenly putting loads of boundaries on them because I needed them to get the marks and I knew what they would do to get the marks

> **SH:** [KS4 is] a complete contrast to what I do with key stage 3, coz (sic) key stage 3 I let them have complete freedom, but I think as soon as I get to GCSE it's like, you know they've got to get something done, you know they've got to do it on their own

> **SH:** We go from that freedom and working in a group at key stage 3 to then "you're on your own working in these parameters"

This contrasts with AH at MRG who approached KS3 as very restrictive and guided. As with the previous literature (Odam, 2000; Fautley, 2005; Savage and Fautley, 2011) SH also felt the jump between KS3 to KS4 **"**a massive step" calling it "a

completely different ball-game", and the **"biggest leap"**. She reflected on the possibility of introducing more skills-based composing tasks in KS3:

> **SH:** [KS3] respond better to direction at that age and I'm hoping that if I get it ingrained in them, then by the time you take GCSE they can then apply those rules in a more creative way and make the choices. So I've kind of, flipped it over, how I used to teach at [the last school], so I'm doing all the boundaries stuff in key stage 3 and I'm hoping that by the time they get to year 10 they will have the skills to decide whether or not to use them and make that conscious choice

SH presented the image of a composition "toolbox" so that students had key skills and in order to compose more freely at KS4, thus considering if students must learn the rules first in order to break them:

> **SH:** Learning the craft of composing before you can get to creativity. I don't know how well it would work the other way round, to just to go straight with the creativity thing, how satisfying, or musically satisfying a piece of music might be, you might get one or two but actually to give them the craft first and then them to take that and adapt it or break rules. I would always teach it that way round I think

Swapping the outcomes of KS3 and KS4:

Key Stage 3: "Creativity"	Key Stage 4: "Skills"
• Freedom	• Boundaries
• Creativity	• Skills-based
• Self-discovery	• Leaning rules
• Rule breaking	• Directed
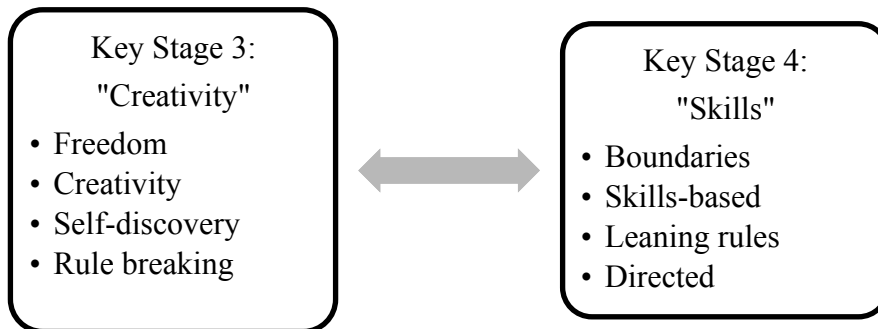
Figure 37: MEH KS3 and KS4 approaches

Although SH discussed the possibility of teaching the craft of composing before creativity, she made no solid conclusions, instead reflecting on the benefits and different pedagogical options open to her.

6.5.2 Diverse Composing Pathways

More than in any other case study, both the music teacher and the students were conscious of the diverse practices and processes that might take place when composing. SH reflected how her own musical experiences influence her teaching, being concerned that some students may feel restricted by her teaching:

> **SH:** Rightly or wrongly we obviously as teachers inflict our way of working on them within our lessons, so, composition is subjective, is always going to happen

> **SH:** Some of them [students] will fly with it and really like the way I work with composition, some of them will really struggle

SH repeatedly commented that not all her students followed the same composing process, and expressed that some of her students needed to play on their instrument to get musical ideas, whereas other students already had the ability to plan and talk about the music better:

> **SH:** I was going to say to them "let's plan it first before you get on instruments" but actually that would hinder Student X because he talks about it through the music, he cannot describe what he's doing but he can play it

SH tried to accommodate different composing approaches in her lessons and at the start of the academic year she planned a handful of introductory composing lessons for her GCSE music class. Unlike the tasks set by CP, these allowed for freedom and decision-making from the students. In one lesson she presented the students with a wide range of starting points (see appendix 10b), thus demonstrating the diversity of composing processes.

SH stated in her interview that teaching composing can easily stagnate due to teachers taking few risks to modify their practices:

> **SH:** I think with composition it's so easy to get stuck in a rut, whether it's teaching how you were taught or teaching composition, how your head of department teaches it

She admitted in her past school she had taught very prescriptively:

> **SH:** I compose in a very "in the boxes", coz (sic) I had really weak ability kids...it was very much "composing by building blocks", erm, really restrictive…but so many with behaviour difficulties, they couldn't work independently

Rather than relying on the teaching approach used in her previous school, she critically evaluated her own teaching methods feeling they would not be fit for purpose with her new students at MEH. SH highlighted the need for teachers to be sensitive to the skills, experiences and needs of each individual and to be able to alter teaching practices.

6.5.3 "Real-World" Composing Practices

SH commonly questioned if and how composing in school reflected "real-world", professional composing practices. Even though she confessed that she might not know what "real composing practice" (SH) might entail, she was one of the most proactive in attempting to model real composers' practices:

> **SH:** I've put into a vocational setting, we're doing advert music and they are getting a portfolio of products and they are working in collaboratives…so - I think that's probably - more representative of what happens in the real world

And she imagined the day-to-day practices of a composer and considered how she could support her GCSE students:

> **SH:** In my head they [composers] just sit in their room and just like compose all day, try ideas and they get a bit cross and make a cup of tea and then go back again…So that's what I need to do, bring tea and biscuits and then to be honest we've got it sorted [laugh]

Even though the comment was said as a joke at first, SH began to consider the value of time and space away from the computer:

> **SH:** It would be interesting though to see how they coped. Maybe I should try that with those year 11's on a Monday morning have tea and biscuits and see

how it changes the lesson - It will be interesting though wouldn't it?...Maybe one day when we are hitting a brick wall we can try the tea and biscuits. ...And if they've got a whole hour on it, to have that option where they can come and maybe just sit in the middle and talk with the tea and biscuits and see how that changes them when they go back to it

SH highlighted that, unlike performance, many of the students' only experience of composing is in the classroom, therefore providing an experience to work with a composer would allow for a wider understanding of what composing involved:

SH: I mean would that be amazing, an *actual* composer. So they got to work with the composer and that was maybe their year 10 composition, and they film that workshop and you looked at each kid's ideas and how they performed in the workshop in improvising and how they contributed, and things like that…It would be amazing though that every GCSE kid in the country as part of their course got to work with an *actual* composer, and that was statutory. You never know it might happen one day

Interestingly SH emphasises the word "actual" twice in the interview. Although she did not clearly define what was meant by the word, she alluded to a specific idea in her mind of what being a composer involved.

Interestingly, many of the students commented that they did not compose outside of the classroom. During a classroom observation, upon asking the students if they had composed before most commented that they had not:

KD: Have you composed before?
S1: No never
KD: Have you done this sort of stuff [group composing] before?
S1: Yeah but not proper composing
KD: What is proper composing?
S1: When you write it down and stuff?

In the interviews, it transpired that some of the students created their own music informally using technology, and on their instruments, or in bands:

S3: I think of a riff when I'm on the guitar, I just record it on my phone and I listen to it and I just save it. Just "ah that sounded cool"

S5: Yeah, as I am in a band like, we like write our own stuff, and we play it

The students did not feel that what they were doing at home or in their band was "composing", thus questioning the link between school and home composing practices. Upon asking the focus group what they would change in the examination they suggested making it possible to work together in a band format:

> **KD:** In what way could it [the GCSE exam] be better? What would you like to see or do?
> **S4:** Well, the bands I'm listening to, I'd like to like, compose like them. Get in a group, bounce ideas off each other and stuff like that but you can't exactly do that, at this.

In addition, students in the second focus group felt that their examination compositions were not valued by the school or teachers believing that their compositions would be deleted once they left:

> **S2:** I bet the moment we leave this school they are going to delete these [compositions]…they probably would
> **S4:** They will

Controlled Conditions

SH was concerned about the validity of the examination in how it reflected the professional domain of composing, and discussed feeling conflict between allowing her students to experience "real" composing practices under the restrictions of the examination. SH was critical of the controlled conditions set by examination boards feeling it was unrealistic, impractical and not conducive to creativity calling it a "compromise":

> **SH:** Lesson time does not accommodate teaching composition…Within an hour, by the time you've done something, say 1 minute in, they've all settled, 5 minutes, 10 minutes into the lesson you're ready to start, they take 5 minutes to get logged on and actually find where they're doing, then they'll probably spend another 5 minutes faffing about playing ideas on the keyboard. Maximum they've probably got 20 minutes, 25 minutes to *actually* compose

SH expressed how some students make very little, or even no progress in lessons, due to too many "distractions" and a lack of time in the classroom. In addition, the composing lessons were spaced out over the year and students were prohibited from

working directly on their composition at home. As a result the students would commonly "forget where they're at between lessons" (SH) meaning they were "constantly back-pedaling" and "recovering old ground" (SH). It was clear that SH felt the conditions were not conducive to creative composing.

SH highlighted how the controlled conditions not only reduced the time for students to compose, but also their creative ambitions:

> **SH:** [student c] wants to write a whole orchestral piece, so I'm trying to say you've only got 10 hours is this realistic?...And my concern with him is if he sends that in are they going to know that he hasn't done that in the 10 hours?...I don't necessarily want to scale it back because he knows what he's doing, he can hear it, it's there in his head, and it seems a real shame just because of the control conditions that he can't compose that piece. I'll probably just run with it

SH was sceptical about the real-world application of composing in this way:

> **SH:** And it would be interesting to see, honestly, how many people [other schools] stick to that 10 hours. Cos 10 hours in 20 minutes slots, you can't do a composition in that. You just can't. Nothing, no one works like that surely, composing in 20 minutes slots, 10 hours worth, what are you going to produce? So I would ask whether the exam boards are setting kids up to fail, coz (sic) the rules they're putting in not conducive to *how* the majority of composers would work. So it's not a vocational way of working [pause] It's pretty rubbish really [laugh]

SH highlights that composers would not compose in this way, thus questioning why students are made to do it. As a way around the imposed restrictions, SH combined the controlled conditions into two days in her last school, mimicking how the art and design GCSE coursework is conducted:

> **SH:** They had two days solid and it was amazing. I had 10 kids for two days and it was absolutely brilliant and they enjoyed composition because I wasn't stressed trying to run around them all

SH called this approach "pupil-friendly, teacher-friendly, composition-friendly" (SH), stating that it created "an environment, which allowed them to compose" (SH).

Highlighting the importance for time and space to create and be creative, was echoed in the composer-educators interviews.

6.5.4 Ownership

SH adapted her teaching to become more prescriptive to support her students through the examination; however, she commented that she felt uncomfortable with this:

> **SH:** I don't like just teaching to the exam, you can get anyone through the GCSE if you really wanted to but it depends how much your, of their work, you're willing to do

> **SH:** It's that line between it becoming my composition or their composition. And that's such a tricky one as a music teacher

SH admitted that she knew music teachers who crossed the line between it being the student's composition, to it being the teacher's work:

> **SH:** And let's face it, it happens all over the country and I know of cases where literally - teachers have changed specific notes or chords to make it sound better and I personally can't bring myself to do it, and it probably means the kids do get a lower grade, but what am I teaching them for the rest of their life? If they then come back for A-level and I've got to do it all over again, it . yeah. I'm not a spoon feeder, they do need to do it themselves

SH was adamant that her students' compositions were to be their own, even to the detriment of their examination grade:

> **SH:** My old place I would have very much said "look I'd rather you be happy with it, or you get something out of this marks aren't everything" and a lot of them would have come out with Ds and Es but actually if they have a piece of music that they've written and they're really proud of, to me that's worth more

SH questioned the reasons behind her students' composing, asking if the grades were more important than their learning.

SH commented how the performance culture of her new school differed dramatically:

>**SH:** But here the kids are *so* driven by grades. That would not go down well with the kids or the parents if I said that to them… Yeah, "but look at the techniques they've used at the end of the day, it's a subjective way of marking this". That, that wouldn't go down well at all

The teacher had to negotiate complex social situations of the school community, performativity pressures and parental pressures resulting in her renegotiating her own morals and what she felt was important. This has been raised in the literature with Torrance (1995a) questioning the 'cost' of testing on learning (p.4), and Eisner (2005) and Ball (2003a) discussing how testing may cause anguish when it is not in line with their beliefs about the purposes of education.

SH felt that feedback to students should be positive and encouraging due to the personal nature of composing:

>**SH:** I know some people are like "oh if it's really rubbish you should tell them it's really rubbish" and things like that and…if that kid has given you the honour of listening to that idea that's come from inside them, I think to then turn around and say "no that's wrong" or "you haven't done that" could be soul destroying for that child

She also felt it was not her place to instruct her students, but could only give her own opinion:

>**SH:** I don't want to tell them it's wrong because actually I'm not a composer, I have no right to turn around and say "it's wrong". I can say I like the sound of it or I don't like the sound of it. They appreciate that it's got to be subjective. Just because I don't like it doesn't mean that everybody else doesn't

However, she commented that she had been criticised in the past for her use of positive feedback:

>**SH:** So I will always give them recognition for "that's brilliant that that's your own idea" or "well done for taking a risk" or find something positive to say about it and that might be looked down upon by the powers that be that came in to watch me

Although I observed her giving suggestions to students during classroom observations she would make it obvious that it was a suggestion or questions, and not a direction.

The majority of the time the teacher would ask questions to the students allowing them to evaluate their own music and composing process:

> **SH:** Where would you hear this piece of music
>
> **SH:** What did you find easy?
>
> **SH:** Do you like that?
>
> **SH:** What is you favourite part of the piece at the moment?
>
> **SH:** Where do you see it going next?

The students echoed that they felt that the guidance from SH was helpful but not overly restricting, feeling that the composition was still their own piece:

> **S5:** Miss isn't like dictating what we need to put in and stuff…it's our ideas.

As discussed above, it is apparent that questioning can be a powerful pedagogical tool for supporting the progression of composers while still offering them freedom of choice.

6.5.5 MEH Summary

Although SH was one of the least confident in her own composing ability in the interview, she was one of the most responsive, reflective and open to changing her teaching practices. SH was open to allowing students more freedom with their composing and encouraged students to compose in different ways when possible. She was very aware of the diversity in composing, acknowledging that some students needed more support and guidance, whereas others "flourished" (SH) when given time and freedom to be creative, recognising the flaws of both approaches. The restrictions of the examination caused her to evaluate how she taught composing, feeling that the gap between KS3 and KS4 was too wide concluding that students must first learn the rules of composing in order be creative, resulting in her saying she was going to change the KS3 course to focus more on the techniques of composing.

6.6 Case Study Summary

The five case studies detail profound insight into the complexities involved in teaching composing at KS4 and KS5. The teachers demonstrate and debate different teaching practices with key debates regarding the teaching of skill or allowing creativity, the use of peer and teaching feedback, the role of notation, encouraging group and live performances, and teaching in formulaic ways. What underlies all of their practice is the pressure of assessment. Although some teachers were more affected by the examinations than others, all teachers are conscious of the limitations they imposed if reliable and successful examination results are to be achieved.

7. Surveys and Telephone Interview Findings

Over a period of 11 months between May 2015 and April 2016 two surveys, totalling 183 respondents, and 19 telephone interviews were conducted. The aims of the surveys were to understand the breadth and extent of some of the issues raised during the case studies. The surveys were split between KS4 and KS5 due to some considerable differences between the two qualifications and wanting to identify specific themes and issues within both. The teacher telephone interviews expanded on the survey questions, allowing more in-depth understanding. In this chapter KS4 and KS5 will be discussed separately, with comparisons drawn at the end of the section identifying similarities or differences.

7.1 KS4 Survey

The KS4 composing survey took place between November and December 2015 with interviews taking place between February and April 2016. The survey and interviews aimed to uncover information about the teachers' experiences of the KS4 assessment and their own composing teaching practices and beliefs. 112 music teachers from a range of secondary schools participated in the online survey, with the majority from academies or state comprehensive schools. A small proportion taught in grammar schools and in the independent sector, free schools, further education colleges, and international schools (see appendix 11a). A range of qualifications was taught including music technology, and performing arts, but GCSE music was most prevalent, with a small percentage (6.8%) of participants teaching BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) music (see appendix 11b). Teachers who taught GCSE and BTEC were asked to highlight any differences between the composing modules. Their responses are summarised in the grid below:

Table 23: Comparison of GCSE and BTEC composing

GCSE	BTEC
Predominantly focused on the end product of composing (outcome)	More focused on the process of composing
Higher value placed on music theory	Being more practically based
For students already with instruments skills	Use of technology more common and more suited to the students
For students perceived as more "academic"	More directed teaching of composing
Composing orientation around the "set works" from examination boards	Composing in styles of interest to students

Some of the music teachers felt there was very little difference between teaching composing at GCSE and BTEC believing that: "composing is composing" (T2410). All major KS4 examination boards were reflected in the survey with Edexcel being the most popular (see appendix 11c).

The survey captured teachers with a diverse spectrum of composing, as shown in figure 38:

5 What personal experience do you have of composing?

Very little composing experience (last composed as pupil in school) — 19 (17%)
Moderate composing experience — 49 (43.8%)
Composes and creates own music regularly — 28 (25%)
Professional / semi-professional composer — 13 (11.6%)
Other — 3 (2.7%)
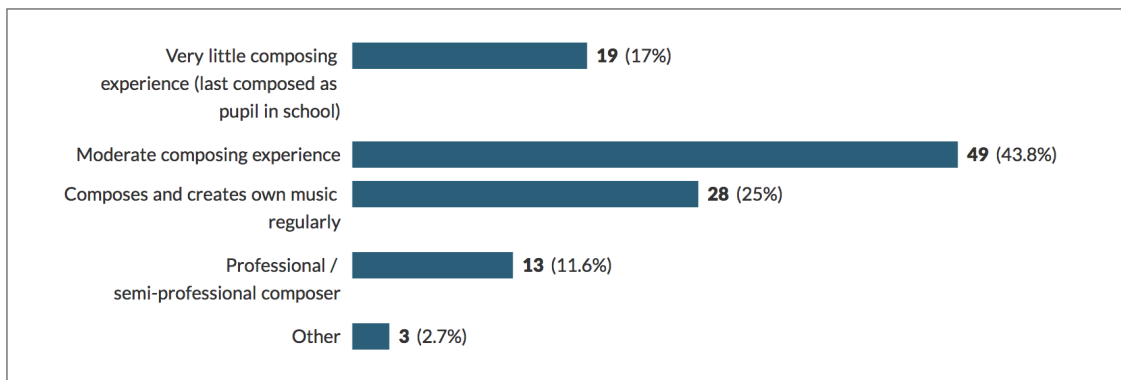
Figure 38: Teachers' experience of composing

Teachers own experiences and abilities including: songwriting, choral and sacred composing, electronics, media music composition, and working with dance and theatre. A large proportion of the teachers experienced composing during their music

degree: 13 teachers labelled themselves as "professional" or "semi-professional composers" having vast experience through completing a PhD in composition, composing music for BBC radio, TV and film, having works published, being commissioned by professional orchestras or receiving international performances. One teacher even discussed composing for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. In contrast, 19 teachers felt their own composing experiences were very limited:

> **T930:** Didn't even do it at school! Did O levels, learnt on the job

> **T603:** As an O level student I didn't have to compose. RNCM [Royal Northern College of Music] graduate (Academic studies) composing Bach Chorales and fugues, but little "free" composition

> **T366:** Did no composition at O Level and limited at A-level. Did some basic at uni, but dropped it early on

Although some teachers had experience of composing in education, they highlighted how long ago it was:

> **T104:** During music degree 1997

> **T004:** Last studied as compulsory module in 1st year as an undergraduate

> **T002:** Majored in composition at Uni in the 90s

Regardless of experience, many teachers expressed their enjoyment of composing (T358, T728, T548, T190, T714 and T019), with only one teacher openly discussing their dislike:

> **T162:** Hated it at school and was rubbish at it in examinations

Interestingly, 65.2% (56.3%+8.9%) of KS4 music teachers felt their own composing experiences influenced their teaching of composing:

9.3 My own composing experience impacts the way I teach composing at Key Stage 4:

Strongly agree	**10** (8.9%)
Agree	**63** (56.3%)
Neither agree nor disagree	**20** (17.9%)
Disagree	**16** (14.3%)
Strongly disagree	**3** (2.7%)
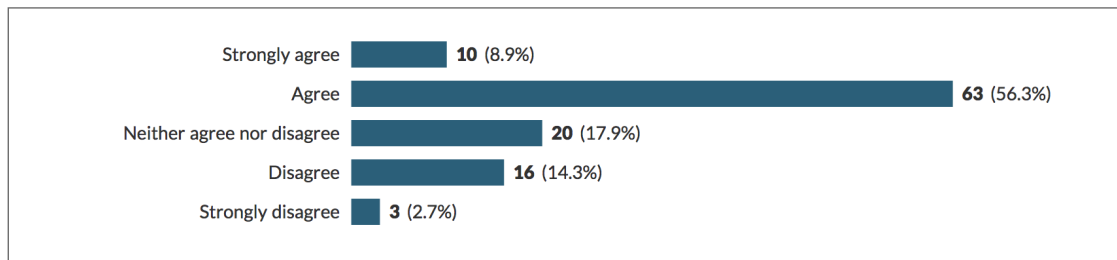
Figure 39: Influence of teachers' experiences of composing on teaching

Teachers discussed the importance of their composing experience further by highlighting how it directly affected their teaching and students positively or negatively:

> **T149:** It is inevitable that a teacher's passion will reflect in their student's work…the fact is that in Art and Music teachers exercise significant influence upon their student's choices and ultimate submissions
>
> **T939:** I learned a more traditional style of composing which strongly influences the way I teach composing
>
> **T613:** I have a very broad range of experience in the creative music world and I try to incorporate that into all of my teaching
>
> **T622:** I sometimes use techniques I learnt at university as they are accessible to students starting out in composing
>
> **T724:** I have been fortunate to have some very good compositional training, which I can pass to my own students
>
> **T484:** My lack of composing experience does run off on students as your likes and dislikes tend to manifest in theirs

A couple of teachers felt that their own experience did not necessarily dictate their teaching:

> **T837:** My own composing experience impacts but does not control my pedagogy - I am always learning from my students and their needs.
>
> **T230:** I learned and compose myself in a traditional classical style. However, I tend towards a more improvisatory style when encouraging students

Even though many teachers enjoyed composing, most felt they could not continue to compose due to the time pressures of being a full-time music teacher:

> **T778:** High levels of composition during university undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Only current experience is school level arrangements due to workload

> **T547:** Used to be a prolific songwriter - not so much any more!

> **T019:** I have little time to compose

This raises concerns as if teachers do not have the time to continue their own composing practices; this could negatively impact their composing ability and confidence, which can directly influence the teaching and learning of composing.

7.1.1 Reliability

As discussed in the case studies, the KS4 teachers experienced unexpected examination results in the composition marking. Over half (52.7%) of teachers experienced "surprising" examination moderation:

6 Have you ever been surprised by a moderation result at Key Stage 4?

Yes	59 (52.7%)
No	46 (41.1%)
Maybe	7 (6.3%)
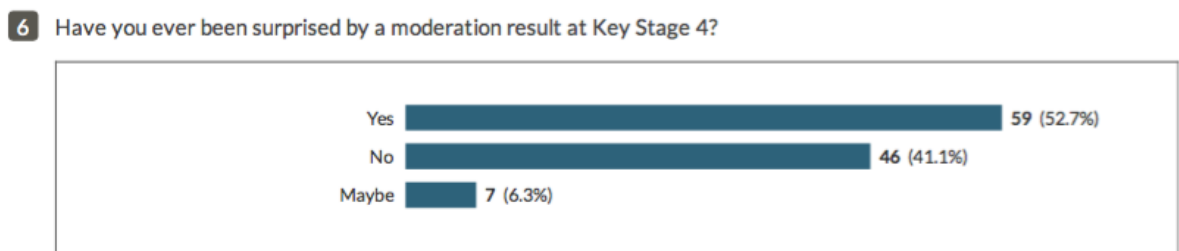
Figure 40: KS4 examination surprises

Some teachers expressed their distress at receiving dramatically different results following moderation:

> **T046:** Course work was brought down by up to 16 marks…expected a B and given an E. These were shown to a chief examiner who is a friend who suggested this was ridiculous and they should be re-marked - they were re-marked and brought back in line with predictions

> **T930:** All marks lowered significantly

T938: Massive drop in grades!

But they reported students receiving both higher and lower marks than predicted:
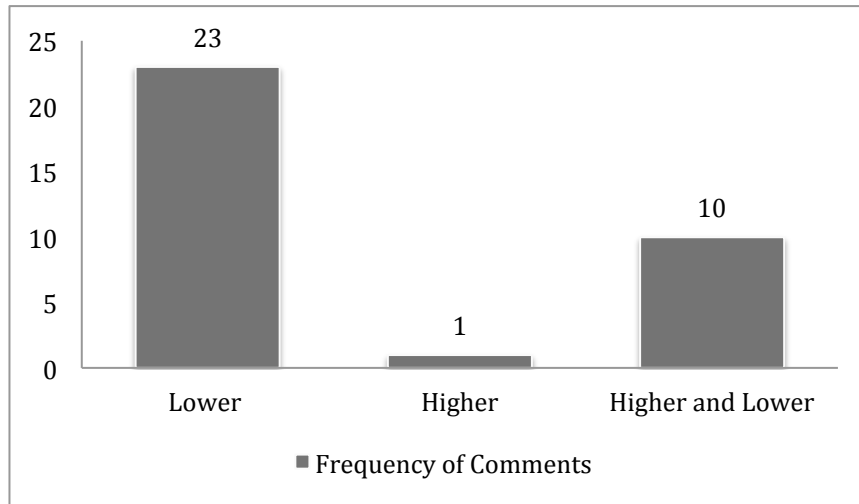
Figure 41: Frequencies of teachers who experienced higher or lower marks than predicted at KS4

Surprisingly, only 48.3% (43.8%+4.5%) of the music teachers felt that assessment requirements were easy to understand:
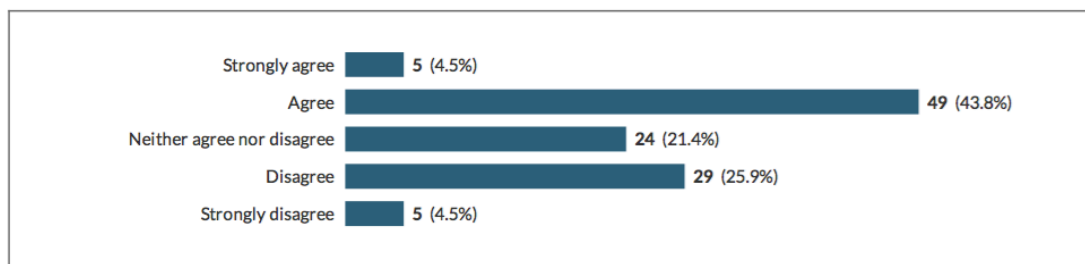
Figure 42: Clarity of the KS4 assessment requirements

As found in the case studies, teachers argued that criteria were ambiguous and open to interpretation:

> **T663:** I don't believe it should be assessed as it is now. The criteria are vague and do not progress logically

> **T049:** The grading criteria is (sic) far too vague to mean that it can be accurately marked

> **T110:** Criteria is (sic) very vague

> **T622:** Compositions are very different so criteria is quite vague

> **T959:** Criteria can be vague and too open to interpretation

However, not all teachers were in agreement as a large number were relatively content with the marking of GCSE having only received one bad experience of the moderation process:

> **T884:** One year when several marks were changed - both up and down, sometimes by 3 grade boundaries, with no apparent pattern. Otherwise, never had any changes at all!

> **T838:** All our marks were pulled down this year for GCSE and that's never happened before, to the point it badly affected our overall pass rate

> **T776:** June 2014 GCSE compositions moderated down by 10 marks across entire cohort

> **T084:** Marked the same as normal and one year had grades pulled down by 4 marks on each composition. Did exactly the same the following years and no change to marks!

These teachers believed that the criteria were "fairly clear" (T343), "generally understandable" (T622), and "easy to understand if you have experience" (T149). Therefore, there appeared to be some discrepancy over the perceived reliability of KS4.

Creativity Deemed as a Risk

As seen in figure 41, teachers experienced students receiving both higher and lower marks than anticipated. In the free text responses, teachers discussed high ability students receiving considerable lower marks than expected, and vice versa:

> **T076:** Both weak students getting higher marks than imagined and strong students getting lower marks than anticipated

T837: Work judged to be poor was moderated as good, and work judged to be good was moderated to be mediocre

T412: Varied - exceptional piece marked down but equally poor compositions marked up (in different years)

It appeared that discrepancies in the grading were most common with the highest and the lowest ability students. Similarly, teachers shared experiences of creative students receiving poorer marks than students who followed a strict formulaic approach:

T144: Boring, formulaic compositions being moderated up and inventive ones down

T663: Simple, easy to understand compositions faired (sic) best this year, while our most creative and able students had their marks brought down

T884: Sometimes very creative ideas aren't recognised by the mark scheme. Conversely, it's easy to get a "B" with "tick box" composing - brilliant for nervous pupils who struggle to work creatively

Similarly, only 34% (30.4%+3.6%) of teachers felt the current assessment rewarded creative musical responses:

7.3 Students are recognised and rewarded for their creative musical responses in the assessment:

Strongly agree	4 (3.6%)
Agree	34 (30.4%)
Neither agree nor disagree	38 (33.9%)
Disagree	31 (27.7%)
Strongly disagree	5 (4.5%)
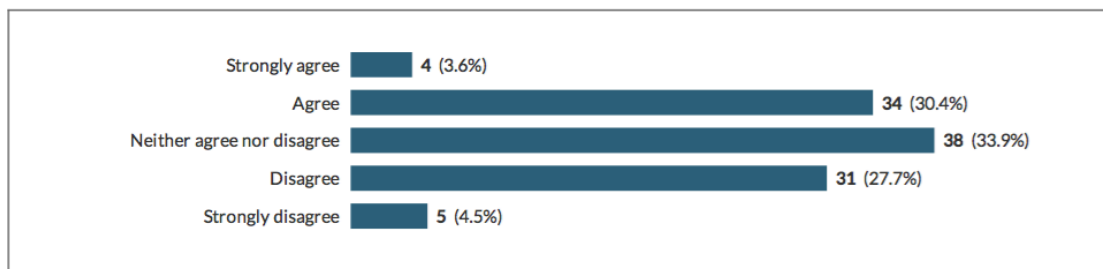
Figure 43: Recognition of creativity in the assessment

Many teachers explained how terms such as creative or imaginative were the most difficult to assesses and teach:

T603: Assessment can be subjective and difficult to predict even when using the criteria. What is "creative and imaginative" to one person isn't necessarily to another - can work for or against students

T539: Entirely subjective assessment of creative work

T589: True freedom in creativity may not score highly against the criteria

42.9% of teachers (40.2%+2.7%) felt that the current marking criteria did not even accurately represent the quality of music:

7.2 The marking criteria accurately reflect the quality of a piece of music:

Strongly agree	3 (2.7%)
Agree	27 (24.1%)
Neither agree nor disagree	34 (30.4%)
Disagree	45 (40.2%)
Strongly disagree	3 (2.7%)
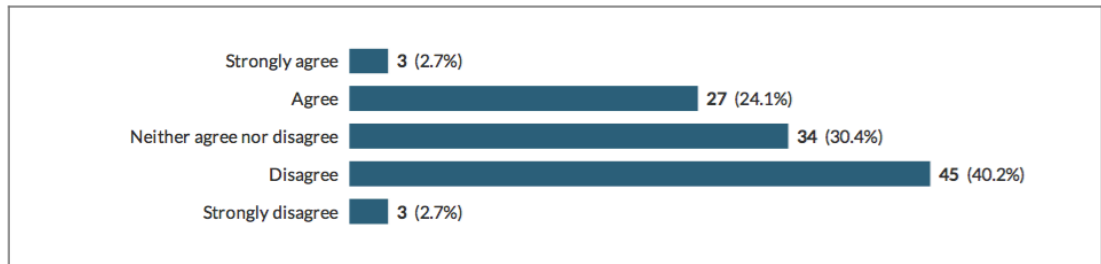
Figure 44: Quality of the music

What emerged from the data was that teachers perceived creativity to be a risk in examinations and therein less reliable. Similarly, Hickman (2007) found that teachers believed examiners rewarded 'safe work' (p.83). As a result teachers discussed encouraging their students to pursue composing processes and options to secure higher grades:

> **T867:** I encourage pupils to compose in a way that will get marks rather than teaching composition

> **T046:** Often it is better that pupils do a less creative piece that is safer to ensure they achieve their grade. Contemporary composition is discouraged as it is so difficult to assess

> **T110:** Focus is on pleasing the examiner rather than crediting the creativity of a piece. For example, a student would gain marks for simply adding more "devices" even though this could potentially spoil the final outcome

> **T162:** The best grades come from those pieces that are very tick boxy

> **T121:** There are hoops to jump through that are not too creative

Teachers discussed how formulaic teaching approaches worked best to secure high marks consistently. Spendlove and Wyse (2008) also found that teachers took fewer risks in their teaching, wanting to play 'safe' (p.16) due to the pressures of the

examination. Teachers often felt they had to restrict students' freedom and choice in composing:

Students have complete freedom to explore their own musical interests/styles in their composing for their GCSE/BTEC assessment:

Strongly agree	**7** (6.3%)
Agree	**43** (38.4%)
Neither agree nor disagree	**18** (16.1%)
Disagree	**39** (34.8%)
Strongly disagree	**5** (4.5%)
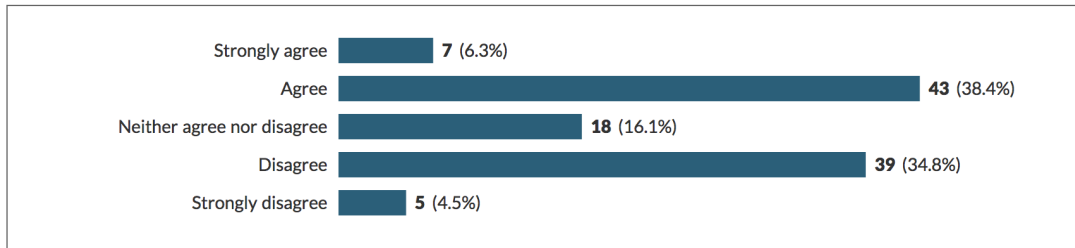
Figure 45: Student freedom in the examination

However, teachers disputed that some students needed this guidance and direction:

> **T121:** I believe a formulaic approach can help students as they learn, but composition teaching must build on creativity at KS3 and not be all about theory and notation

> **T639:** "complete freedom to explore their own interests" is (I believe) impossible to achieve, even were it desirable. A reasonable measure of freedom is. I tend at times to follow the traditional composition teaching method of giving pupils limits within which they have to work. At times I think this can be effective at teaching young people to be creative, and in developing their fluency in writing music

As found in the case studies, some teachers admitted that they felt conflicted between allowing freedom and creativity, and needing to pass the examination:

> **T930:** I more and more find myself encouraging students not to compose in a style that interests them-just to tick the boxes

> **T046**: My own composing experience tells me that the way I am working with my pupils is often not musical but I fear that if I encourage them to experiment further they will not receive a high grade

Worrying that this teaching to the test (TTT) might stifle students' creativity:

> **T336:** I feel that creativity is sometimes stifled in favour of "ticking the right boxes"

T226: Teacher can heavily influence the outcome by scaffolded sessions taking essential criteria one-step at a time. It helps novices but hampers creativity. It stages results

T838: I think too many teachers are relying on the theoretical side of composition and not enough on the creative side

T002: Composition at KS4 can be taught to obtain an A grade in unit ("composing by numbers") but A* requires flair and creativity which is v[ery] difficult (if not impossible) to teach

The debates around creativity were underpinned by the teachers' experiences of unreliability in the assessment, resulting in teachers feeling they needed to guide students through a step-by-step formulaic approach to guarantee good grades.

7.1.2 Perceptions on Composing Ability

The survey uncovered some beliefs regarding composing ability. The majority of teachers, 92.8% (46.4%+46/4%) believed some students had a "natural aptitude" for composing:

7.6 Some students have a natural aptitude for composing:

Strongly agree	52 (46.4%)
Agree	52 (46.4%)
Neither agree nor disagree	5 (4.5%)
Disagree	2 (1.8%)
Strongly disagree	1 (0.9%)
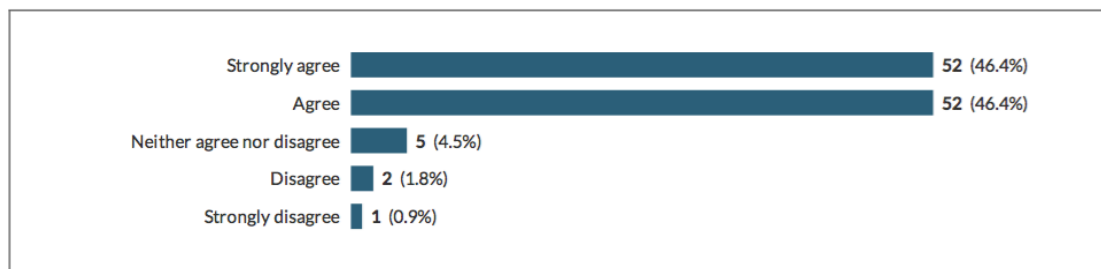
Figure 46: Teachers' beliefs about natural aptitude

Interestingly, this result was by far the strongest result in the survey. Some of the teachers discussed the complexity of this concept of natural talent, although believing that it can exist, but that it manifests in diverse ways and is not the only reason for composing success:

T410: I think students' natural aptitude is also due to their mind-set - whether they are willing to take risks and try new things

230

T004: Some students are naturally gifted at composing, some work really hard to get better at it

T818: Most students probably have an aptitude for composing, but many/most only get to use this aptitude from Y7 onwards

T179: Some that have a natural aptitude, but anyone can compose something

Just over half of teachers, 51.8% (26.8%+25%) also felt that having instrumental lessons aided students' ability to compose:

7.5 Students that have instrumental lessons find composing at GCSE easier than those that don't:

Strongly agree	28 (25%)
Agree	30 (26.8%)
Neither agree nor disagree	28 (25%)
Disagree	22 (19.6%)
Strongly disagree	4 (3.6%)
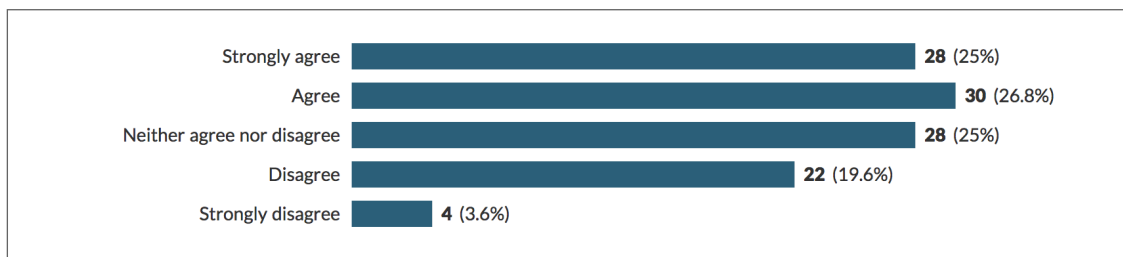
Figure 47: Links between instrumental lessons and composing skills

When teachers discussed the benefits of instrumental lessons it was often in relation to students' knowledge of western classical notation and music theory:

T972: Students who have instrumental lessons have their scores to draw on as resources for approaches to notating musical ideas. They are more likely to understand key facts about keys, structure in music, and how musical ideas might look on the page if they have been taught well

T781: Students who already have a good understanding of notation e.g. play an instrument, are encouraged to use western notation when composing

However, not all teachers agreed that instrumental lessons were advantageous to composing:

T957: Some pupils have a natural aptitude for composing. This is not always the strong musicians. Some excellent performers really struggle to compose as they are not creative with their instruments

T884: Instrumental tuition often doesn't help pupils develop knowledge of harmony and structure, so not a reliable indicator of success with GCSE composing

T499: Instrumental lessons do not necessarily make better composers

T901: Even students who have instrumental lessons can struggle as composition is not part of this qualification [ABRSM music examinations]

Two teachers commented that students with experience of western classical music can be at a disadvantage when composing; being less creative:

T084: Those who read any kind of notation tend to find the freedom of composition difficult because they are used to following the "rules" of following and playing music

T004: Some (often strong instrumentalists) really struggle, and it's like their creative "on" switch isn't functioning yet!

This suggests that instrumental lessons potentially embed restrictive theoretical rules which can inhibit creativity and experimentation. Previous research similarly contains mixed results as to the relationship between instrumental proficiency and composing ability.

Despite education policy and research promoting creativity as universal and something that can be fostered (Amabile, 1985, 1996, 1997; Boden, 2004; Eisner, 2005) the results from the KS4 survey highlight how the beliefs surrounding composing and creativity as innate are still ongoing. If the majority of music teachers believe in concept of natural talent this raises questions as to the effectiveness of teaching composing and shows a general lack of understanding of the development and learning of composers.

7.1.3 Time and Pressure

The survey aimed to investigate the day-to-day composing practices taking place in the classroom at KS4. The survey found that the majority of students worked independently at KS4:

Students regularly work in groups or with other students when composing at GCSE/BTEC:

Strongly agree	2 (1.8%)
Agree	16 (14.3%)
Neither agree nor disagree	19 (17%)
Disagree	45 (40.2%)
Strongly disagree	30 (26.8%)
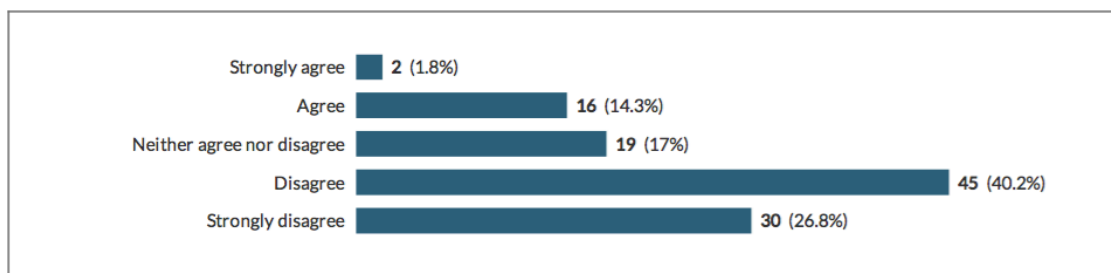
Figure 48: Group composing

These results were unsurprising since examination boards discourage and prohibit group compositions as part of assessment:

> **T594:** The board I use strongly advises against group compositions

> **T547:** As it's controlled assessment it is often quite an isolated experience

However, many teachers mentioned using group composing at the start of KS4 to support students for their independent examination composing:

> **T957:** Pupils work in groups at the start of the process to gather ideas and skills before working individually

> **T548:** Similarly pre-tasks, workshops, exploration tasks can be done in groups

> **T838:** We encourage students to compose in groups at the start of the GCSE course to help them understand how to add numerous instruments to a composition, but they then have to apply this to solo compositions

> **T019:** I allow students to work in groups initially to learn harmony but then the actual compositions are done on their own

As raised in the case studies, the teachers discussed the benefits of group work and the students' enjoyment:

> **T358:** I encourage group work composition at GCSE level even though it is not officially assessed as I have found it really beneficial to all students' learning

> **T144:** They'll work in groups to perform their compositions but I have to stop them composing together

T631: Pupils like to work with others when composing at GCSE, but they can't do this for coursework

T410: It gives them the forum to discuss and try ideas out more. It is also "safer" for my worried students

Although many teachers acknowledged benefits, only one teacher suggested the possibility of group composing in examinations:

T144: It would be good if GCSE allowed "band compositions" where students have genuinely collaborated

The teachers did not question the possibility of altering the system to include group compositions.

The survey also asked teachers how frequently their students have their compositions performed live. Answers contained a mixture of responses, with the most common answer was that very few or no students have their works performed live:
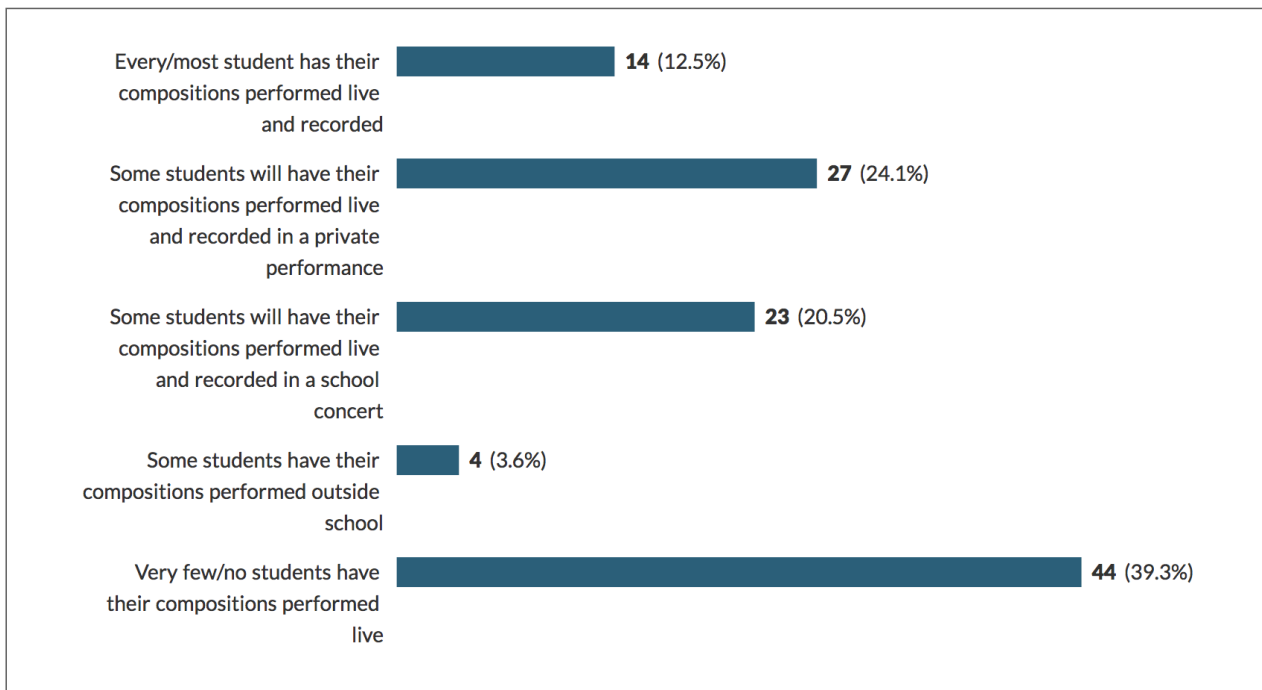
Figure 49: Commonality of live performances

Those that were able to have live performances outlined the benefits to their students, including boosting student confidence and enthusiasm, as well as making the composition "easier to mark" (T884). One head of music expressed that although they witnessed advantages to live performance it was not enough, in terms of examination marks, to justify continuing:

> **T547:** The impact on the student's results do not make enough of a difference for it to be worth the time

Although many of the teachers felt most aspects were important, they commented on the reality of teaching composing in schools:

> **T358:** I feel that the above are important yet some are not realistic, which is a real shame
>
> **T179:** KS4 timetables don't allow for a lot of what you suggest

Creating a sense of teaching having to weigh-up what was important with being realistic. Teachers discussed the lack of time, money and resources for some of what

they believe would be beneficial to their students. Many teachers expressed the intense pressures from schools and managers to secure good grades at KS4:

> **T49:** It must be understood that teachers are under pressure to secure good examination results. Therefore the quality of submissions tends to reflect the expectations of examiners in terms of assessment criteria. I have learned how to help students select genre and approaches which suit their aim of decent results rather than indulging in a pure creative process. This is the realpolitik of the situation

> **T110:** As a teacher you tend to see what works well and gets students the highest marks…this is due to the vast amount of pressure in school to get above average results

> **T211:** Unfortunately I am in a catch 22 situation whereby if I continue to teach composition (getting consistent grades of C, B and occasionally A for this module) then I am told by SLG I need to guarantee grades of A, A* in order to offset the potential lower grade on the written paper

This led to teachers feeling trapped in the system and resorting "teaching to the test", even if they were unhappy about the situation.

7.1.4 Use of Technology

The survey asked teachers to estimate the percentage of time they believe students spend composing using "technology" at KS4:

11 On average, what percentage of your students' time is spent using technology to compose at key stage 4?

80-100%	**41** (36.6%)
60-80%	**39** (34.8%)
40-60%	**18** (16.1%)
20-40%	**12** (10.7%)
0-20%	**2** (1.8%)
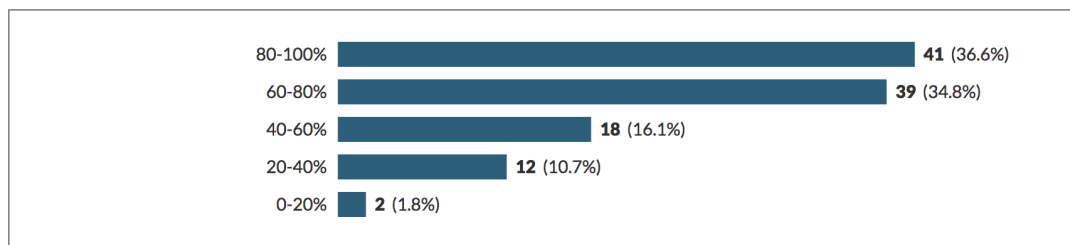
Figure 50: Percentage of time spent using technology to compose

It is clear that KS4 students spend the majority of their time composing with the aid of technology, with the qualitative data revealing most students used a computer using

Sibelius, Logic Pro, or Cubase. Some teachers commented that technology was "fundamental" (T706), "essential" (T809) and "at the centre of the activity" (T613):

> **T179:** They use computers all the time, with keyboards, guitars etc. to support

> **T867:** Almost all composition work is completed in this way

> **T622:** Use of macs and Sibelius…on which all composition work is done

Although the percentage of time was very high, teachers commented that the amount of time also depended on the student:

> **T884:** [It] varies massively between pupils

> **T176:** [the] figure is based on those who select this pathway. It is right for some but not for all

> **T104:** So much of this depends on the individual however - some work best away from computers etc. and for others using the technology suits them

> **T639:** It varies a lot depending on the student

Therefore, caution must be taken in generalising these findings.

As seen in the case studies, teachers said they encouraged students to pursue a mixture of using technology and their own instruments to compose. Composing using live instruments often came at the start of the composing process to generate musical ideas for the composition:

> **T228:** We use Sibelius but encourage pupils to compose their ideas on an instrument first before moving to the computer

> **T957:** Some pupils prefer to get ideas using their instrument before putting their ideas into the computer

They encouraged students to view the computer as a "notational tool" (T539) and not as a "composition tool" (T121), something also discussed by Savage (2007a).

7.1.5 Bias in the Examination

46.2% (35.7%+20.5%) of teachers who took part in the survey said they encouraged students to notate their compositions using western classical notation:

7.4 I encourage my students to notate their compositions using standard western musical notation:

Strongly agree	23 (20.5%)
Agree	40 (35.7%)
Neither agree nor disagree	31 (27.7%)
Disagree	13 (11.6%)
Strongly disagree	5 (4.5%)
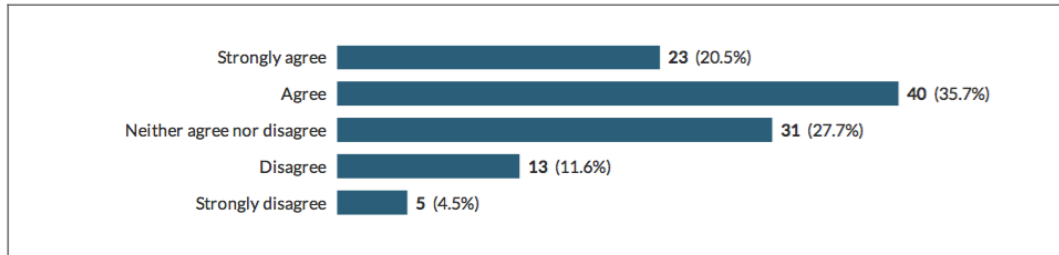
Figure 51: Use of western classical notation

Although examination boards require a "score" at KS4, western classical notation is not compulsory (see appendix 1). In the survey comments, some teachers argued that the use of notation must be suitable for the musical style and the students' musical experiences:

> **T837:** Notation methods should be differentiated - one size does not fit all
>
> **T392:** Regarding notation, I feel that some styles of music are more appropriate for conventional staff notation than others. A student who has written a rock/pop song, or something technology based would notate their composition with chord charts/lead sheets, written commentary, graphic score or a combination of the above
>
> **T230:** Some genres lend themselves more readily to notated composing

One teacher wrote extensively on their ethical concerns regarding WCN inflicting cultural bias:

> **T200:** There may be ethical issues with asking students to compose using standard "western" musical notation if they have written for an instrument that would not normally be notated in this way e.g. the shakuhachi. I would personally encourage students to try and notate music in a manner that is as authentic and culturally situated as possible, rather than imposing one method of writing for all types of instrumentation

However, the same teacher was aware of the limitations of the examination:

> **T200:** However, I am aware that there are restrictions on whether exam boards have the provision/resources available to mark work that is not notated in "western" musical notation…I would suggest that many music educators do encourage their students to work with standard "western" musical notation because it probably the "safest" musical option in compositions that are assessed by exam boards

Although bias in the marking was not directly questioned in the survey, some of the teachers discussed their worries about prejudice against certain styles/genres of music and that non-traditional notation may be inferior in the examination:

> **T410:** I would prefer not to use standard western notation and occasionally submit other forms of notation. It worries me that some examiners will "look down on" other forms of notation

> **T595:** I get quite stressed at the prospect of students who don't have a score. For example, those who have used Cubase

> **T200:** Having exposure to other types of notation and allowing pupils to learn and experience this also means that as educators we are not subliminally creating musical or indeed, cultural biases or suggesting that one musical/cultural practice is superior to another

Gipps and Stobart (1993) also debated concerns regarding bias, commenting that success in examination was 'persistently linked to social class, gender and race' (p.8). This raises concerns regarding cultural bias, questioning which students are advantaged or disadvantaged.

Perceptions of "Rigour"

Due to the changing political landscape of music education at the time, the survey questioned music teachers' opinions on the developments to the GCSE music examination asking their thoughts on the examinations becoming more 'rigorous'. The term 'rigorous' was taken from the former Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government's Secretary of State for Education educational reforms:

In line with our changes to the national curriculum, the new specifications are more challenging, more ambitious and more rigorous (Gove, 2013: online).

During the survey, these changes were prevalent in the media headlines. Some teachers in the survey felt the changes would have very little effect or admitted they were unsure of the changes. A small selection of the respondents felt it was positive and necessary. One teacher felt the changes would benefit their students in the independent sector:

> **T019:** A more "rigorous" GCSE would benefit my students in the independent sector as they crave competition and a more "academic" approach to all aspects of the curriculum

The other perceived benefit was that GCSE would become more challenging:

> **T228:** Otherwise we are not giving our higher ability pupils the chance to succeed in the subject. Music should not be dumbed down otherwise in 20 years it will be extinct except in very elite circles!
>
> **T899:** It needs to be [more rigorous] as its been dumbed down over last 15 years!
>
> **T030:** The GCSE is getting dumbed down every year

The phrase "dumbed down" (T622, T228, T899, T030) was used several times with teachers feeling the current GCSE was too easy. By making the GCSE more challenging, teachers felt this would ensure the gap between KS4 and A-levels would be more manageable:

> **T622:** I think more rigorous will better prepare students for the jump to A-Level
>
> **T724:** The positive thing, I believe, is that the "gap" between GCSE and A-level may be reduced
>
> **T228:** GCSE needs to prepare for A-level, which in turn needs to prepare for University

Although some teachers were positive about the changes to the GCSE music course, the majority were concerned it would result in music becoming less elitist:

T392: I would not like to see music qualifications perceived as elitist, as they were in the past. As long as more rigorous does not mean less broad

T899: …worried about elitist agenda and curriculum squeezing

Two themes emerged from data regarding elitism; the first was that the range of music taught would become less broad in terms of styles and genres of music taught, and second was a concern that WCN would dominate. The main concern from music teachers was that western classical music would have higher status compared to other genres:

T121: I am worried that notation and western classical music will dominate

T581: Rigorous equates to a western classical structure of composition

This anxiety may have come from examination boards making the western classical style a compulsory part of the GCSE music. Teachers expressed views that the western classical tradition did not always relate to their students' interests or musical experiences and were concerned that it might discourage some students from taking music:

T818: The compulsory focus on 1650-1910 WCT [western classical tradition] music is at odds with the experience of most musicians at KS3 and outside school

T478: Rubbish! They have taken out pop music a major draw to most pupils. Makes it now less accessible

T246: Bullshit! 95% of my students start KS3 with no insight into music at all!

T246: GCSE is old, [out] dated and virtually irrelevant to music in the 21st century

T179: It puts music out of reach to a large majority of non-traditional musicians

Some teachers also felt "rigour" meant the learning and use of standard western classical notation:

> **T884:** I worry that use of stave notation will become more important than musical development and expression

> **T144:** Shouldn't affect composition approach too much except if pop guitarists/singers are required to use staff notation

> **T776:** I'm concerned that drummers, guitarists, bass players who don't read traditional notation will not be catered for

As a result they were fearful that student numbers might fall:

> **T110:** Students at a school like mine will be put off the subject, making it unaccessible. As a result of this I see the subject disappearing from the curriculum in the near future

The second concern was that GCSE music would become more difficult for those who do not have access to extra instrumental lessons:

> **T683:** The new courses look like they are aimed at students with the skills already in place. They are for those who are privileged enough to have had additional lessons for a number of years

> **T663:** It will be a shame if students are put off taking music if they don't have private lessons. I don't mind rigorous but standards need to be comparable to other subjects. You wouldn't expect a Geography student to have private lessons and do Geography every day to have a chance of getting an A/A*

Similarly, teachers were concerned regarding accessibility and students numbers:

> **T901:** Will make it even more elite as it will be even more difficult for classroom musicians to access

> **T957:** This will reduce the numbers of pupils able to access the course and music as a subject will become even more minoritised

> **T930:** I think the changes will exclude lower level students who showed a keen interest and would have been able to come out with a 'C' no longer will

Questions emerged as to whom the changes may benefit, and which students might find it harder [9]:

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[9] From the comments regarding elitism, further analysis of the survey results were undertaken to investigate if a relationship existed between school type and the opinions of teachers in relation to this rigour. This was done through selecting teachers who identified as teaching in a private school and

T959: I worry that it will make GCSE music less accessible to certain students

The additional concern raised by the teachers was that the new music GCSE may reduce creativity:

T358: The word "rigorous" scares me and seems to suggest danger to students' creativity scope

T387: There is the danger that teaching and learning will become less creative and practical in an effort to "tick the right boxes"

T412: Assessment of composing becomes quite "tick box" rather than creative

As a result they felt that creative musicians would be at a disadvantage compared to students who prefer a guided and directed teaching approach:

T121: The creative musicians could be punished with these changes

T438: I think it will become even more "compose by numbers" which will dent creativity in composition. The new "rigorous" exams have already meant I have students ask what formula they need to apply to get an A* I don't think this is actually possible to do.

Overall teachers expressed a general sense of disdain highlighting the lack of understanding from government officials into composing and creative processes and musical learning:

T603: Music is already a rigorous and difficult GCSE demanding many higher-order thinking skills to be able to achieve well

T158: How can something that is subjective like creativity be tested rigorously?

T410: The problem is that music education is being taken further out of the hands of music educators

T046: The assessment has moved away from assessing what is musical - composition and performance - and onto what is easier to assess - listening

---

analysing their answers to this question. An obvious relationship or specific dominant view was not found from teachers from the private sector. Therefore, more research would need to be conducted to prove any correlation.

T127: Composing, which for many is the most challenging part of the course, is becoming less important in many cases, showing the lack of understanding of bureaucrats

Concerns regarding musical genre, notation, instrumental lessons and creativity in the new examinations open up a longstanding and ongoing debate as to the place and purpose of GCSE music.

7.2 KS4 Telephone Interviews

The telephone interviews supported some of the key themes from the survey and the also presented new themes demonstrating how the examination significantly influenced teachers' decisions and teaching practices. Participants that took part in the telephone interview came from a range of schools with the majority being female, as shown below:

Table 24: Overview of KS4 telephone interview participants

Teacher	Sex	School type	School location	Interview length (minutes)
VD	Female	Grammar	South East	20
SS	Female	State	West Midlands	20
SP	Female	State	Derbyshire	36
SA	Female	State	Unknown	29
PF	Male	Independent	Oxfordshire	41
LP	Female	State	Gloucestershire	37
KW	Male	Academy	Birmingham	27
JS	Male	Independent	Warwickshire	31
AM	Female	Academy	Unknown	34
AB	Female	State (rural)	Norfolk	45

7.2.1 Teaching Skills or Creativity

Teachers elaborated on their experiences of creative compositions doing poorly in the examination:

> **KW:** We do see really awesome creative stuff but it gets a really low grade
>
> **JS:** I've had a kid marked down because although their ideas are really good and creative
>
> **AB:** In my very first GCSE group I had a kid that I always feel like I let down because he had this amazing idea…but because he couldn't develop it according to the GCSE criteria he didn't do very well at all and it's very difficult at the time, I was like "oh let's let them be creative", "let's let them have an original voice"

Thus, resulting in limiting creativity and originality in composing:

> **LP:** I'm quite aware that they've got to "tick the boxes" and, so I think there is definitely, I think there is kind of, I don't want to say a cull on creativity
>
> **AB:** They [students] don't actually have to be creative… they can get a high B, possibly an A, even if it's the most boring piece ever

As a result, teachers seemingly gave priority to the teaching of skills and theory, rather than fostering creativity in composing. Terms such as "skills", "techniques", "basics" and "tools" were commonly used during the interviews to describe the learning of composing:
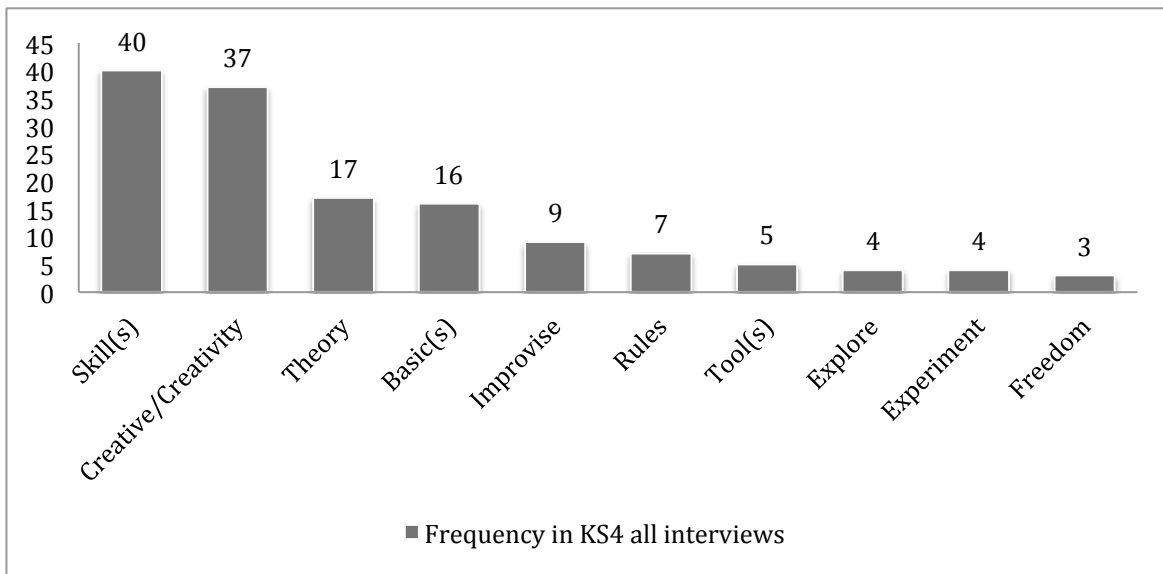
Figure 52: Common terms in KS4 telephone interviews

As can be seen above, although 'creativity' is on a par with 'skills', other words to denote creative practices (such as 'explore' and 'experiment') were rare compared to the words associated with the teaching of skills and music theory. A large proportion of teachers felt that the learning of composing skills and techniques was crucial for students as the 'basics' of composing; thus alluding to the belief that the rules of composing must be learnt and taught before students could be creative, as illustrated below:

Figure 53: Skills as foundation

Lupton and Bruce (2010) call this belief a 'time-honoured approach based on knowledge' (p.274), and rooted in myths and tradition, which many teachers aligned themselves with:

> **SA:** I'm somebody who believes that you can't be creative unless you've got the basic skills in the first place

> **SA:** And I'm a big believer in that you've got to have those skills to be successful to a point

> **LP:** I'll teach them the basics of like melody writing, functional harmony, modulation

> **AB:** I have been increasingly at key stage 3 and the beginning of year 10 have been given them the tools of this is how you use it

> **AM:** …"paint by numbers"…these are the basics, the initial techniques you can use to help you develop a composition

> **AM:** So in terms of barriers if they haven't got a theoretical understanding they are less successful…It's skills development rather than the composition development, I think it's right to, so we've already done it with year nine

> **VD:** Once they [students] can manage the technical aspects I let the more able ones then sort up, pull them around a bit and do you know give them a bit more of free rein

The language used by some teachers suggest a strong opinion and belief system regarding how students learn to compose,

However, not all teachers were in agreement with the approach:

> **AB:** I don't necessarily agree with people that say you've got to learn the rules before you can break them because I think if we do that no kid's ever gonna (sic) bang on a saucepan with a wooden spoon you know

> **JS:** Are you stopping people from being creative by not giving them the skills first? Or do you develop their own language and then teach them skills later. I, I don't know which side of the fence I come down on

Some teachers felt that young people were inherently creative and composing should start with their enjoyment, then introducing skills and knowledge when needed:

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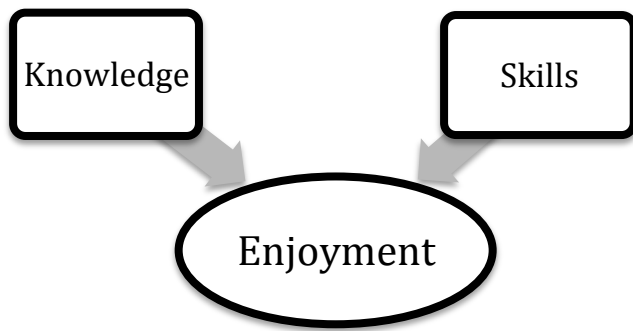
Figure 54: Enjoyment at the centre of composing

However, this view and approach appeared to be in the minority of music teachers who took part in the telephone interviews.

Washback

Connected with the discussions above, teachers perceived their students' struggle of composing at GCSE as a result of a lack of theory and composing skills being taught at KS3:

> **SA:** The link between key stage 3 and key stage 4 it's massive. They are barely related
>
> **LP:** Massively yeah I feel like I have to always starts again in year 10 and be like a big crash course in theory and composing and things like that

In light of this, some teachers discussed the role of KS3 as preparing students to take GCSE music. The extent of washback, defined as when 'teachers and learners do things they would not necessarily otherwise do because of a test' (Alderson and Wall, 1993: 117), through the KS4 interviews was striking. Music teachers admitted to intentionally designing their KS3 curriculum in order to prepare their students for the GCSE examination:

> **SP:** So, yeah we're trying to tap it in to fit a little bit better with what the exam board will be fundamentally wanting at year 11

> **SA:** What we have tried to do is guide the key stage 3 towards GCSE so that they have got an idea of what GCSE is going to be

> **SA:** Yes we do we try to get them to learn the basics in key stage 3

One new music teacher modified the KS3 music curriculum feeling that previous lessons focused on music as fun and practical were not good enough to prepare students to pass their GCSE composing:

> **AM:** [students] weren't developing skills that are transferable anyway because they were just having a go every week…we completely overhauled key stage 3 provision. I've convince them to go down a theoretical route

Some teachers described how KS3 students started using the technology normally used at GCSE to prepare students with the technical tools before KS4 starts:

> **SS:** We use Cubase from year seven quite a lot and introduced Sibelius depending on what we are doing with year eight, nine a bit more. So they have used, by the time they do GCSE they are fairly used to the technology side of things dealing with things that go wrong more than anything

> **LP:** I'm finding that I am filtering that down into key stage 3 as well, teaching them how to use it and then it's really brought on some of the composition skills that as well

One of the main changes in the last few years in music at KS3 and KS4 has been the introduction of a three-year GCSE. This has altered how many music teachers teach year 9 students:

> **AM:** what we have historically been doing at key stage 4 they are now doing at key stage 3

> **KW:** My own personal approach is to simply start teaching it in year nine with a three year GCSE. So the year nine they are working on that preparing for the year 10 work to start. So it's a bridge curriculum that in year nine it gets them to year 10. I think it really helps with the results

As KW points out, teachers with three years to do the GCSE specification found their students' results were improved as a consequence. Many teachers commented on the role of KS3 as giving students the tools and skills for composing with the aim that students could then be given more freedom at KS4:

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> **AM:** …hopefully they can be a little bit more creative at key stage 4

Two teachers commented on the lack of music provision at primary school, and explain why a formulaic approach to composing is needed due to lack of basic skills:

> **SA:** …the vast majority have had no experience of music whatsoever in primary school, so we are doing catch up
>
> **AM:** …we've had to change it to sort of become formulaic because a lot of our students don't have any musical provision at key stage 2

In addition, some teachers felt strongly that the GCSE did not facilitate the jump to A-level:

> **JS:** I don't think it prepares people for A-level in anyway and I don't think it ever has…And that's my problem is that GCSE music no way prepares people for A-level music
>
> **AM:** I standby the fact that it's just notation and theory skills should be an assessed part of the GCSE, because the biggest problem we have is the jump from GCSE to A-level

Working backwards to design the curriculum, teachers considered the role of GCSE as teaching the knowledge and skills needed at AS and A-level. This opens up a much wider debate regarding the purpose of KS3 and KS4 music, and therefore the function of classroom music lessons in general.

7.2.2 Pressure to Pass

Although some of the KS4 teachers in the survey alluded to the pressures, it was not until the telephone interviews that the depth, magnitude and consequences of the examination were exposed. Many teachers in the interviews were unashamedly honest about teaching composing in a formulaic and prescriptive way. There were a number of alternative terms for this such as: "ticking boxes", "composing by numbers", "painting by numbers", "step by step", and "composing by boxes":

> **PF:** So the mark scheme will influence the way I structure their task or the

feedback that they give them on what they are doing in that sort of way

AB: I've got used to knowing what works and what will get the kids through the exam, in the way of possibly being less encouraging of creativity

SA: It is very much "composing by boxes", "ticking boxes"

AM: A lot of the time we have to do that [composing by numbers] with the students

VD: Yeah, yes. I teach GCSE in a much more prescriptive way. So I teach them, I mean literally it's "composing by numbers"

One main recurring pressure was the limited time available for teaching music both at KS3 and KS4:

LP: Personally don't get a massive timeframe really when it comes down to it that they've got to produce to compositions. So I think that really helps with the time pressure as well

AM: What we can give them at key stage 3 is very limited because they are one-hour week

JS: If we had as much time as the maths department we could do all sorts of things

SA: The pressures on the kids are so, so heavy that there isn't time

Although some teachers expressed wanting to explore other areas of composing, they felt restricted resulting in only teaching the examination content:

AM: Obviously we only cover what is marked on the exam board because we are so stretched for time as it is, that putting things that they don't actually get a grade for, well there's two - we can't really justify it but also school wouldn't accept it. If they looked at our planning and said well why are you doing that, where does it fit in to the mark scheme? I couldn't show them

VD: If the exam said right you have to do a collaborative piece and it was marked, if they said that then obviously we would prioritise that but because it's not part of the exam system we are just an exam factory and we've just got do as we are told

The second critical theme was that teachers were required to reach the unrealistic examination targets:

VD: a lot of my pupils have a target of, in fact not this year, 97% of my year 11s have A or A* as their target. Within that, I have girls that are less than grade 2 on an instrument and I also have girls who have vocal lessons, haven't done music apart from key stage 3. So I have very, very high target grades. It is easy to get an A grade and the composition by doing the painting by numbers and then tarting it up but it is very difficult to get an A* without some form of individual style

LP: I find that frustrating…I've just become one of those more and more institutionalised…that's the way it is and you've got to get results at the end of the day

SA: [students] need to know what they need to do in a mechanical way to get them the grade D to a C which is the most important borderline. So we do that in a very mechanical way according to the criteria

The students' targets appeared to be predicted from KS3 maths and English test scores, leaving teachers frustrated that musical ability and capabilities (such as performance ability) were not taken into account. Due to the intense pressures of having to get students' performing ability to a high level in the available limited time, teachers felt that securing a good grade for composing was easier through the "painting by numbers" approach:

AM: I suppose you could approach it in a lot more open way but because of the skill level of our students

KW: The less able ones who are new…tend to stick by the "painting by numbers" formula and then once they have done a pretty generic piece then we, we tart it up, so to speak with ornamentation, dynamics, phrasing, all that, slurring, articulation all that sort of stuff just look, do you know trying to add triplet bits so we can "tick that box"

SA: Those who don't play an instrument, particularly they need that extra help

SP: It's one of those things that you are kind of stuck between a rock and a hard place I think because as a teacher because ultimately both have these projected targets and sometimes that's the route that you might have to go through for them to just get that grade

One teacher (SA) shared that she had been suffering with mental ill health and depression, resulting in her quitting full time work, due to the pressures listed above; something Fautley (2017b) also raised as an emerging concern in schools.

Understanding the pressures and limitations teachers must work with helps to illuminate why music teachers may feel compelled to teach to the test (TTT).

7.2.3 The Value of Music Education

As discussed in chapter 2, significant changes in arts and education policy can have a detrimental effect on music in schools. During the data collection, there were significant changes in educational policy, specifically the introduction of the EBacc and Progress 8. Many teachers had experienced a fall in student numbers and directly linked this with the introduction of the EBacc:

> **KW:** 90 [students] is our average taking at GCSE…And this year is the first year our school has enforced the EBacc and 21 have chosen it

> **VD:** [students] are heavily encouraged to do the EBacc subjects. Our numbers we used to have…about 30, 35-36 taking music…most of our years now are 20, 18. So the numbers have massively gone down…And we think next year is going to be less than 18. So numbers have gone down a lot and it's across all the art subjects

> **SS:** We used to have two groups per year running and we haven't had that since the EBacc introduced and I don't think we will ever get that again unless things really change

> **AM:** The change to progress eight and music in [unclear] not counted in the EBacc has seen a massive change in attitude towards the option subjects at key stage 4. So our numbers have dropped quite significantly. So we've gone down to 2 full staff. But we are timetabled to the max, I have also lost, we've lost our key stage 5 groups and we've lost a key stage 4 group

AM also commented on a change in attitudes regarding arts subjects. Some teachers reported that high achieving students had been discouraged from taking arts based subjects in favour of more "academic" subjects:

> **SS:** When it [EBacc] was first introduced I actually had a year nine form…so I really got to see the whole process and how much they were being pushed, particularly the so called academic ones, how much they were being pushed into taking not even just the EBacc subjects, but ONLY the EBacc subjects as in taking two languages and two humanities rather than just one of each. And there was even a careers, I kicked up a bit at first about this but one girl went to the careers adviser and was told not to bother taking DT, or music, or art

> **SP:** We've got students who should be fundamentally…who are really ideal music students, and they get cajoled into taking more "academic", quote unquote, subjects, which is very difficult

The attitude of music as a "soft" subject, rather than academic, created a negative perception of the subject in some schools:

> **AM:** I'm worried about the profile that the subject is getting lower down in the school because of the weighting. I know maths and English have always been considered more important but now the fact that they get double weighting compare to all the other subjects

One teacher discussed how she had to make music appear more academic in her school (AM). Similarly, VD explained how she had to prove music's academic worth' in the school through teaching music theory and doing more written work:

> **VD:** I do teach in an academic [unclear] school…all we do is endlessly say that music is an academic subject. You know and point to the fact that it's a subject at Oxbridge and you can't study the other arts at Oxbridge so we end up delegating other art subjects because it's a soft subject system. Because we are trying to promote the fact that we are academic….It's horrible, it's really horrible because you don't. You sort of comment to your colleagues in drama and art, you're putting them down because you've got to fight for this academic rigour and all of this

VD paints a picture of a ruthless battle for teachers to recruit students to take their subject at GCSE, which the current educational climate of falling number in arts subjects may become more commonplace. This view of music as non-academic also occurred in parents' understanding:

> **VD:** Parents so, you know we know as musicians music is highly academic but to the layman, the parents that are not musical they just see it as banging some instruments and shaking a tambourine or whatever

> **SS:** For the particularly for the higher achieving because a lot of them, often pushed by parents, will say well you don't need to do GCSE music because you already have your lessons, you already go to Orchestra, you know you can do your County Youth Orchestra instead of the GCSE and that will let you do something else

As a result of the areas outlined above, the value of music in schools generally was reported to have decreased making some teachers feel undervalued:

AB: People are very negative and downtrodden

This was mostly reflected in the reduction of time available at KS3 and the available resources for music, something Burnard (2013) also confirmed. Teachers affirmed that timetabling at KS3 had been radically reduced:

SP: We've lost one of our three hours a week…but we are obviously still expected to get the same grade

LP: I don't know how you do it unless you have the time and resources, I don't know how are you, how it happens. But yeah. I've been told that's the way it is so deal with it

AM: EBacc…because it obviously has a massive impact for hours, and then going into recent meeting that it is citywide that it is having a significant impact

One teacher reported how her ICT resources were removed and given to another subject deemed as more important:

AM: Our resources are not great at the minute because we've gone from five full-time music teachers to two in 12 months. And we've lost our main teaching classroom which had the ICT set up in it, it has been given to another subject area so we are fighting to get in there at the moment

And another teacher spoke about how her funding for instrumental lessons had been cut:

SA: I found this week having to return to work that they are about to double the cost of instrumental lessons from September, that's a another nail for us

The main concern from teachers was if the fall in student numbers continued, GCSE music could be removed from school. Teachers reported a similar situation at A-level:

SS: Yeah so that's already cut our A-level, they are no longer offering A-level music as of this year but GCSE. We should probably be alright for one group because I think they will probably go down to 10 or so before they cut it but.

Therefore, teachers expressed their most underlying concern about potentially losing their jobs:

SA: Yeah because if we don't get the uptake in key stage 4 that affects jobs.

KW: …the EBacc is massive it impacts on jobs we expect next year it impacts on the students, on the courses, everything

Due to the cuts and loss of jobs as demonstrated above, three teachers admitted leaving the state schooling system:

VD: I am actually looking to get out of the state system

SA: As the arts are being squeezed [I will] try and do something for the kids actually out of school

JS: …one of the reasons why I moved into the Independent sector actually because of the fact that music is being side-lined

However, not all schools felt the pressure of cuts and teachers explained how their school continued to support music and the arts even when other schools appeared to be side-lining music, therefore they call themselves "lucky" and "fortunate":

SP: Erm, yeah. I mean we are very lucky because the sort of school that we are we have got a lot of support and I think we are well respected in our school because of the results that we produced that sort of helps

AM: Our school is also very, very vocal about protecting the arts because there are schools locally that have lost their music and art departments all together. I mean my original job I was made redundant from and I was the only teacher of music

AB: Well the thing is I was very lucky in my last school because although it was a state funded school we were able to get a lot of money if we put the right things on pieces of paper

JS: I am very fortunate that I have a very very supportive head, she is very mindful of the value that music has gone across the school…I, don't think it [EBacc] will have any impact on me but I think I know it will have impact on various different colleagues of mine, because they are complaining about the drop in GCSE next year

VD: We are quite lucky because we don't have that many [students] doing A-level music and they had said that it would continue. Dance has been pulled at A-level

Two teachers explained that even in schools that purportedly regarded music as a priority, seemed to be cutting provision:

> **KW:** A school that really promoted performing arts as something special, something really important to study, inclusive to everyone. Restrict the options and it goes to 21 [for GCSE]

> **SA:** We are a performing arts school, or were a performance arts school before things changed…it was made is unique and you know was one of the selling points of the school but they are increasing the cost 100% [of instrumental lessons] as of September. We will be lucky if we get one third taking the lessons. So again that will be another impact on our uptake and I say I'm preparing myself for the worst really

Some of the issues appeared to be more prominent in state schools than the independent sector:

> **PF:** Talking to colleagues who teach in the state sector. It has had a significant negative impact on take up of music GCSE

Underlying this, some teachers were concerned that music education would become the preserve of those that could afford it outside school, making music more elitist:

> **AB:** …think about the schools without money and let the kids also don't have much money at home and yeah. It's so difficult to teach something like GCSE music easily when the kids haven't got access to good stuff

> **SA:** …what tends to happen is that the ones that can afford instrumental lessons, and music and all the costs associated with that tend to go to the grammar schools

Teachers expressed frustration with the education system and governmental policy, believing that music, creativity and the arts played a vital and important role in the education of a young people and for future employment:

> **KW:** Creativity actually has been proven time and time again that people who take the creative subjects it helps them with their thinking skills than the more academic ones so it's actually an absolute farce really

> **SP:** The thing is at the moment you've got Nicky Morgan or whatever saying "oh go do history, go do this, not arts, and a viable job" well actually funnily enough all the students that are going out and doing degrees in law aren't necessarily going to get a degree, sorry a job, in law

> **SA:** Yes it's just ridiculous, ridiculous. It's short-sighted, narrow-minded, something will change eventually but it will be too late for a whole generation of kids

What can be drawn from the KS4 interviews is that the place, resources and value of music in school very much depended on the school; making it a lottery.

7.3 KS4 Survey Summary

The KS4 survey and interviews allowed for a greater understanding of the complexities, pressures and challenges teachers negotiate. In the current changing education climate, teachers' primary fear was losing their job. This explains the rationale behind the prevalence of curriculum washback at KS3 and TTT, as although many of the teachers valued creativity in composing they deemed it as a "risk" and less reliable than formulaic teaching approaches. Teachers questioned the relationship between skills and creativity in terms of a binary relationship, asking what should come first, with very few viewing them as progressing simultaneously and supporting each other. Working under such high-pressure, it is unsurprising that teachers' health and wellbeing concerns were raised.

7.4 KS5 Survey

The AS and A-level composing survey and 9 telephone interviews took place between May and October 2015, with the aim to uncover teachers' experiences of composing assessment. The survey was intentionally kept short, with six main questions focusing on the reliability and consistency. The survey had space for free text responses allowing teachers to expand on their answers. Interestingly the last question of the survey asked participants to share 'any other comments', 47 teachers out of 71 responded with thorough and detailed information regarding a wide range of issues, highlighting the significance of the topic and the passion of the teachers responding.

7.4.1 Reliability

As with KS4, the most significant finding from the survey was that the majority of teachers perceived composing assessment as unreliable and unpredictable. The most striking result was that 90.1% of teachers had experienced at least one surprising examination result at KS5:

2 Have you ever been surprised by an examination grade for any of your pupils for composition at AS or A Level?

Yes — 64 (90.1%)
No — 3 (4.2%)
Maybe — 4 (5.6%)
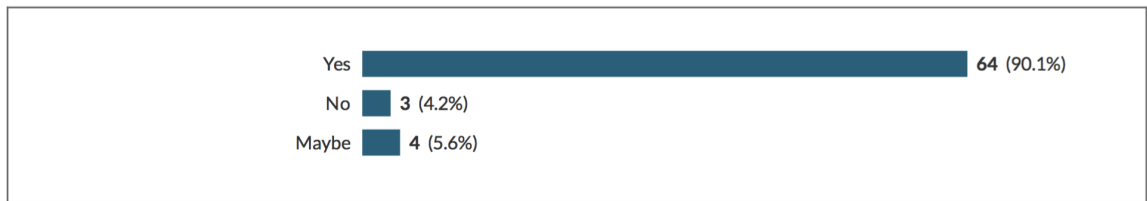
Figure 55: KS4 surprise in the examination

Other questions in the survey confirmed this finding; with 74.7% (43.7%+31%) of teachers believing examination boards were inconsistent:

4.2 Results from examination boards are consistent:

Strongly agree — 4 (5.6%)
Agree — 2 (2.8%)
Neither agree nor disagree — 12 (16.9%)
Disagree — 31 (43.7%)
Strongly disagree — 22 (31%)
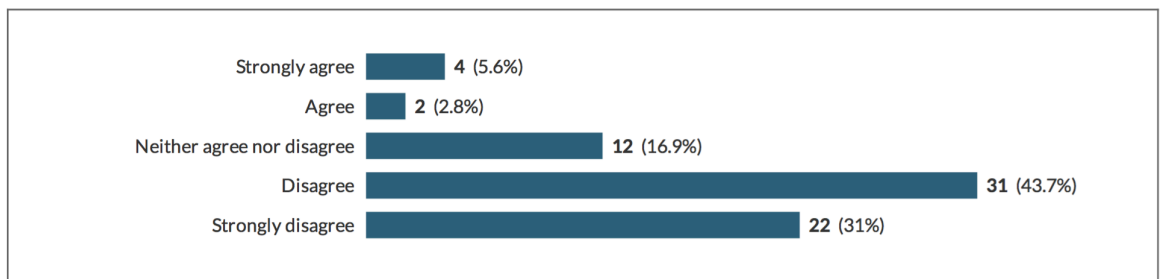
Figure 56: Teachers' opinions on consistency of marking

Only 26.8% of teachers (1.4%+25.4%) feeling confident to predict grades for composition at KS5:

I am confident at being able to accurately predict the grades my pupils will get:

Strongly agree · **1** (1.4%)
Agree · **18** (25.4%)
Neither agree nor disagree · **10** (14.1%)
Disagree · **30** (42.3%)
Strongly disagree · **12** (16.9%)
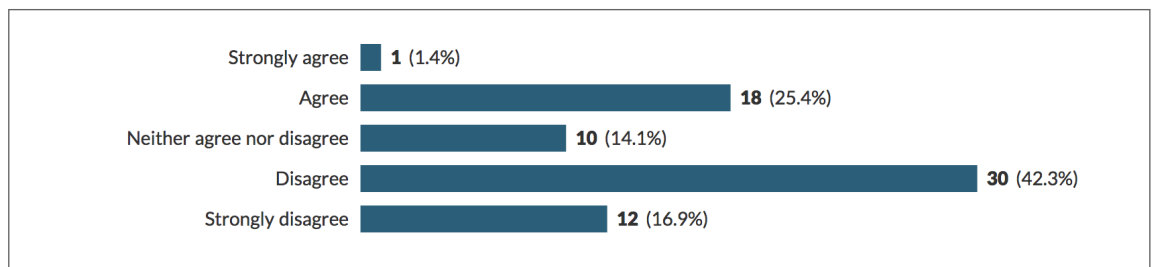
Figure 57: KS5 teachers' confidence in predicting grades

In the free text responses, teachers shared more information and similarly to KS4, they experienced grades that were both higher and lower than expected:
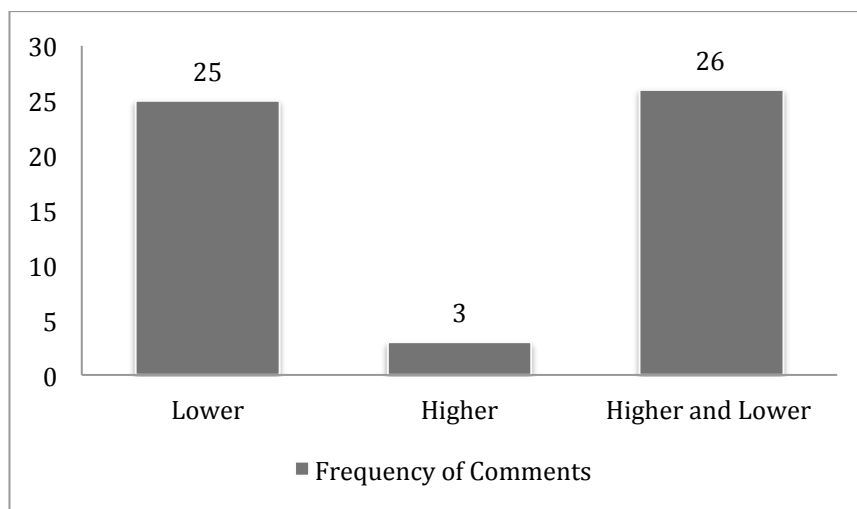
Figure 58: Frequencies of teachers who experienced higher or lower marks than predicted at KS5

However, unlike KS4, teachers emphasised the frequency of unpredicted results with some teachers experiencing it annually:

T285: Every year there is a lack of consistency. We never know where we stand

T093: Year to year results are inconsistent

T187: Frequently graded much lower than expected

T873: I have done training every year to try to better my skill at knowing what is being asked for, but 10 years in and I still get it wrong

Teachers also shared experiences of radically inconsistent marking with results being several grade boundaries away from expectations:

> **T961:** Composition marked several grades lower than expected (E instead of A)

> **T192:** Marked down significantly

> **T508:** Expected B [but] got E

> **T954:** The same composition could score anything from a D to an A grade depending on the view of one individual examiner

> **T786:** I have had a student whose composition I thought was D/E get an A

> **T279:** One year I felt that I had a really wide range of students at AS level - yet they all achieved C grades for their compositions. Every single one

> **T508:** Also a pupil who got an A at AS, got a U at A2 despite composing in a similar style and same amount of effort

Discrepancies in the marking were most common at the extreme ends of the grade spectrum. Thus very high achieving students received significantly poorer marks than predicted, and low ability students received very high marks. Some teachers explicitly highlighted this concern:

> **T205:** Two students both received the same C grade when one was a much higher standard than the other (I had predicted a D and an A)

> **T706:** Low ability student producing work, which would be C at best, achieving higher than others who would be As

> **T830:** Whilst the "middle"-level submissions get grades consistent with predictions, the "extremes" often throw up some extraordinary results - none of which give clues about what criteria (if, indeed, there are any) the assessors are using. It frequently seems arbitrary and based on the passing whimsy of the moment

Teachers questioned why grades did not correlate with students' composing abilities:

> **T408:** The "rank order" was changed significantly last year for my A2 group. Couldn't understand why on musical quality

> **T283:** Mark was significantly lower than I had expected. The student, I felt, had real flair in composition, and this was not recognised

And some shared incidences of when successful and talented music students did poorly in the examination:

> **T873:** An outstanding and innovative composition from a student who had won national youth composition awards got a D
>
> **T660:** Student who should have got an A for composing and is now studying music at Oxford, where he got a first last year for his composition work, got a D where a much weaker student got a B
>
> **T523:** I had a student who went on to study composition at a London music college gain…a low B in her AS re-take

This raises concern regarding the validity and "real-world" application of the examination outside of the classroom.

From the data outlined, it is apparent that teachers experienced radically unpredictable results commonly and much more than at KS4. This significant lack of predictability is disquieting considering the high-stakes, with A-level often being the gateway to university (Gipps and Murphy, 1994). As the future of a student's education and career potentially depends on their A-level results, universities and music conservatoires need to take into account the potential unreliability of composing at A-level.

Re-marking

As a result of the perceived unreliability and dissatisfaction from teachers, it may be assumed that teachers regularly send disputed compositions to be re-marked. Although 38% (15.5%+22.5%) of teachers admitted to sending compositions for re-marking every year, just over half (54.9%) of teachers rarely went through the re-marking process:

5 How often do you query an examination mark and/or ask for re-marking of AS and/or A Level compositions:

More than 2 compositions every year — 11 (15.5%)
Between 1-2 compositions every year — 16 (22.5%)
Every couple of years — 25 (35.2%)
Very occasionally / hardly ever — 11 (15.5%)
Never — 3 (4.2%)
Other — 5 (7%)
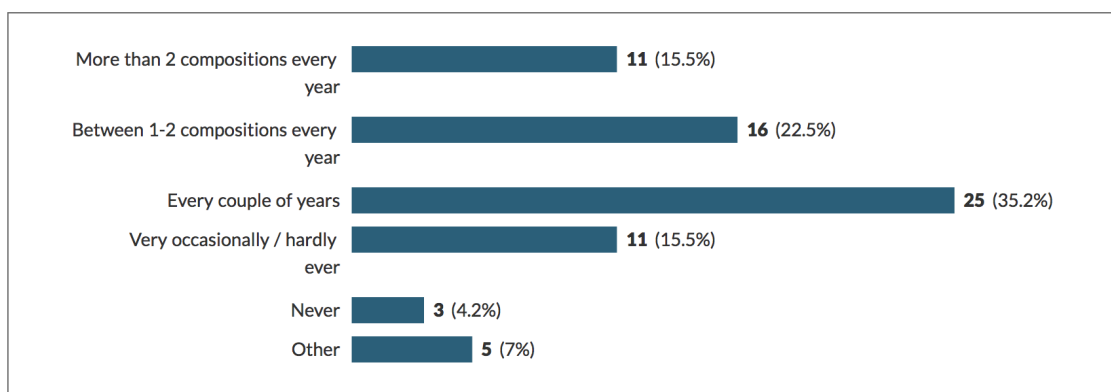
Figure 59: Re-marking frequency

A small number of teachers shared experiences of re-marking where marks were improved dramatically:

> **T283:** I had the work re-marked, and the mark went up significantly

> **T164:** Candidate who achieved A* in GCSE and Unit 2 receiving D grade. C on re-mark

> **T187:** Marks too often go up by as much as 30 UMS after a re-mark. Outrageously poor

However, the re-marking process did not guarantee a favourable outcome for the student or teacher and it would be too late for A2 students to get a composition re-marked as it may already have affected their university entry or future educational pathway:

> **T953:** Marks are not usually queried by A2 students as the result will be too late if they are continuing to university

One participant that who had been a KS5 composition examiner, commented that some of the re-marking process might not be as objective or reliable as expected:

> **T574:** Music coursework is not re-marked blind, therefore requesting re-marks is not always productive as there is a tendency for them to cover one another's backs. I know this first hand as I used to be an examiner, but lacked faith in the system/education of composition they are promoting

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Another teacher also found that they were not able to send a composition for re-marking:

> **T192:** Compositions [were] marked by chief examiner for performance, so [I was] told [that I was] not allowed to challenge

Overall, there was a sense from teachers over a lack transparency and honesty in regards to the marking and re-marking of composition:

> **T246:** This info is only available if a re-mark is requested
>
> **T279:** Feedback from the exam board isn't helpful as they will not give anything back for the unit other than the overall grade
>
> **T430:** What the exam board say at composition meetings and courses does not tally with the real grades that compositions are marked at

With finance and time being both a restricting factor for re-marking as an option:

> **T953:** This depends on the stage of the student and their financial situation…sometimes it just costs too much to query results, which are questionable.
>
> **T164:** Re-marking is expensive and one candidate was marked down on re-mark

7.4.2 Subjectivity and Bias

In the survey very few teachers (18.3%) felt that assessment requirements were "clear and easy to understand":

4.3 The assessment requirements are clear and easy it is understand what is required of the student:

Strongly agree	0
Agree	13 (18.3%)
Neither agree nor disagree	11 (15.5%)
Disagree	30 (42.3%)
Strongly disagree	17 (23.9%)
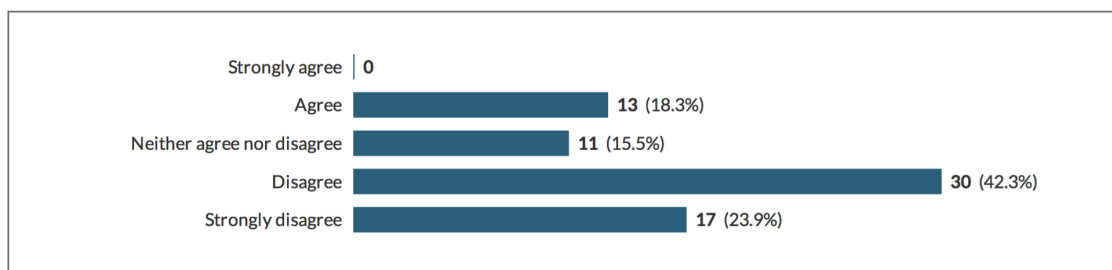
Figure 60: Clarity of the KS5 assessment requirements

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As discussed in the KS4 survey, many teachers felt the marking requirements and criteria were ambiguous at AS and A-level:

> **T484:** I would like more specific assessment criteria that isn't wishy-washy

> **T941:** Mark schemes for the board I teach are very vague

> **T430:** The A2 techniques marking criteria needs to be considerably more specific as currently they are literally all but useless

> **T430:** The assessment criteria AND the marking criteria are way too vague to be a constructive tool in the composition process, for both the teacher and the student. The criteria is (sic) way too ambiguous and needs to be considerably more detailed and/or structured - more quantitative guidelines/targets as at the moment it is virtually all qualitative

> **T551:** I have been on courses on how to get an A / A* at A-level with teachers who all want to know the same thing...what are the examiners looking for? I have never had a straight answer and my marks are always below 75%

Teachers commented how the lack of clarity in the requirements could lead to subjectivity in the marking:

> **T317:** It is sometimes difficult to understand the expectations of composition, as much of it is a matter of opinion

> **T283:** The problem is one of subjectivity, especially in the free composition option

> **T287:** I feel that the composition paper really depends on the examiner or moderator (depending on the board) and how THEY interpret the criteria. This clearly varies from year to year

Gipps and Stobart (1993) also commented how a complex activity, such as composing could lead to different interpretation of the criteria resulting in less reliability.

Similarly to the KS4 survey, concerns regarding subjectivity were more prominent when the teachers discussed imaginative and creative compositions:

> **T873:** I do understand how it is hard to be subjective in marking creative work, but the criteria is (sic) woolly. For example too much use of words like "imaginative". Who decides what imaginative is and isn't? Very difficult!

> **T807:** Composition is so subjective that it is almost impossible to achieve a consensus on an appropriate mark

Teachers reported overwhelmingly how creative approaches to composing were not recognised in the marking:

> **T684:** Good quality harmony and string quartet work at A2 following all rules with some creativity that also worked, headed as a U
>
> **T185:** Individual voice amongst the best students seems to go unrecognised. Examiners are confident dealing with a mixture of the banal and pastiche
>
> **T495:** Originality and competence seemed to gain few marks - it seems that pastiche composing against a set of tick boxes is required
>
> **T732:** Highly imaginative compositions were marked low
>
> **T692:** Candidates showing high levels of creativity and originality should have this reflected in their final mark, and that this aspect should be incorporated into current mark schemes
>
> **T287:** Musical compositions have often been marked down unfairly (in my opinion) and unmusical rewarded for clunky and technical gestures

And there was a concern that specific styles of music may be disadvantaged in the examination:

> **T408:** Popular/Jazz styles scored lower than pastiche classical
>
> **T108:** We have done popular songs in the past for the AS composition…but scored very low, some students scoring E and U
>
> **T896:** It seems that students who compose in a contemporary style (be it a pop song or a bi-tonal piece) seem to score better than more conventional compositional styles (eg. string quartet)

Due to this unreliability, some teachers questioned the skills of the examiners assessing KS5 compositions:

> **T430:** I do wonder about the level of experience of the examiners who mark the A2 technique papers - I feel that the students' grades depend massively upon the experience of the examiners i.e. a classically trained examiner will most likely be better suited for marking certain techniques as opposed to a rock/pop/jazz trained one, and vice versa

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T430: The examiners should be degree level qualified composers. Many examiners (I am assuming) probably did very little if no degree level composition so therefore should not be marking A-level work

Past examiners who took part in the survey discussed their experience of marking A-level compositions, confirming teachers' suspicions regarding the lack of examiner training:

T523: I previously marked A-level composition papers for an exam board and [I] felt the training was not long enough and the amount of papers you were expected to mark for the money was terrible. The pressure was very intense and very sadly it doesn't surprise me that marks for the composition papers are so sporadic. They most likely have to re-train markers every year and most likely don't have time/money to ensure a brilliant job is done

T574: I used to be an examiner, but lacked faith in the system/education of composition they are promoting

T941: I have been an examiner for A2 composition in the past and have seen first hand how pieces can get wildly different marks from different people

As discussed in chapter 3, Gipps and Murphy (1994) believed that the musical genre could influence the examiner. The teachers in this study, recommended more thorough examiner training to 'reduce bias' (Gipps and Murphy, 1994: 27) in the tests:

T432: I think examiners need broader training. Some examiners seem competent marking/grading in just one or two styles - sometimes evident if one child composes in an "unusual" style but to the same standard as other candidates

7.5 KS5 Telephone Interviews

The 9 KS5 telephone interviews provided a deeper and more detailed understanding into the effect of inconsistent marking on the teaching and learning of composing. A range of school types and locations were represented, with most KS5 teachers interviewed being male:

Table 25: Overview of KS5 telephone interview participants

Teacher	Sex	School type	School location	Interview length (minutes)
TR	Male	Unknown	Unknown	Not recorded
TB	Male	Unknown	Unknown	29
SK	Male	State sixth form college	West Midlands	23
LH	Female	State	South East	20
LG	Female	Unknown	Unknown	28
KW	Female	Girls catholic grammar	Greater Manchester	22
JK	Male	Unknown	Unknown	19
AL	Male	Independent	Cheshire	24
AA	Male	Academy	Leicester	19

A wider range of themes was raised in the interviews including understanding students' intentions, being transparent about the marking process, contradictions in the marking criteria, bias of genre and live recording in the marking, the pressures of high-stakes examinations, TTT processes and questions surrounding the purpose and validity of composing at KS5.

7.5.1 Intentions

The majority of music teachers interviewed acknowledged the complexity involved in assessing composing admitting it was inherently difficult to assess reliably:

> **AA:** I think it is very difficult to mark composition work
>
> **TB:** It is incredibly difficult to assess
>
> **LH:** It's a very uncreative way of assessing something that is a creative piece of work

There was an understanding into the challenges examination boards and examiners faced:

> **TB:** They have no methodology actually to assess that, and sort of who does?
>
> **LG:** It must be so difficult to mark composition, I do get that, and the whole point of composition is that it's meant to be the most creative thing you can do musically and to mark that is incredibly difficult…It's really hard I don't know what I would do if I was the exam board really
>
> **KW:** I think it must be quite hard to just judge the composition

Many teachers worried that the intentions of students could be easily missed or misunderstood by an examiner. Some teachers suggested that a written commentary could accompany the students' scores and recordings to make visible the decisions made by the students:

> **AL:** The teachers write like a document to say what the child has done and what they come at the teacher believes this composition to be worth

This appeared more necessary when a student's composing approach was more creative, or when the music did not fit within the WCT:

> **LG:** We asked him [student] to record and to write an introduction to it so by saying "I've melodically develop my ideas throughout these parts, you'll see in bar one and bar seven you've got the reoccurring ideas". We try to make it really very explicit how he was meeting each of the criteria

Some teachers felt that, like GCSE, they themselves should be trusted to mark the KS5 compositions so that they would have a clearer understanding into their students' intentions having witnessed the composition develop:

> **LH:** If it was predominantly marked by the teacher they would pick out things that the student had done and highlight key things that maybe someone that's got to listen to 300 of the things in five minutes isn't necessarily going to pick out nuances…the teacher has been in that process from beginning for the student and understands how the composition has developed and grown and it's not necessarily all about the end product it's about the process as well

> **KW:** You do get very involved with your students and you know you see the piece and emerge and develop

> **LG:** I think as teachers we live with these pieces for an entire year, we know how these pieces have evolved, we know what the point of them is, and with an examiner how long are they listening to two or three times

> **AL:** You've got to appreciate that I've been working with these kids compositions for X number of months, I think that I would have a better idea of what that kid deserves

> **LH:** You only have very few minutes to listen to each composition…[a friend] had to mark 300 compositions. She said I listen to them twice and if they sound good then that's it

Some concerns highlighted in the quote above, highlight a worry that low pay and limited training of examiners might influence the quality of the marking; thus lowing the assessment's reliability.

Contradictions

As with the KS5 survey, teachers felt some of the terminology was vague, "open ended" (AL), and "woolly" (TR and LG):

> **TB:** there was (sic) no clear guidelines to what they [examiners] were looking for

> **AL:** I don't feel that…the mark scheme is as clear as it should be

Teachers highlighted significant contradictions in the wording of assessment criteria, in particular the word "imaginative":

LG: We all have different ideas about what an imaginative melody

AL: So it says okay, I've got to write for my chosen instrument with imagination. But it doesn't help me to know how imaginative something is. So how imaginative is an A grade as opposed to a C grade composition? That would be my argument for the exam board

LG: If you look at structure so there will be standard structure, it's a clear and proportional structure, that's quite easy to say if it's proportional or if it's not isn't it? But then you go to things like where it says it has an imaginative structure or it has an imaginative melody…I don't know what an imaginative structure is, does that mean it has lots of sections? Does that mean that it has to have contrast? If you have a piece that is with a really whacky structure well it might not be proportional any more. So it kind of contradicts itself as well

Similarly SK commented on contradictions after attending an A-level assessment training event:

SK: A-level music A number of us gave it [composition] quite a low mark because harmonically it was really simple, really straightforward and the chief examiner said well actually it got this mark, a lot higher because the texture is interesting. The next piece…we went okay "erm, so erm, harmonically it's not great but the texture is quite nice" so we gave it a higher mark but when we heard…what the examiner actually gave them, it was a lot lower because the harmony was boring. So, so they kind of contradict themselves

SK found that the training exposed areas of ambiguity. AL highlighted possible discrepancies questioning to what extent students could explore instrumental techniques:

AL: It doesn't always specify whether that means that the child has to use say two things, so if they are a trumpet player do they use like just a muted trumpet and then use double tonguing? Or are you expecting them to use more advanced techniques like being able to lip trill for example, or flutter tongue? There are some instruments that have a lot more things that they can do, and a lot more dextrous than others so like woodwind has a much better range than brass. So am I expected to use a wide range of woodwind or if I use a smaller range on a brass instrument are they going to penalise?

7.5.2 Expanding on Examiner Bias

Examiner bias was a significant concern from all of the KS5 teachers interviewed. Concerns were divided into two main categories: firstly bias regarding the style/genre of the composition, and secondly bias in regards to having a live recording of the composition. As mentioned in the survey results, bias towards certain styles and genres was often linked to the examiners' own musical background and experiences:

> **AA:** And I think for example the examiners musical background can I have a huge influence

> **LH:** Musicians like different styles

> **LG:** I do think a lot depends on who is actually marking it because we are increasingly aware that the person that marks the composition could be a, a 20th century specialist who has got a Masters in composition, they can equally be someone who has done a pop music degree and has done a lot of contemporary music, it could be Church organist who teaches in a private boys school…you wonder who is marking, some times and if that has any biased

There was a sense from teachers that the examiners marking the compositions might not have the necessary knowledge in all genres of music to be able to mark the compositions reliably and fairly:

> **LG:** I wouldn't have a clue where to start marking something with lots of music technology effects for example

> **JK:** One year you to have a bunch of compositions from a wide range of styles that you would see the marking was either skewed towards classical or popular and the reasons for that not making sense in terms of musical detail and ambition and structure…it would be all of the classical ones were rated higher or all of the popular ones were rated higher and I think many examiners all moderators must come into it with a heavily biased to one or the other

Some teachers insinuated that they felt specific styles might be unfairly discriminated against: "music in pop wouldn't get marks in A-level" (TR), whereas other styles were deemed as safer in the examination:

> **LG:** So theme and variations, things in sonata form and so on. Things like songs for voice and piano or string quartet. Like really functional ensembles

seem to be the best

There were also concerns that examiners might not be composers, making them incapable of marking composition fairly:

> **TB:** It seems a bit random and seems to be down to the examiner who might not be, who specialise in my not be composition at all

As a result teachers felt anxious about the examiners' personal preferences and opinions rather than believing they would take an objective and unbiased view of the compositions:

> **SK:** Sometimes you…think maybe they [the examiner] just don't like that

Subsequently, some teachers commented that they attempted to "outguess" what the examiners expect to see and hear in the KS5 compositions:

> **TB:** You're trying to outguess what they [examiners] want to hear so if it's a passing storm or something. So you're trying to think what does the examiner feel will be suitable for a passing storm? You're trying to tick those boxes aren't you? You're trying to find ways in which you feel "oh will they expect this?"…teaching to the test I think

> **SK:** The teachers' job almost becomes to second-guess

> **TB:** everything they [students] do, everything the student does is being referenced back to the specification and to outguess what will work. Trying to guess what will work, what will be successful in the exam…rather than what is actually good

Live Recordings

An additional perceived variable in the examination depended on a student having a live recording of their composition. Two teachers felt that a good recording could subconsciously influence the marking:

> **LH:** If their compositions are performed live then that can make quite a good impression on an examiner

> **LG:** I think with things like the Sibelius…especially vocal pieces and they

will sound horrendous, and if we don't provide a live one, then obviously that doesn't translate as well

Although examination specifications state that 'the quality of recorded performances will not be assessed' (Edexcel, 2012: 47), LH disclosed a colleague's experience of assessing composing stating that she had felt a positive bias towards live-recorded compositions:

> **LH:** …as a moderator when she moderated…she really appreciated that, like "oh this one's a bit better because it is performed live"

Although LG acknowledged that the recording quality should not directly influence the marking: "the party line for the exam board is it doesn't affect anything" (LG), she felt that in order to assure her students the best marks possible she should record all possible compositions:

> **LG:** To be really sure about composition marks and being quite desperate to do everything we can come, the last two years we've recorded both the Sibelius and live recordings of everything

Similarly, TB expressed concerns for students relying on music technology for their recording and availability to good quality sampled sounds:

> **TB:** Actually it depends on what the poor guys can afford. If they can afford top east-west sampling kits and that sort of thing then that's fine but if you've just got the basic Cubase or whatever sounds, they are not going to do as well as someone that has access to the £1000 sampling kit

The teachers allude to possibilities for hidden and unconscious bias. If marks are reliant, to some extent, on the quality of a student's recording and style of music, it raises further ethical questions into equality and fairness in the examination.

Transparency

There was a sense from the interviews that more transparency from examination boards was needed. Three teachers expressed severe distrust for the examiners marking the compositions:

TB: I had doubts about the competence of the people marking

TR: I don't trust, people marking who couldn't read music in music technology…GCSE not marketed by a music teacher…a musician but not qualified music teacher

LG: I have less faith in the people marking it than the criteria

AA: you get some moderators that you know you can trust…the chief examiner so I thought right I know that he is marking all of them and I know that mark will be reliable.

Teachers emphasised that there was very little opportunity for dialogue between teachers and examiners, with examination boards were viewed as a "closed shop" (TR) with limited possibility of debate or discussion:

AA: I am reading moderators reports I don't really know who the person is and I can't enter into a dialogue with them

AA: It all looks fair and transparent but really it isn't. But then there is a wider issue of assessment is you don't know who is marking the work

KW: There is no opportunity for me to sort of speak on my students' behalf

Two teachers even regarded examination boards as "corrupt" (TR):

SK: It's not a well-publicised fact, that it is a fact that they don't re-mark stuff blind so…it's far from transparent, and the trouble is all the time, that it isn't transparent and it's not being re-marked blind. How are we ever going to get, like, a fair re-mark?

SK: Ofqual came in two years consecutively running because they weren't happy with the marking of composition so I think there is a massive tendency for them not to sort of, almost say there is a problem here, you know

These comments highlighted some of the discontent and distrust teachers felt towards examination boards and KS5 examiners.

7.5.3 High-Stakes

Many of the KS5 music teachers revealed working under high-pressured circumstances, and acknowledging the importance of the examination for their students' future. Many of the teachers felt personally responsible for their students' grades

> **JK:** When you've got a surprise and it's one of lower marks then your brain instantly goes to the implications for the people and then there's all of the worries that you have in terms of you may or may not have done wrong

> **LG:** …we really don't want to let our kids down

> **AL:** They have to do three A-levels to go on to university…they have a lot of time constraints and other subjects as well

> **LG:** You just know you're giving it the best chance before it starts… it's just so important to them I just don't want to let them down

> **KW:** Some do but most go on to do medicine or they go to Oxford and Cambridge to do something else and they need an A or an A* ultimately

Furthermore, teachers reported additional pressures from their schools to reach set targets:

> **LH:** I think teachers in schools are under so much pressure to achieve certain grades and get the results

When students received lower results than expected, teachers explained how schools investigated this with high levels of monitoring taking place in some circumstances:

> **AL:** The school finds it harder to point the finger anywhere. So who is accountable for these grades and ultimately the teacher is. Maybe that's my state school upbringing

> **AA:** Everyone is under pressure from their managers to achieve the best possible results for the students and when they don't achieve those there will be a lot of analysis of why they haven't achieved them and then I have to show what they are going to do to improve them

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TR: I was told I must be rubbish because of wrong predictions… deemed as unfit for purpose even though I'm not. I already know how to mark composition and I was very accurate on the course

These quotes illustrate a culture of blame and fear (Moss, 2017), resulting in lowering teachers' confidences:

KW: It was all about free competition then the marks were absolutely haywire. I mean that was not a happy time for me in teaching composition…It was absolute lottery

AA: You don't really know, you don't know what the outcome is going to be and some of the work that I think is very good gets a relatively low mark. Yes it's, it's a little bit of a stab in the dark I would say

LH: I just don't have that much confidence almost, almost fearful

One teacher (TR) admitted having suffered with mental health problems, and fear for his job, as a result of the inconsistent marking of composition:

TR: I have all of August off…I hate most of August. I am worried about what will happen…Effects the summer holiday…cannot relax…scared

TR: My job on the line…makes me look like an idiot with predictions

Similarly to KS4, the KS5 teachers also reported a significant constraint in time available:

AL: At A-level it is constrained for time because the kids have like one hour lesson blocks… I mean they would only have 20 minutes with me and I find it very difficult

KW: Because you can do formal harmony and counterpoint, you can do free composition, you can do arranging and they say in the [training] course to teach them all of the skills and techniques in the first term and you think "have you ever taught?"…In an ideal world they would have more time

SK: I think the trouble is trying get through so much content

This high accountability landscape, combined with the unpredictability of the examination and limited timeframe, begin to explain the high levels of stress experienced at KS5.

7.5.4 Questions of Validity

Although questions concerning the reliability of assessment dominated the survey, the telephone interviews challenged the validity. Two main discussions emerged; first referencing the construct validity of the examination with teachers challenging disparities between students' composing practices in and out of school, and second regarding consequential validity, where teachers considered the negative side effects on learners.

Three teachers felt that the composing examination did not demonstrate a true reflection of the students' composing capabilities, competencies, or musical interests outside of school. LG gave an example of a highly skilled jazz music student:

> **LG:** A very, very gifted, playing in the National Jazz Orchestra having lessons with really good people, like top of his game already… we are saying to him in his compositions "you need to stop rambling and you need to have coherence", "you need to cut that improvisation and you need to have proportional sections". And he looks at you as if "what do you mean this is Jazz". I'm not a jazz specialist; he looks at me as if you don't know what you're talking about. And I think he feels like I'm really stifling him

Here the teacher was very aware that the criteria for KS5 were not appropriate for the musical medium the student was composing in; therefore, she was conflicted between allowing him to continue, or ensuring high grades in the examination. Other teachers echoed this distinction between home and school composing, asking students to separate their practices:

> **AL:** I try and tell them that there are composition that I have done...I don't actually like them

> **LG:** You can compose what you want for pleasure but when you're composing for an exam board this is what you need to do

> **KW:** I say "do your school composition as an exam, and just toe the line of what the board are looking for…but just freely compose in your own time and be as experimental as you possibly can"

A large number of teachers raised concerns when high achieving students received low marks in the examination:

> **LG:** That really gifted student…was winning competitions and having works performed by kind of national organisations and is passionate about composition

> **KW:** This particular candidate, who's actually just graduated with a first in music and continuing to compose…it came back as a C and I just thought what? And since then that was about five years ago, I have a shied away now from saying to my students be really individual

> **AL:** One of my best examples is from the kid that wanted to go onto conservatoire to study composition. He was quite advanced for his age I would say…he just composed naturally, composed for hours…he wrote a piece of music and everyone in the department said yes that is an A grade, easily an A. You can't fault it in any way really. The exam board said oh no it's a B

> **LH:** We had one student in fact that did AS and A2 composition in the same year...She went on to do composition at the Royal College…A2 she got full marks in her composition, at AS she got a B. How does that even make sense? Clearly she is a good composer, really well skilled, gone on to study it. It just doesn't seem to add up

> **TB:** I remember one particular student who I thought was very gifted and in fact proved to be very so when he went on study music, and he got a very poor mark

> **LG:** …the formulaic piece actually got an A in composition, which we were staggered by and the student that has…pinned is in entire life on like being an innovative young composer has got a C…we really struggled with that

Teachers questioned why their students' composing abilities out of the classroom, did not correlate with the examination requirements or marking.

Consequential Validity

The second concern was regarding the consequential validity of KS5 composing. Consequential validity, also known as washback validity (Messick, 1996), measures an assessment based on both the positive and negative influences an assessment can have on teaching and learning. Due to the perceived inconsistencies of marking and the pressures outlined above, many teachers felt they had to teach composing in a very prescriptive way to give their students' the best chance:

TB: Grades being moved considerably lead to very much to, teaching to the test and rather than. Rather than allowing students to develop in their own way in the way that you'd imagine composition would suggest, to being very cautious

JK: The closest thing to a winning recipe I found was to say to pupils "repeat, develop, repeat, develop, contrast, repeat and develop that contrast"…so there was a degree of a formula there

KW: What really works I find, what's getting the highest marks…[is] pastiche…heavily, heavily sort of looking at a particular composer style

LG: Compose a very formulaic kind of, "right eight bars, starting the tonic key, go to the dominant, and by the end of the eight bars return, put a perfect cadence at the end, modulate to the relative minor, then come back", so it was ternary form, and then do variations. And we were very prescribed

SK: You can do a box ticking exercise, you can say it "right we need a modulation there let's go to the dominant", you know and then that ticked that box. Yeah you can say "you need to develop that idea without it being so radically new, well, play it backwards"

Some teachers confessed to getting students to copy previous high scoring compositions at KS5:

TR: I will make kids copy/model their work explicitly on what a grade A looks like rather than let them be creative

TR: I show students a grade A composition…Told them to copy, model it and they got grade D

LH: I just kind of go on what I've done before because that has produced good results and kind of try to steer students down the same path of similar types of composition at a similar level

This exemplifies what Francis (2012) and Fautley and Savage (2011b) saw, with students learning how to compose 'examination pieces' (Francis, 2012: 166).

Many teachers were aware that teaching TTT was not good practice and could be detrimental to students' learning and creativity:

TB: I think it is a huge danger…in the end it just becomes a set of rules

JK: As I went on I became much more focused on the mark scheme rather

than creating pieces that were of genuine musical value…when I did focus on the mark scheme and drilling that, the marks tended to get lower and lower so [laugh]…the last couple of years…I skewed it back towards creativity and just being genuinely interesting

SK: Students become very aware that you are almost clipping their wings slightly. Because you want to make sure that they are ticking boxes

LG: I feel like I'm really clipping their wings really and as I said this exceptional student I mean he's just, I just feel like he's been let down by the whole thing.

AA: I think composition can become extremely formulaic…it takes all the life out of it and also in the end stunts the learning of what they are able to achieve

And they showed traits of internal conflict between allowing students' creative freedom and getting them through the examination:

AL: And I do you sometimes feel that as a teacher you're between a rock and a hard place

TB: Is the balance between encouraging creativity at all costs and actually making sure that students have had some sort of grounding?

LG: Composition should be free, it should be open, it should be, it shouldn't have to be confined by rules

But ultimately, due the performativity and accountability landscapes described above, many felt they had limited choice:

JK: I think, I think a danger lies down that path. But I completely understand why teachers end up doing it

Another negative consequence of assessment was for students. Teachers commented that due to TTT students' experience and enjoyment of composing was affected:

LG: They don't enjoy composition at this level now because…they are being hemmed in all the time by criteria

LH: They don't enjoy it as much because they see it as a kind of "right I've got to do want the examiner wants", rather than doing what they want to do and being creative I think sometimes

KW: They will not compose another note than what they have to do for GCSE

or A-level, they just won't do anything other than it and you know that when they hand in that submission that is it. That composing life is over and that's a shame really

Teachers also shared stories of enthusiastic and high ability students being demoralised after receiving a low examination grade:

LG: He wanted to be a professional composer and he's now, and he's decided, despite being really having his confidence knocked, he is going to go for it and applied to do a composing…he is confronted with a low result and the impact of that

JK: …it's [the examination] put some very able, potentially fantastic composers right-off and I can think of, off the top of my head I can think of five or six people straightaway who have dropped music after AS level altogether because of that experience of composing marks and they're, they're thinking was "well I've got to pursue the courses where I will get the best grades and I can't predict the grade I will get from composing so I can't predict the grades I will get from music". So yes it had a huge impact on them

JK: I think it is that serious as well, I think we might have actually lost some genuine great musicians through the examination system

AL: How can you mark someone's dreams, how can you assess someone's dreams? Because when someone composes it's their, it's their thoughts if you want to look at it like that and then I think it's great send it to the examiner, and they think it's rubbish

This illustrates the detrimental effect of assessment on students' confidence and creativity, raising questions into the ethical responsibilities of examination boards.

7.6 KS5 Survey Summary

The KS5 findings reveal that the majority of teachers experienced unpredictability in the marking, with some experiencing significant and frequent discrepancies. The way examinations in England are graded depend on a particular year's cohort; therefore grade boundaries vary from year to year. This may help to explain some of the fluctuations in marking. Teachers not only challenged the reliability of the assessment, but also validity, questioning how and why high-achieving and

experienced students received low grades. Although teachers expressed frustration with the examination many felt obliged to TTT due to high levels of accountability, even to the detriment of their students' learning. Due to the high-stakes attached to A-level examinations, the inconsistency and unpredictability of the composing examinations should cause significant concern for students, parents, teachers, schools, examination boards, policy makers, and higher and further education institutions. Although, as Harlem (2007) highlighted, many universities are now becoming aware of the issues of reliability and validity in A-level examinations:

> **TR:** Ignoring A-level composition marks at universities – they don't base anything on it. It has no status with universities

> **LG:** I have heard rumours that actually universities do take composition grades with a pinch of salt… I think universities have cottoned on

Thus, raising further questions about the purpose of composing at KS5.

7.7 KS4 and KS5 Comparisons

A number of similarities can be observed between the experiences of the KS4 and KS5 teachers. Both surveys found that there were concerns in the reliability; however, unpredictability was much more frequent and extreme at KS5 (90.1%) compared to KS4 (52.7%). The extent and frequency of unanticipated results was also greater at KS5. These results are unsurprising since an external examiner marks AS and A-level compositions. Both KS4 and KS5 teachers felt that parts of the marking criteria and examination board requirements were vague, leaving space for ambiguity, bias and interpretation, particularly for words such as "imaginative" and "creative". This was echoed in their experiences of creative and high achieving students receiving significantly lower marks than predicted. As a result they called for greater transparency and dialogue between teachers and examination boards.

Pressure to pass the examination appeared more intense for KS5 teachers due to the high-stakes attached to A-level results, resorting to formulaic and pastiche composing approaches, which they deemed as safer and more reliable in the examination. Some

teachers expressed how the pressures outlined above affected their mental health, explaining why they had decided to leave the education system. Both groups were concerned about how the changes in music education, such as the EBacc and Progress 8, and the perceived value of music education being lowered, might affect access to music education, their students, and their jobs, with a concern that music education may become more elitist.

8. Composer Findings

As part of the data collection, five composer-educators were interviewed to allow for a different world-view and perspective on composing education. A number of key themes emerged from this data set that offered a new perspective on the topics discussed, allowing for a more detailed picture. In addition to this, I asked participants from the composer-educators and case studies how they defined the word "composer" and "composing". Their answers are discussed in this section together rather than by data type, so that patterns, similarities and conflicts can be drawn.

8.1 Composer-Educators

All composers interviewed had at least 5 years experience of composing with young people both in and out of the classroom environment, through project-by-project based education work over short periods of time, and working regularly in schools or junior conservatoires departments over a number of years. Their experiences both within the professional composing world, as well as a wide range of education work, offer a unique and different perspective. Although each composer had over 5 years of experience, no one identified directly as a teacher. There was a sense that the composers felt uncomfortable with the term, and the stigma of traditional teaching and learning:

> **KA:** So yeah I do see myself as a facilitator more than anything too rigorous I suppose
>
> **DC:** I'm not a music teacher although I have taught A-level composition in the past

When asked how they viewed their role when delivering education work they talked about being a "facilitator" (KA), "mentor" (SW) or "sounding board" (FT):

> **KA:** [students] all come in with their own experiences and they have certain things that they want to try so it's really about helping facilitate that
>
> **DC:** Sometimes I'm there to support people by playing, sometimes I am there

to support people by listening and commenting, sometimes I am there to support people by notating their ideas…sometimes I support people by picking them up at the station

SP: It's to enthuse them and to get them to do anything they can do and to get them to have a go

The composers felt their role was to support, rather than imposing their own musical ideas and ideals:

```
┌─────────────────────┐
│   Young composer    │
└─────────────────────┘
          ▲
┌─────────────────────┐
│ Support (composer)  │
└─────────────────────┘
```
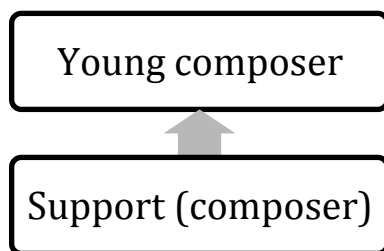
Figure 61: "Bottom-up" composer as a support

Thus, contradicting the traditional "top-down" notions of composing teaching as the master-apprentice model:

```
┌─────────────────────┐
│  Master (composer)  │
└─────────────────────┘
          ▼
┌─────────────────────┐
│ Appentice (student) │
└─────────────────────┘
```
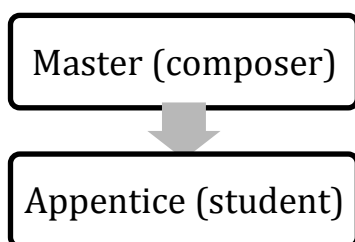
Figure 62: "Top-down" master-apprentice model

8.1.1 Composing Processes

One of the key themes raised by the composer-educators was regarding composing processes including the importance of creativity, trial and error, self-evaluation, and collaborative practices. Composers considered broader ideas around composing such as the structure and feel of a piece of music

SW: I don't think we talked enough about broad brush strokes, if that makes sense. So those big effects. Don't think about the individual harmonies, the notes or anything like that. What's the effect you want? And what kind of instruments can you hear it on and just blitz it down. Draw it, whatever

KA: Talking about the overall structure in the wider sense and then looking at the nitty-gritty sometimes on how to take this step forward or whatever else. So sort of a mixture of referring back to the structural plan and the overview

SW and KA argued that focusing on the wider facets of the music and envisaging the "bigger picture" were just as important as focusing on specific musical details such as rhythm and harmony. However, they felt this important part was commonly omitted in the classroom in favour of a clear bar-by-bar linear composing.

All composers valued experimentation and trial and error in their own composing processes:

SW: Opportunities to fail that's the biggest thing

SP: It's not getting it wrong, you're just looking for something that will fit

SW shared his own experience of a "failure" and how it played a significant part in his own learning:

SW: When I did the LSO [London Symphony Orchestra] piece, I did the first workshop and it completely flopped and it was rubbish and I scrapped the whole piece and started again but I had the opportunity to fail in quite a big way…was the biggest thing I have learnt from because it taught me so much about writing for orchestra and everything I was doing wrong so they need the opportunity to fail and be able to try something new again

FT acknowledged that facing failure was a difficult part of composing but that young people must become resilient in order to succeed:

FT: That's one of the hard things about it because you need to have a lot of determination and courage to keep going and to keep coming back to it and keep doing it and to keep building it up over, over a period of time

However, the composer-educators found students had little experience of this in school composing and often found they struggled to feely experiment:

> **SP:** There are a lot of nerves and fear around it, about presenting it yourself and about getting it wrong

The composers used terms such as "just to throw it out there" (SP), "it can be successful but it doesn't matter" (SP), "it doesn't have to be perfect now" (SP), "splurge" (KA), "play or sing whatever" (KA) and "try some stuff out" (SW). Some composers encouraged students to improvise freely as a way to generate ideas:

> **KA:** I'm quite interested in improvisation as a big tool for composition… Really promoting the idea of spontaneity

The composer-educators aimed to reassured students that a musical idea might not be perfect first time; thus insinuating a trial and error type approach of learning from mistakes and evaluating ideas.

The composers also commented that a significant amount of time was needed for trial and error:

> **FT:** Composing is hard work you have to put a lot of time and I do you have to kind of be prepared to kind of re-write the same ideas three times and I think that's a barrier

> **SP:** And it's very hard, it's very hard you've got to spend a long time writing stuff that isn't very successful in order to come at the successful stuff

> **FT:** Yeah I mean composing isn't fast is it? It's something that takes, that takes time to unfold

Although the composer-educators, and much of the literature advocated the benefits of risk-taking (Sternberg, O'Hara and Lubart, 1997; NACCCE, 1999), the composers acknowledged the narrow amount of time available in the classroom:

> **FT:** Creativity in general needs longer periods of time to immerse yourself…and I think today school curriculum is just less disposed to that way of working, it's more one hour of this, one hour of that

KA: Time and space to explore creativity. I acknowledge absolutely is quite a tall order because school, secondary schools are incredibly restrictive by their timetables…you need time, I just need, like I've been sitting around all day to be honest. But the way to be creative, sadly, is to have time and space

FT also found that his students were not able to work for prolonged periods of time on their compositions, instead wanting immediate responses:

FT: People want things to happen so much quicker these days

FT: They want to do something quickly and move on

DC argued that well-known stories of composers hearing and composing complete works, was a myth and did not reflect the role of struggle, experimentation and failure in the composing processes of professional composers:

DC: It doesn't all come to you in a great big whole thing where you have to write it down like Elgar pretended, used to say, or Stockhausen dreamt the big string orchestra piece. He said he dreamt it completely and then he wrote it down, I'm not sure I believe him, so I don't think it comes to you like that.

Self-Evaluation

For trial and error to take place, a composer must be able to make judgements about their own music. A vital part of the composing process, identified by the composer-educators, was the role of self-evaluation, which SP called "constant questioning":

SP: You've got to ask questions: "how do I achieve what I'm looking to, what I'm looking to create? How do I make that happen?"

Many of the composers felt that their students should develop their own self-evaluation and appraisal methods, and they discussed their own role in supporting students through this:

FT: I do agree that the questioning…is really useful to try and get the students to see for themselves rather than just you know, rather than just to say that's what I think.

SP: I think it's about what they were trying to achieve and did they achieve it?

Getting the young people to talk about themselves rather than me telling them: "I think this, I think, I think", to develop a sense of self respect, self-analysis.

DC: Those sort of approaches: "think of your favourite bit, what bit would you like to hear more than once?" That kind of stuff. "What's missing? Is it complete? How do you know when it's complete?" Lots of questions but more trying to cultivate people to ask their own questions….so to cultivate a series of self-questioning

DC believed that students must learn to judge their own music to become self-reliant:

DC: One day I'm not going to be there. If you have to rely on somebody else…they are not going to be there forever unless you can afford to pay for someone to do it.

This relates back to the idea of the "bottom-up" approach to teaching, in guiding their students rather than telling them what to do next (see figure 61). Although most of the composers valued questioning as a crucial form of feedback, no observations of their teaching were undertaken to triangulate and confirm the trustworthiness of their statements.

Collaboration

Collaboration was a vital part of some of the composers own creative processes specifically DC, FT and SP. DC commented that the concept of individual composing was outdated and only represented a small fraction of music-making from around the world:

DC: The idea of the solitary ownership of "the piece" that somehow belongs to you and nobody else, I just think it is, is quite a small bit of music history

Other composers spoke of the benefits of composing in groups in helping generating ideas, what FT called "communal momentum":

FT: You get ideas from other people and things flow and composing in that scenario is actually really easy and straightforward and fun and energetic and quick and spontaneous

KA: One of the things about solo composition is sometimes it's hard to work

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on your own, so group composition is maybe [lost connection]…sharing ideas rather than the student not really knowing where to go forwards

Although benefits of group composing were discussed, FT also highlighted the need for individual composing to develop fully as a composer:

> **FT:** So the solitary approach usually means notation and the group approach normally means non-notation

> **FT:** It's about the practical and the spontaneous, the quick, the here and now, the momentum, and then but it's also about what you take from that as an individual and how are you craft something over a period of time and come back and revisit it

Concluding that a good composing education should involve both group and individual composing in equal measure:

> **FT:** Really good composition teaching is both of those things

> **FT:** Just mixing that up a little bit I'm really trying to get the best of both worlds into composing because they're both very rich things

8.1.2 What to Teach

During the interviews four composer-educators were asked 'do you think composing can be taught?' All four composers felt strongly that it was possible to teach composing:

> **DC:** Yeah, yeah, you can teach it yeah. Yeah you can teach people to write music you know. Yeah of course.

> **KA:** Yes [laugh], yeah you know. Yes absolutely… in English you are taught creative writing, if we thinking about something that is creative, can be taught to a certain extent. So there is no reason why composition can't be taught either

> **SW:** Yes absolutely

> **SP:** Yeah, yeah of course it can

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The composers went on to expand why and how composing could be taught; however, there were disagreements between the composers on how this was achieved and two ideas emerged between encouraging and fostering originality and creativity, and teaching more direct technical aspects.

As with many of the music teachers, SP discussed technical and theory approaches to teaching composing:

> **SP:** You've got to learn skills, you've got to learn how to write a treble clef, I mean this is if we talking about, we're talking about notation but even if you're talking about other forms of music making, electronic music, you have to learn how to put the programs and do that there

> **SP:** …there is a certain amount of skills and techniques you're going to need to do well at a certain level to a degree

> **SP:** To be honest, if somebody came to me to learn *composing composing,* I'm very very strict. I'm very this is what you can learn from them and I've taught at the conservatoire. I made them learn C major scale and chords

SW commented that he had experienced schools taking this more technical approach to teaching:

> **SW:** Technical exercises to improve compositional technique – that's how it's presented in schools at the moment. I think and I think that's how it seen…seen as like a maths problem

In contrast, DC did not think that the teaching of theory was composition:

> **DC:** I think theory and orchestration, and say arrangement, aren't composition you know

Instead DC considered wider concepts of providing diverse ways for students to create musical ideas for themselves:

> **DC:** You can teach people frameworks…I think what is important is teaching people methodologies for generating ideas and working and evaluating ideas

DC and FT believed it was important for students to be "curious" (DC) and have "open ears and an open attitude" (FT) about music and sound. Although they felt that exploring other music was important and a useful tool:

> **FT:** You know that you can there is nothing wrong with finding out how reggae works or how 12 bar blues works or how minimalism works, and actually treating that as a compositional exercise

They were opposed to students solely learning how to replicate other genres of music; something they saw schools focusing on:

> **FT:** I think there's a lot of emphasis on schools on stylistic imitation which is different from composition and creativity, schools are much more happy to live in a world of recreating 12 bar blues or, reggae or samba, rather than investigating the students own potential in terms of their own creative energies and what they could do as composers themselves

Their aims were not for students to mimic or imitate a specific musical style, but to take musical ideas and techniques from diverse styles and combine them to produce something new and original:

> **FT:** You take ideas like that but make them work for you and reinvent them, and rethink them and you know find a new type of music that has elements of those things

FT talked about reinventing the musical ideas, thus taking composing away from purely replicating, as with stage one of Sternberg's Propulsion Theory (2003a), to moving the style forward in some way, or combining ideas to make something new. The ability to make something sound original, was highly valued by the majority of the composers, and something they looked out for in their students' compositions:

> **DC:** I'm always excited by exploring new things I've never heard before so that if you can communicate curiosity, inquisitiveness

> **DC:** I would look out for a sense of uniqueness

> **KA:** [I'm] always looking to do things that were quite outside the box

Originality was something KA valued strongly even over technical understanding:

> **KA:** ...an original voice…that's much more interesting than somebody who is just technically adept and really good at writing symphonies just on Sibelius, film music symphonies on Sibelius. People that have a real spark, yeah and original voice whatever that means in whatever sort of style, but hopefully mixing it up a little bit

However, KA highlighted that schools and examination boards may not always share the same attitude:

> **KA:** If sometimes talent doesn't fit into that box, into that marking criteria it's about understanding that, and having some of extra things, like an extra tick for being really imaginative…when students are being really imaginative and thinking outside of the box there needs to be ways for that to be recognised and applauded so that otherwise that's what happens

> **KA:** You know ticking things off, this piece has a modulation, maybe some kid doesn't want to write a piece that modulates, maybe some kid wants to write a drone base piece that uses three notes. Well that immediately sounds far more exciting than a piece that starts in be major and modulates to the dominant because it supposed to, because it has to do

In contrast, SW who was one of the most experienced with school teaching felt that originality was not necessarily the most important aspect for young composers:

> **SW:** I think there is an element of finding new ideas but I don't think that has to be inherent to composing. I think composers can happily write in the style that has been written before in many ways they can still find a lots of happiness in that and actually I think that's what's most important

This relates to Boden's 'P' and 'H' creativity theory (1990), with KW valuing H-creativity, a creativity that is historically original and creative, whereas SW acknowledges P-creativity, when creativity and innovation can be wholly new to the individual or student.

The "Toolbox"

A commonly used term used by the composers was "toolbox" and the idea that students needed to develop a set of tools and techniques to aid their composing. Similarly, Grainger, Goouch, and Lambirth (2005) suggested the use of a 'toolkit'

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(p.5) in creative writing. How the composers defined what tools should be in the "toolbox" varied depending on the composer. All of the composer-educators felt it was important for students to be exposed to different styles and genres of music. Some viewed their role, as an educator, to expose students to new and unfamiliar music:

> **DC:** I think our job is to introduce people to things and ways of thinking as well as music. So ways of thinking about music is that they haven't encountered before. To challenge what they think music is, what its functions and contexts can be and are

> **FT:** To try and open their eyes, ears, minds to other possibilities to the things that they are already doing

SW felt that analysing features from other musics could help students expand their own ideas for composing:

> **SW:** How can I use them in my piece? And then suddenly it becomes this toolbox that they are using for their compositions that has worked with

SW also called this developing a "palette" a set of "techniques you can put in your piece" (SW). SW also mentioned that a student's own musical experiences could be used as a set of "tools":

> **SW:** That's the first session I have a do is "what is in your toolbox?" So what instruments do you play? What are your favourite styles of music? What styles would you like to investigate? And then we start talking about palletts of sound. So are there any particular effects you like? And then they are starting to form this composer's toolbox that it gets them in the frame of mind of thinking what their strengths are and what they need to work on and that means they can then have their own personal learning plan I think

KA discussed how she sets her students composing tasks with clear boundaries as a way to teach composing and develop a set of techniques:

> **KA:** Just lots of limitations, that's what I'm really interested and so...a certain rule such as a pitch row. So I like small tasks. Sort of like, like a toolkit, lots of different little approaches that you might be up to use and also to pieces in all sorts of instrumental ensemble

Although all of the composers agreed that composing can be taught, what emerged was that there were different perceptions and opinions on how. Most of the composers valued originality in composing, feeling that examination boards and teachers rewarded replication over creativity:

> **FT:** There's always a way that you can interpret these ideas for yourself, but I think often that part of it is the bit that is missing [from school composing]

It appears that there is a considerable divide and conflict between what the composers value in composing compared to what teachers and examination boards value.

8.1.3 "Real" Composing

During the interviews, the composers questioned if composing in the classroom reflected their own and real-world professional practice. The composers commonly referred to "real" and "proper" composing:

> **DC:** So someone is in a band so we recorded that band…they were real things
>
> **SW:** I think in order to do composition properly…
>
> **SW:** I almost just wanted to get them out of the classroom. Going to experience what composition really is about

The interviews revealed a discrepancy between the composers' conceptualisation of *"real"* composing, and composing for examination:

> **DC:** I think there's a difference between composing a piece of music, and writing a piece of music for an exam
>
> **SW:** We are teaching towards an assessment not towards people being composers
>
> **SW:** I do have to demonstrate that results are improved and things like that…I'd rather just go and teach composition

As with the music teachers, SW clearly showed conflict between getting his students to pass the examination and also wanting to ensure they develop important composing skills:

> **SW:** A pupil will often turn to me and say "but I don't like that…and in the back of your head you're going "I know that if you put this and you're going to get a super mark" but as a composer I should be teaching you to be critical of what you put in that composition and what you put in and what you remove

SW and FT shared their disappointment with the separation of school and professional composing:

> **SW:** Composition is a task in schools, it's a task to show that you can develop ideas in a pre-described way in order to achieve a mark and that's very sad but that's what it is

> **FT:** I think it's a shame to, to compose only for exams

Expanding on this DC and SP highlighted a wider disparity between music education and music outside school, stating:

> **DC:** We think there is music education and there is music

> **SP:** Music in school is bizarre

KA discussed her own experience of when the school and professional music worlds collided, resulting in conflict:

> **KA:** I was going in with all my sort of usual wacky stuff, the head of music was great…but, he was only interested in teaching certain bits…he didn't really get what I was doing

Some of the composers experienced first-hand the conflict between "seeing students who have done a fantastic piece of work and have not had it recognised" (SW) in the marking:

> **SP:** I remember at HA school there was one young guy who had done a really amazing tune. Pop tune in 5/4, really good chromatic stuff, excellent, excellent piece of work. And he got a C for it because it didn't really fit into the really narrow remit of the GCSE syllabus into verse chorus, verse development, verse chorus. I think it is atrocious. It is disheartening

KA: I remember him [student] getting a B for one of his pieces and I was thinking, how was that possible? It was like better than the stuff I am writing now. It's absolutely ridiculous!

DC: I think it's unfortunate that some of the young composers I work with write brilliant pieces, like the Opera House pieces and then not allowed to submit them for any exam. So they've written this piece themselves, and they have this recording with the orchestra of the Royal Opera house with their piece been played brilliantly…And it counts for nothing because I haven't done in the right conditions.

Even students who had composed successful pieces for "real" composing circumstances, such as a competition, were not able to submit their pieces due to the examination restrictions. Thus, causing the composer-educators to question the validity of the examination. Two composers even questioned if any composers had been involved in informing the examinations believing that this would improve the validity:

SW: I want to find out when they wrote these exams what advice did they get? What composers did they get to advise on these exams, on to how they assess them because I'll be amazed to hear who it is they have, if any at all

KA: People who are experts in that area, are the people who should inform the curriculum…the top down approach

Some composers were critical of current teaching practices and felt some teachers were ill-equipped to teach composing:

DC: It's a subject that is really being taught really really badly and it's been taught [in a] far too formulaic way in my experience…the kind of musicians that become music teachers in schools are the best people to teach it to be honest

SW: Problem is teachers come away with so many preconceptions about composition…[they] don't understand how to teach composition

Some highlighted the lack of skills and confidence in music teachers:

SP: If the teachers don't have the skills then they are not going to be confident teaching it

> **KA:** …but I think really needs to happen is maybe a lot more training of teachers where teachers are not confident

> **DC:** A lot of teachers aren't comfortable with it [composing] so they will say "I'm not a composer"

> **FT:** If teachers had the opportunity to become a little bit more comfortable in both of those areas…if teachers were able to have some developmental time to develop those two strands

FT and KA suggested that further training could help raise confidence; however, SW withheld the notion that professional composers were necessary for any high ability student:

> **SW:** Regular contact with someone who is a qualified composer or at least knows how to write music because you can spot what will provide them with the vessel to get them to the next level in the composition

The interviews identified multiple constructs and realities of composing, which at times were in conflict. The composers challenged the validity of composing in the classroom and the relationship between school and real-world practice. The contradictions between the composers' and teachers' views on composing allude to what Fautley and Savage call 'examination composing' (2011b); a modality of composing that exclusively exists in and for the examination but not outside the classroom.

Real Sound

All five composer-educators commented upon the educational, motivational and creative potential of hearing a composition performed by live musicians:

> **FT:** Having live acoustic instruments that are of good quality and available for people to play and to write for is really important

> **SW:** I think hearing their music performed live is really important

> **SP:** Having their music performed live…It's very important. And once it's happened once then that's when you get the buzz

Some composers suggested that students' pieces should be performed in concerts regularly to normalise composing, thereby developing a culture within the school:

> **DC:** You are in a school that every concert has a new piece in it, otherwise you don't have a culture of it… So, I think building things like that into the culture of it

> **KA:** Write something for instruments that they know will be up to be heard by their peers, played by someone…Write for three clarinets and a bassoon because those are your friends

> **FT:** I find I spend a lot of time saying to people you know "get realistic" and "get practical", and write something for three instruments that way you can actually hear the music being played and you can talk to the musicians and you know, experiment with it in a live situation

However, they also acknowledged limited performance opportunities were available:

> **KA:** For some of them [students] it's the first time they've ever had their music performed live and I think that is a real flaw and a real worry, and I think some part of the curriculum should be that something is written and performed live

> **DC:** …actually hearing it live because actually. There is a problem I think that music has in music education music has stopped becoming

Unlike the KS4 music teachers, the composer-educators viewed technology negatively. SW found that the computer could be an "obstacle" or a "barrier" for students with FT commenting on students exclusively using Sibelius calling them "Sibelius composers":

> **FT:** With the rise of music technology and people being able to put a whole Symphony Orchestra on Sibelius or writes a film score that has an orchestra of 100 people

> **FT:** Rather than write huge orchestral scores on Sibelius which are just living in an unrealistic world really…. Not in a reality… I think it's important to put people in touch with reality and real-life situation and you know

KA also negatively commented on students' ability to write large-scale works on Sibelius labelling them as: "film music symphonies on Sibelius" (KA). The composers questioned the value and purpose of composing unperformable large-scale

composition on Sibelius: "it's not going to get heard so what's the point?" (KA), viewing it as a meaningless and unrealistic activity, lacking real-world practicality.

8.2 Perceptions of a Composer

During data collection, I asked teachers, students and composers to define the term "composer", with the majority of teachers and students not identifying as a composer. By grouping together their definitions three main themes and belief about composers emerged, these were:

1. The composer as a profession
2. The composer as an out-dated practice and term
3. The composer as a creative genius

Each theme will be discussed in turn.

8.2.1 Composing as a Profession

One of the reoccurring conditions for being a composer, as stated by the teachers and students, was that it was something someone had to do as a profession and career:

> **GFS S3:** It's not the only thing we do like composer seem to be like, it's their job kind of thing

> **MRG S1:** For me a composer is someone that does it for living and I definitely don't do it for a living. So I compose but I'm not a composer

> **CP:** I suppose if one introduced oneself as a composer then you're, you're kind of thinking that's their main job, you know so. I think it's used in two ways: "I'm a composer, that's my job" and "I compose, therefore I am a composer"

> **MRG S1:** As in a composer as a job

> **MEH S2:** We don't do it professionally

> **MEH S2:** You might do it professionally, like as a paid job.

Therefore, they considered "composers" to be people that composed extensively:

> **MRG S5:** It's like if someone writes a poem, does that make them a poet instantly? I guess it's the same sort of thing
> **MRG S1:** When you're writing it you are a poet and if you're constantly writing then you're a poet

And some students compared it to other professions:

> **GFS S2:** Yeah like a composer feels like, a, a career almost so like you said you'd be a biologist or a psychologist, you'd be a composer…It seems a lot more professional than doing an A-level composition sort of thing.

> **MRG Yr12 S1:** like a builder. You can do Lego and stuff but that doesn't make you builder

Therefore, students felt that doing composing as a hobby did not warrant being able to use the term "composer", also feeling that they could not use the term due to their age:

> **GFS S4:** I don't think I'd call myself composer
> **GFS S6:** No
> **GFS S5:** Kind of like, I don't know
> **GFS S4:** Amateur babbling

> **KD:** Would you called yourself a composer?
> **MEH S2:** No [quick response]
> **KD:** No? Why?
> **MEH S2:** Cos' (sic) we're like 15, 16 years old.

Associated with this view was that they felt the use of the label of "composer" alluded to having works professionally published and performed:

> **GFS S2:** It's not going to be performed or kind of be published in a sense, so it's less pressure

> **GFS S5:** I would class a composer as like if like . people have written stuff and you like
> **GFS S6:** It's been performed
> **GFS S5:** Yeah it's been performed and published and stuff
> as such but and you're not expected to write loads

CP: If published composers have done these things why is it that we don't consider doing them in our own compositions?

Students occasionally referenced famous classical composers and "the big people that you've heard of" (GFS S2), sometimes comparing their own composing to these "great" composers:

GFS S2: How are you going to get your compositions that you write on a Mac to sound like Mozart sort of thing. And that's what's going through my head I think. So it's just I don't, my worry is that I don't want it to sound bad but I guess that's not really the worry for the exam sort of thing. That's my worry.

Participants were reluctant to call themselves composers feeling that to be a composer suggested a certain degree of specialism, skill and ability:

MRG: I think you have to be *good* at composition to be composer.

With some students believing the term composer meant the ability to compose "large-scale" compositions:

GFS S1: I think it's more extravagant than just, obviously there's people that make songs and that's amazing that they do that but I don't know, comparing it to what
GFS S3: Composing is more like huge, like, ensembles and stuff.
GFS S1: Yeah seems more,
GFS S2: You kind of, yeah you kind of link it to the massive composers that you've heard about that write like symphonies and all that

MRG: When you think about composition, composers you kind of think all composers. A massive like array of notes and people and instruments.

8.2.2 Composers as Outdated

The word "composing" was sometimes associated with an outdated practice, which not relevant to the students:

MRG S3: I don't know the difference between composition and songwriter but one sounds a lot more obsolete to me than the others

MRG S4: Erm, it's more. I wouldn't say there's that much distinction, songwriters are still writing, they're still composing and they're putting lyrics to it. It's just what modern day people that do it. Because you don't really hear of famous composers in 2014, it's more, when you think of famous composers you think of Mozart, Beethoven. It's more erm . classical and baroque

MRG S3: I wouldn't call myself a composer because like the songs that I write are more modern so therefore I would call it songwriters…Songwriters like a, you know a kind of modern terms

The term "composing" held with it strong historical connotations with some participants feeling it sounded "pretentious":

GFS S2: You consider yourself as a composer it's probably a bit vain

MRG S1: I probably wouldn't call myself, because I mean it sounds a bit
MRG student (unidentified): pretentious

CP: A friend of mine once introduced himself to me when I first met him as a composer and then he was working in Carphone Warehouse so, I said I'm all sorts of things in my spare time it's difficult isn't it? Because I occasionally compose I consider myself to some degree to be a composer but I would never ever introduce myself as such, [laugh] you know I'm a teacher who happens to do a bit of composing occasionally

Similarly, students also felt "composing" involved the act of writing music down:

CMC S2: I feel quite uncomfortable sat at a piano with manuscript paper and writing all that like that. I rather put it into Sibelius and then I can listen to it.
CMC S3: Writing music

MEH S5: You can sit down with a massive computer or manuscript and write for hours or you can just put loads of ideas on paper and just to play through them

Instead, some students preferred to use the term "songwriting" presenting a very clear distinction between the two:

GFS S1: I wouldn't call myself a composer like, I've written songs as in, like kind of pop songs but not like instrumental, musical composition…. I wouldn't consider that composing really because I think it's too simple. Obviously I've written it myself but I'd say it's more like singer-songwriting in kind of thing.

GFS S3: I think that composing seems more like a formal kind of music, rather than just leisurely pop song sort of thing although some people consider

them to be composers but [laugh]
GFS S1: Yeah

GFS S3: …like I think it's easier for like people to like me because I'm a guitarist, to write songs rather than compositions. With other people as well you just, I don't know you just do it, you don't think about it

CMC S4: Creating songs

The term songwriter seemed to be better connected with some of the students' own musical experiences and practices out of school.

8.2.3 The Creative Genius

As noted above, students compared their own composing to well-known classical composers. Some considered the success of these composers to the belief that they were born specifically gifted and held innate natural talents:

GFS S2: But also I guess like the famous composers of famous because it came naturally to them

SH: In my experience we were all performers and then there were those people that could compose…some of us compose, "the lucky few" can do it [laugh]

Student referred to examples of other students that appeared to hold these talents as a "musical genius":

GFS S1: I think student 2 is a natural at it. I think it helps because you're so good at piano you can just sit there and do it
GFS S3: Musical genius. You've been playing for a long time

Similarly, SH found how students often believe they could either compose, or not:

SH: I think children always feel they can they can do it or they can't do it

Similarly, composers were viewed as being creative and expressive, which was something they did not always feel reflected their own composing in school:

> **CMC S1:** Being creative in music and creating melodies or chords, or something like that

> **CMC S4:** It's a sort of a type of creativity. So like artist painting things, so in English it's writing things, music it's composing

> **MEH:** They express themselves through music

This idea of the creative genius was also found within the KS4 survey results and will be discussed in more detail in chapter 10.

8.2.4 Composer Findings Summary

These finding uncovered multiple conceptualisations and perceptions of composing and composers, thus highlighting differences and conflicts between participants. The composers questioned the validity of composing examinations, concluding that the professional composing world and education world were disparate. As the composers-educators had a wealth of experience working in diverse schools around the UK, they noticed that music education was "patchy" (DC) and could vary drastically depending on the school, also discussing how a school "culture" could influenced music lessons:

> **SW:** It's really important it's about culture. Music culture in schools and what the culture is in terms of whether you are looking to promote better results

> **SW:** Music has to be a culture within a school not just a lesson

8.3 Findings Summary

The findings illustrate the socially complex, conflicting and high-pressured landscape that music teachers are working under, highlighting how the culture, or 'ethos' (Cremin, Barnes, and Scoffham, 2006: 5) of a school can have significant influence on the teaching and learning of creative subjects. Many of the themes and codes uncovered conflict, as summaries below:

Table 26: Conflict within the study

Desired intention	Reality
Students composing for themselves	Students composing for the examiner
Students composing for enjoyment	Students composing to pass the examination
Students' composing practices out of school	Students' composing practices in school
Thinking about composing/music holistically	Thinking about composing/music in isolated elements
Teaching so students have a meaningful, creative experience of composing	Teaching to pass the examination
Fostering creativity	Teaching techniques/skills of composing
Use of open composing tasks	Limiting choice, and closed composing tasks
Use of questioning to support students	Use of direct instruction, guided by examination criteria
Prioritising validity	Prioritising reliability
Rewarding originality	Rewarding replication
Group and collaborative composing processes at KS3	Individual composing at KS4 and KS4

The most prevalent concern and conflict was between teachers wanting students to pass the examination but also wanting to give them a meaningful and fulfilling experience. This often went deeper with it conflicting with teachers' personal beliefs about the purposes of teaching, and teaching under the current high accountability and performativity landscape. Hence many teachers expressed feeling "stuck between a rock and a hard place" (SP and AL). The data from the students also exemplified this presenting conflict between their school composing experiences and their out of school composing processes. Although there was a sense that students and teachers were unhappy with current assessment practices, they also felt that they could not change it and instead had learnt to work within the system in order to achieve and succeed in the examination. As Mansell (2007) commented, teachers learned how to

play 'the results game' (p.3), and to some extent there was evidence from this study that students also had learnt how to play the system.

Due to the perceived unreliability, and concerns regarding bias in the composing assessments at KS4 and KS5, it appeared that the validity and real-world application of the composing examination was second to increasing reliability, even at the detriment to the students' learning and creativity. Therefore, the teaching of identifiable skills and techniques to replicate certain genres of music was prioritised over allowing students freedom to explore their own ideas. This in particular conflicted with what the composer-educators deemed as valuable for young composer to develop and caused questions as to the purposes and uses of composing at KS4 and KS5.

9. Discussion

The findings highlight a wide range of complex social issues and considerations involved in the assessment of composing at KS4 and KS5. By bringing together the analytical frameworks of Engeström's (1999) CHAT and Bourdieu's field theory (1984) these complex and multiple threads can be drawn together to answer the key research questions outlined at the start of the thesis:

1. In what ways does the examination of composing directly affect teaching and learning of composing at KS4 and KS5?

2. Is assessment of composing perceived as reliable and fair?

3. Does composing at examination level reflect real-world composing and creative practices?

This chapter will outline the theorisations, abstractions and analytic generalisations created from the findings of the previous chapters, with the aim to generalise more widely beyond the cases observed in the study so that they can be of use in similar situations (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The theoretical frameworks help to make visible and externalise, the multiple interacting systems and layers of power at play during classroom composing at examination level.

A number of conflicts and contradictions were present in the study. The discussion allows investigation into these conflicts starting with categorising the different teacher behaviours observed, and going onto contemplate how teachers' actions and priorities change over time. Drawing on existing theoretical tools such as notions of enculturation and Bourdieu's field theory (1984), the discussion leads on to consider regarding how prevalent 'myths' (Burnard, 2012b) influence teaching, learning and assessment of composing. The final section of the chapter considers how the findings from the study fit within Engeström's (1999) cultural historical activity theory model (CHAT). The use of CHAT allowed for an explanation of the conflicts found within the data, also considering how CHAT can be expanded and developed to accurately describe the nuances observed in the study

9.1 Teacher Archetypes

Throughout the findings, patterns of behaviours, values and beliefs emerged that affected teacher pedagogy in the classroom. By grouping behaviours and values together 'characteristic forms of teaching' (Shulman, 2005: 52) were identified. Unlike Shulman's (2005) notion of 'signature pedagogies', in which teaching and learning behaviours are 'replicated in nearly all institutions that educate that domain' (p.54), this research found that diverse practices of teaching composing exist in schools. Alluding to Bourdieu's notion of habitus, the teacher archetypes illustrate how teachers' background and previous experiences influence behaviours and decision-making. Categorising and labelling similarities in behaviour has been considered before, such as research from the Centre for High Performance where they identified five head teacher 'prototypes' (Hill, Mellon, Laker and Goddard, 2017: online).

Drawing on data collected from the teachers through the case studies and telephone interviews, four main music teacher archetypes were explored:

1. Examination-focused
   a. Pragmatic
2. Reflective
3. Conflicted
4. Cultural replication

These terms were created through analysis and coding of each of the five case studies to find the most prominent issues discussed by teachers. Some of the terms were drawn from the literature, such as 'cultural replication' (Giroux, 1985; Daniels, 2016), and reflective teaching practice (Schön, 1983). The four categories were then overlaid onto the KS4 telephone interviews to investigate if and how the 10 KS4 teachers may fit within the categories. Upon doing this, an additional sub-category of the *examination-focused* archetype, termed *pragmatic*, was included to ensure it accurately reflected the values and behaviours observed. Of the 5 case study teachers and 10 KS4 teachers, the most common teacher archetype trait was the *examination-focused* teacher, as shown below:
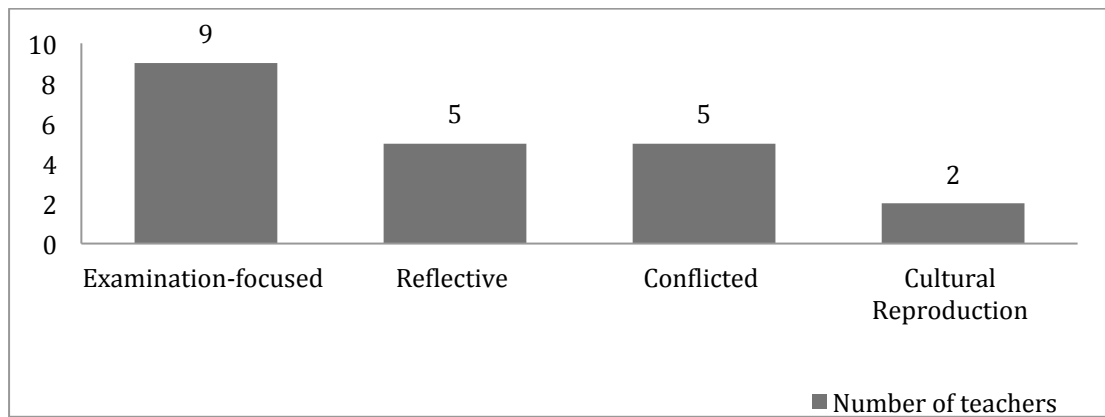
Figure 63: Teacher archetype type frequency

Although the music teachers were grouped into 4 archetypes, they often exhibited part or multiple traits described in other categories. This chapter will outline the key findings from the case studies and KS4 telephone interviews in relation to the teacher archetypes.

9.1.1 The Examination-Focused Music Teacher

As discussed widely through the findings, the prevalence and importance of the composing assessment was a key theme, therefore it is unsurprising that the *examination-focused* teacher archetype was the most common. For six teachers from the KS4 telephone interviews (AB, SS AM, SP, VD, and JS) and three from the case studies (AH, AD, and CP), the examination significantly dominated and influenced their teaching practices. These teachers showed behaviours and beliefs such as:

- Their primary concerns are getting the students to pass the music examination
- They voice their concerns about the unpredictability of the composing examination
- The teacher may outline a specific formulae, style, or method of composing that they feel guarantees reliable grades
- Feedback to students is explicitly directed by assessment/marking criteria
- Evidence of washback through to KS3 may be found with teachers' rationale to provide the skills needed at GCSE and/or A-level
- There is very little reflection on practice or discussion regarding the validity of the examination
- Students may also be driven by the examination and worried about the opinions of the examiner

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The *examination-focused* teachers explicitly expressed that they only taught material relevant to the examination, and they often felt that their main aims were to improve the examination grades of their students. Similarly, Wiseman (1961) and Harlen (2007) found that an examination could cause teachers to focus entirely on passing the examination. The *examination-focused* teachers openly shared approaches to teach composing in order to ensure good grades. VC, who had been teaching for 25 years and had been an examiner, believed that a "composing by numbers" approach was the best way to secure good marks. Similarly, AD felt there were specific ways of composing to get the grades needed and went on to outline step-by-step methods of composing, often based around a specific genre of music. TTT is something that has been researched and debated in detail before (Ball, 1990; Harlen, 2007; Vaughan, 2015) but not specifically in music education. As observed in the case studies from AH and AD, feedback from the *examination-focused* teachers was predominantly guided by the marking, often using phrases directly from the marking criteria. These teachers adopted an instructional form of teaching where dialogue between the student and teacher was limited, thus presenting what might be considered as a master-apprentice relationship (Lupton and Bruce, 2010).

Another way teachers believed improved grades at KS4 was to direct the KS3 curriculum to mimic or reflect the GCSE examinations, also known as washback. Washback was observed extensively in the KS4 interviews and in some of the case studies. This expands on the situation expressed in current literature regarding washback in KS3. The study found that pressures of examinations heavily influenced students' composing processes which was especially present in the Midland River Grammar School, with students commenting that they had learnt how to pass the examination and had a clear awareness that they were just "ticking boxes" rather than composing. This, amongst other responses, gives evidence for the concept of 'examination composing' (Fautley and Savage, 2011b; Francis, 2012), whereby students learn how to pass the composing examination, but do not necessarily learn skills and methods needed to be a successful composer, songwriter or sound artist.

The focus on the examination was to be found very common in this study and this can be attributed to high performativity pressures from schools to get students to achieve at least their target grades. Pressure was found to be especially noticeable at A-level

where results were deemed high-stakes, as discussed by Gipps and Stobart (1993) and Alderson and Wall (1993). VD called her school an "exam factory", and AM described how her school would not "accept" her doing anything outside examination specification. Similarly, AD and AH felt obligated to work to the targets the school had set for students. Both were very aware of the pressures to pass the examination; however, they appeared to be content with this, finding ways to work within the system:

> **AD:** You know there's a way of writing which hopefully will give them the best chance of getting an A, you know, a decent mark because ultimately that's what we're looking for

Even when students wanted to diverge away from the strict rules set by the teacher and examination, AD made sure to direct them back to passing the examination, demonstrating the hierarchy of power.

High accountability measures, outlined by teachers in the study, had a direct and profound influence on the teachers concerned, and were apparent in their teaching. Although some teachers may have been unhappy with teaching to the test, many felt unable to challenge the system.

> **AM:** We do as we are told

> **SS:** I can't really see a way around that that is consistent, for marking nationally. I think a bit of a result of the mentality nowadays is they have to be taking all of the criteria and they have to be getting top marks in everything, it's such pressure on students and on teachers

Thus teachers involved became complicit with TTT practices.

The Pragmatic Teacher

Two of the music teachers (JS and SS) showed features of the *examination-focused* archetype; however, the descriptors did not fully capture all their priorities and behaviours. Therefore, an additional sub-category archetype was added, termed the *pragmatic* teacher. This archetype shares the majority of the *examination-focused*

archetype, but their main aims were to find the most practical solutions to issues arising in the classroom; therefore, behaviours may include the following:

- The teacher has specific teaching practices and solutions but accepts there may be compromise in the composing in order to solve a problem
- Solutions often reference how it will reduce time for themselves and their students
- Passing the examination may take priority over any other concerns
- The teacher may appear complicit and matter of fact about his or her situation

Although passing the examination was often one of the main problems, both JS and SS did not seem to be as dominated by this as much as the other teachers above. Instead they had considerable awareness of the complex barriers and issues to composing in the classroom, but did not spend extensive time considering various different approaches or methods. Instead they sought out the easiest, most time-efficient and practical solution to the problem at hand:

> **JS:** It makes everything much quicker doesn't it?

> **JS:** It makes life much, much easier

SS and JS discussed teaching composing in a very formulaic way. Although they acknowledged that it might not suit all their students, they found they had little choice to do otherwise:

> **JS:** It was a massive school, we had 25 kids in the class doing GCSE music, there is just not time to do that

> **SS:** I can't really see a way around having a certain amount of tick boxes…it's pressed for time and it has to be a relatively efficient and quick marking criteria to go by. But it does disadvantage [some students]

There was also a notion of working within the system, rather than trying to challenge or change it:

> **JS:** You know the real creative process I think it is something that is never ending but you can't do that in school. It doesn't work in real life unfortunately. That's just the way it is isn't it?

The *pragmatic* teachers acknowledged there would be compromise in the teaching and learning of composing, and the discourse they used implied a matter-of-fact opinion that was less emotive compared to the *conflicted* or *reflective* teachers.

9.1.2 The Reflective Music Teacher

During the interviews, three of the KS4 teachers (LP, AB and PF) and two of the case study teachers (SH and AC), evidenced reflective qualities regarding their teaching practice, demonstrating Schön's notions of 'reflection in and on action' (1983). These *reflective* teachers commonly evaluated their own teaching practices, showing some of the attitudes and behaviours below:

- An awareness into the complexities of teaching composing
- Attentive to key pedagogical arguments and debates, assessing their own teaching in light of these
- An openness and willingness to adapting and changing their own teaching practices to suit their students when needed
- The needs and interests of the individual student are recognised and addressed where possible
- The validity and real-world applications of composing at KS4 and KS5 are considered
- Conscious of their own musical experiences, and aware how this may influence what and how they teach

Teachers were very aware of the wide range of barriers and complexities of teaching composing, with AB calling it "tricky" and PF a "very difficult and complex process". Reflections in the interviews included questioning key pedagogical issues such as the role of skills and creativity, notation, and the pros and cons of different teaching approaches. The *reflective* teachers discussed attempting to find a balance between providing structure as well as freedom for their students to compose, depending on the students' needs:

AB: And it's really difficult to get the balance with kids too, if you go be creative and they get terrified and do nothing

LP: So I try to give them that creative independence but try and set certain parameters. So it's kind of a compromise

PF: Yeah but it's about its how much structure do you give a pupil? And how, how much are they able to come up with themselves

Being new to the school at the time of the interview SH was aware that her teaching needed to suit the needs of her students, calling her new school a "completely different kettle of fish". This links to Schön's (1983) belief that teachers 'must be ready to invent new methods' (p.66) in order to suit their students' unique needs. Also aware that teaching could easily "stagnate", SH valued time for reflection and risk-taking in her teaching. LP and AB reflected on how their teaching practices changed over time calling teaching a "work in progress" (LP) rather than as something fixed and set.

LP, PF and AB were opposed to a "one size fits all" formulaic approach to composing, instead they championed for an individual, pupil-centered, approach:

LP: I try to kind of individualise it quite a bit…it depends on the pupil because you might have a pupil…driven by the people that I'm teaching at their experiences of music

PF: What ever you do it's got to be driven by what your class response to

Unlike the *examination-focused* teachers, the *reflective* teachers believed teaching to be something that should be responsive to their students rather than imposed. SH was conscious of diverse composing practices, aiming to allow her students the freedom to explore their own composing processes rather than promote her own methods. AC was also anxious about imposing her own personal composing processes. Savage and Fautley (2007) argue that subjectivities, if unchallenged and unconsidered, can influence teaching and pedagogy. The *reflective* teachers demonstrated the benefits of reflection; however, it was also clear from the findings, and in the literature, that there was a significant lack of time for reflection to take place, and may not be a priority within the school community (Schön, 1983; Savage, 2007b).

9.1.3 The Conflicted Music Teacher

As discussed in the findings, a number of conflicts and contradictions were raised. Many teachers showed conflicted traits and behaviours such as:

- Significant internal conflict regarding teaching composing and passing the examination.
- May believe or say something, but in practice do something different
- Methods of teaching composing may vary considerably over the academic year

A significant number of the KS4 survey teachers interviewed by telephone demonstrated considerable internal conflict in teaching composing (KW, LP, SA, SP), as well as AC from the GFS case study. The main conflict in this study was getting students through the composing examination but also allowing them freedom to be creative and explore their own ideas. LP described this as a "battle" between allowing her students to be "as creative as possible" whilst at the same time getting them the "highest marks as possible". SP termed this conflict as being "stuck between a rock and a hard place".

Although AC repeatedly expressed that she aimed to allow her students freedom to be creative, she also felt pressured to reach targets set by the school. During the observations at GFS it was interesting to see how AC changed her practice; moving from open and student-led tasks using open questioning as a pedagogical tool, to instructing students more directly and using discourse derived from assessment criteria. Interestingly, these changes took place as the examination deadline drew closer. Therefore, there were contradictions in her interview between what she said she valued and what actually took place. This links to what Argyris and Schön (1978) and Schön (1983) called espoused theory and theory in-use, where differences exist between what teachers say about their teaching practices, and what actually takes place:

> Espoused theories are those that an individual claims to follow. Theories-in-use are those that can be inferred from action (Argyris *et al*., 1985, pp.81-2)

Unlike the *examination-focused* teachers, the *conflicted* teachers exhibited frustration about their teaching being driven by the examination with SA calling it "tragic", and LP feeling "completely at odds with things". Although they demonstrated anguish about the system, they also felt unable to change their situation. This was also found to be the case from the literature with art and design teachers whereby:

> …contradictions became accepted norms, which the teachers felt unable to challenge, believing them to be factors that they could not contest (Kinsella, 2014: 306).

Intense internal conflict could also help to explain why some teachers in the study struggled with mental ill health and high levels of stress (Fautley, 2017b).

9.1.4 The Cultural Replication Music Teacher

The *cultural replication* teacher was often unaware of how their own experiences may influence their teaching, thus resulting in a form of cultural reproduction (Giroux (1985; Daniels, 2016). Traits included:

- A strong sense of the teacher replicating teaching practices they experienced themselves in education
- Practices heavily directed by specific musical traditions or genres
- Their own musical development strongly influences their teaching
- Little reflection on their own teaching practices
- Students may imitate behaviours modelled by the teacher

Although this archetype was the least common in this study in the KS4 survey 65.2% of teachers agreed that their own composing experiences influenced the way they taught composition at KS4. Therefore, some interesting discussions and themes were raised and warrant further discussion.

Some teachers talked about being taught composition in a "traditional style" (T939), continuing to teach their students in a similar way to their own teachers, and they discussed essential skills that they felt they needed to pass onto their students. The *cultural replication* teacher replicates their own experience of learning composition, and can be focused on copying the music of specific genres or styles. One teacher

from the telephone interviews (KW) discussed how his own experience studying music technology guided his teaching of composing with his students:

> **KW:** My degree is in music technology, so that's probably why I come from that angle

Consequently he discussed how he preferred his students not to use western classical notation, instead preferring to rely on his own expertise and experience. SH from MEH commented that teachers "inflict our way of working", but in practice SH attempted to reduce her own influence on her students. In contrast to SH, AD (from NCA) was heavily influenced by his own popular music experiences. This is evident in how he referred to composing as "creating" and his predominance for chords in composing. In addition, he explicitly discussed his own learning of composing as being "step-by-step", then went on to say how he taught composing in the classroom as "step-by-step". What was interesting in the case study was the extent to which AD's students mimicked his discourse, and in following the "step-by-step" composing approaches. Similarly, as discussed in the findings AH preferred to use the term "write" in reference to composing, thus highlighting links between his classical and choral training, with his teaching methods. These examples demonstrate how education can be a 'tool of enculturation' (Vygotsky in Blanck, 1990: 49) and create a cyclical model of pedagogy, as illustrated in figure 64:
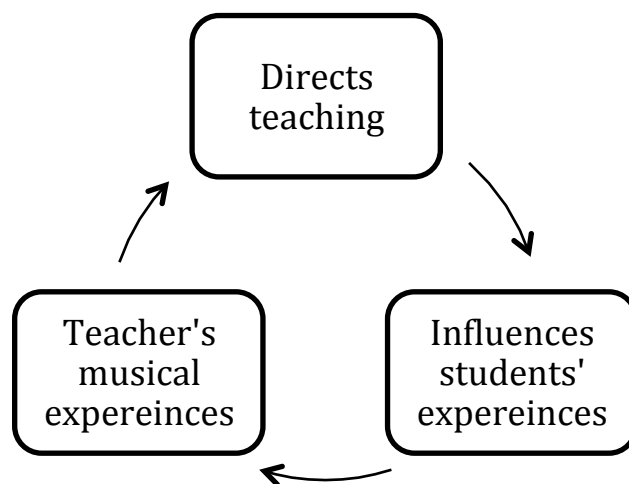
Figure 64: Cycle of cultural replication in music education

As discussed, some teachers seemed to be unaware and unconcerned by their own 'subjectivities' (Peshkin, 1988); thus, demonstrating how pedagogies can become internalised (Wertsch, 1985). This archetype highlights the importance of self-reflection (Schön, 1983) and learner voice in teaching.

9.1.5 Teacher Archetypes Summary

Linking to the first research question, this study found that the assessment of composing had a profound and powerful effect on the majority of teachers. A large group of teachers were wholly guided by the examination, informing all areas of their teaching. Many explained how they felt they had to adhere very closely to the examination as a result of pressure and negative experiences.

Some teachers shared a specific incident that changed their teaching practices and/or confidence. Two KS4 teachers (AB and JS) described specific crucial moments that directly changed their practice. AB explained a situation when she allowed her GCSE students to be fully creative, resulting in poor grades. She goes on to explain how this made her teaching more prescriptive:

> **AB:** I've had kids in the past who have done very, very creative things…Now if I am honest, I looked back and I think about that one kid and I think I should have told him 'do a blues, do three verses, change the left-hand in each verse', you know, and he would probably had gotten much better mark.

JS shared a similar experience:

> **JS:** The main reason I get them to notate it is because about four years ago, I had some GCSE grades that were not drastically down, but down by enough to make me go and have a long hard look at myself

Both teachers use very emotive language and were clearly negatively affected by their experience of the examination in the past. CP from CMC, also discussed how his teaching changed to ensure reliability in the marking of KS5 after receiving unexpected grades in the examination. These 3 teachers described specific incidents that occurred early on in their teaching careers and as a result, they felt they had to

alter their teaching approaches, often resulting in a more examination driven, formulaic, and instructional approach to composing teaching.

The *conflicted* and *reflective* teachers shared their internal struggles between finding a balance between passing the examination and giving their students meaningful and enjoyable composing experiences. Many teachers explained how over time their practice changed to become more steered towards the examination, highlighting how composing assessment often won this "battle" (LP). As discussed in the findings, the 2 teachers with the least teaching experience, AC (2 years) and SH (7 years) who was new to the school at the time of the study, showed the most reflective traits; however, the 3 other case study teachers with more years experience AD (8 years), CP (10 years), and AH (11 years) and how had remained in the same schools for long periods of time, showed more of the *examination-focused* traits. For AC and SH the pressure of the examination often caused significant internal and moral conflict as it went against their beliefs around the purpose of composing and teaching. In contrast the three more experienced teachers seemed more complicit with the system.

It would be of interest to investigate further how time and experiences within the education system alter a teacher's values and practices, to analyse if teachers move between, or along, archetypes as they become indoctrinated and assimilated into the prevailing assessment culture over time, as suggested in figure 65:
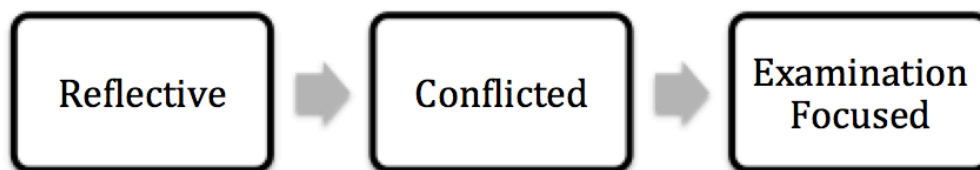
Figure 65: Change in teacher archetypes over time

Critical moments in their teaching may signal this change, making them more complicit and alluding to Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002).

9.2 Myths, Bias and Legitimisation

Pedagogy can be driven by teachers' own beliefs, experiences and 'myths' (Burnard, 2012) about composing practices and composer. Burnard (2012b) defined myths as stories about 'how things came to be and therefore how they are' (p.112), and that 'mythmaking' and 'myth-telling' (Burnard, 2012a: 20) is commonplace in human behaviour (p.20), of which music is no exception. These myths are often reinforced by stories of the 'star players' (Thomson, 2008: 69) and the music of the canon (Kivy, 2001). These myths potentially continue to promote western classical musical ideologies (Spruce, 2013a), leading to disadvantaging some students with different musical backgrounds and cultures to western classical music (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002; Yates and Millar, 2016).

9.2.1 Three Myths

Burnard (2012a) identified 10 myths 'about children's music creativities' (p.278). Exploring and expanding on this, I categorised three prominent composing 'myths' that emerged from this research that guided teaching, learning and assessment practices in music at KS4 and KS5. These myths included:

1. The creative musical genius
2. Composing as a solitary/individual activity
3. Composing involves learning the rules before breaking them

This chapter discusses how these myths underpinned teaching, learning and assessment in composing in this study.

The Creative Musical Genius

Although much education research has investigated the universality of creativity (Craft, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2006; Eisner, 2005) Weisberg (2010) found that the concept of the 'creative genius' was still dominant. This myth promotes the belief that composing is reserved for the elite few with special gifts rather than accessible to all.

This research found that the myth of the creative genius was still prevalent in the music classroom. One of the strongest results from the KS4 survey found that the majority of teachers (92.8%) believed in the concept of natural aptitude in composing (see figure 46). Teachers and students also used words such as "flair" (T002, T283), "natural" (GFS S2) and "the lucky few" (SH), thus implying skills in composing were innate and inherited, and therefore cannot be fully taught. A large number of students and teachers did not directly identify as a composer in the study and some teachers showed a surprising lack of confidence in their own composing ability. As discussed in the findings, many of the teachers and students felt the term composer meant a professional composer, or someone who had to have specifically inherited traits. Students also directly compared their own composing practices to well-known classical composers.

Composer-educator DC debated these stories and myths surrounding composers commenting that they did not reflect real composing practices and believed the myths devalued the role of creative practices such as trial and error, and failure. Similarly, Lamont and Maton (2010) felt that the concept of natural talent downplayed the role of hard work, as did Green (1997):

> …in the celebration of the composer's genius and of the music's transcendent greatness…such a delineation is misleading when viewed in the light of the working practices of many composers (pp.82-83).

Burnard (2012a) also argued that 'the social systems in which children's creative endeavours in music-making are nurtured and developed are significant' (p.278). These misconceptions highlight a significant lack of understanding of the development of a young composer and present unrealistic beliefs about composing and creative processes:

> The perpetuation of high art orthodoxies of Western art music continues to valorize the myth of the Great Composers and with it, the nineteenth-century Romantic-era belief that only child prodigies commit themselves to, and foster a capacity for, music creation (Burnard, 2012a: 278).

Teachers need to be aware how to support and foster creativity in their students, encouraging students to practice and, as DC outlined, promoting trial and error as an important part of composing.

Another internal assumption was that progress in composing must be tangible, 'measurable' (Broadfoot, 1995: 10) and 'quantifiable' (Cantwell and Jeanneret, 2004: 2), and when students did not achieved this they were viewed as "low ability" (AD) by some teachers, but as Eisner (2002) argued 'not everything that matters can be measured, and not everything that is measured matters' (p.178). Eisner gets us to questions if students are not being recognised for their creative achievements due to it not being easily measured and assessed, whereas other aspects that are easily measurable in composing, such as conventional use of harmony and instruments, are being rewarded instead. This highlights a lack of understanding of the complexities of creative processes, and how assessment practices are not suited to creative practices.

Composing as an Individual Process

The second myth outlined is regarding composers needing to compose in isolation. This belief is connected with the ideas of the 'single heroic individual' composing 'perfectly formed, self-contained works' (Burnard, 2012b: 114). Although some composers compose independently, this is not the only form of composing, as highlighted by the composer-educators. The benefits of group composing were recognised by teachers in the study, but very few teachers prioritised group or collaborative composing (see figure 48). During the classroom observations very few group composing tasks took place. Although, group and pair composing is commonplace at KS3 (Glover, 2000; Savage and Fautley, 2011), it is very rare at KS4 and KS5. Some students and teachers discussed the challenges of transitioning from KS3 to KS4, moving from predominantly group, to individual composing, highlighting a significant code-shift with new rules of the game (Lamont and Maton, 2010). It was clear that time was prioritised to facilitate individual composing with only occasional peer-feedback. Although teachers were asked what they would want to change in the assessment, only one teacher (T144) suggested allowing "band compositions" as most other teachers were concerned about subjectivity and

unreliability of group composition. Even though many teachers and students did not consider group composing as an option, this is potentially due to them not believing they could change the current system, instead preferring to become complicit.

Burnard (2012a) argues that this outdated misconception of individual creativity has promoted a single western narrative, thus marginalising other forms of musical creativity:

> While some children prefer to work alone….others prefer to engage collaboratively, communally, collectively, technologically networked, whereupon being a group member responsible for jointly authoring a piece that can be replayed across time, space, and persons (Burnard, 2012a: 279-280).

This was something commented on by the participants in the study, and some students preferred to use the term "songwriter", feeling it was more "modern day" (MRG S4). Similarly, DC commented that individual composing was outdated, and only represented a small fraction of music from around the world. Many of the composer-educators identified how collaborative practices formed an important part of their creative and composing processes, thus highlighting the real-world applications of group work (Green, 2002; Thorpe, 2012). As composing assessment at KS4 and KS5 promoted individual composing, thus promoting the dominant western belief about individual creativity, the value of group composing was contested in the study, and it was clear there were key conflicts between what the composer-educators felt was important, and what was taking place in the classroom.

Rules Before Creativity

The final myth that dominated teachers' practices in the findings was the belief that the rules of composition must first be learnt before they can be broken and creativity can take place. Lupton and Bruce (2010) highlight this method of teaching as a 'time-honoured approach' (p.274), where students must learn from the master composers such Bach, Mozart and Beethoven, before composing something original. Teachers repeatedly propose the idea of needing a solid foundation of skills, knowledge and

theory, required for students' creativity to flourish subsequently, as illustrated in figure 53.

Teachers and composers also often referred to students needing a "toolbox" of skills to compose. For many teachers, the composer's "toolbox" often included elements such as "melody writing, functional harmony, modulation" (LP), "a theoretical understanding" (AM) and "technical aspects" (VD). Composing was also commonly viewed as a tool to learn musical norms, with many teachers preferring students to replicate and copy pre-existing styles and genres. The need to develop vital skills was also evident in the extent of curriculum washback discovered in the study, with many believing that introducing theory and key skills at KS3 would increase students' composing abilities, and therefore grades (see figure 29). This lack of teaching musical knowledge and skills was also in reference to what some teachers in the study referred to as the "dumbing down" of music education (T622, T228, T899, T030).

There was disagreement between the composers and teachers on what was needed. The composer-educators highlighted how this myth of learning the rules first is misplaced. Although they too referenced the need for students to develop a composer's toolbox, they did not necessarily aim for students to stick to specific musical norms or genres, instead they valued learning from other composers and developing knowledge of the domain, encouraging students to do something new with what they had learnt; thus valuing creativity and originality over technical understanding. Unlike the teachers, the composers-educators appeared to value what Boden (2004) identified as 'exploration' and 'transformation' over 'replication' (p.6). This highlights discrepancy between teachers and professional composers about how students to learn to compose and what is important.

The study demonstrates how this myth is very prevalent in current classroom teaching practices but also how it can be a fundamental part of teachers' understanding about musical pedagogy and the progression of composers:

> **SA:** I'm somebody who believes that you can't be creative unless you've got the basic skills in the first place

This belief presented a strong ideology about the purpose of music education, and SA even described it has part of her teaching identity. Similarly, Burnard (2012a) identified three similar myths that help to explain the preoccupation of teaching skills and techniques over fostering creativity:

1. Children's original music-making lacks coherent structure and fluency until they can use the repertoire of genre-specific language
2. Children need advanced years of formal training to engage successfully in the performative act of musical improvisation
3. Children simply do not have the skills to compose proper pieces

(Adapted from Burnard, 2012a: 279-280)

All three myths highlight a strong belief in the need to establish core skills and knowledge before creative practices can take place. Interestingly, rules is also a node of CHAT, thus highlighting how rules can play a fundamental role in determining the activity of composing as will be discussed further in detail.

There was evidence that teachers believed the examination reinforced this notion of skills before creativity due to rewarding replication over originality. They discussed previous experiences of students being penalised in KS4 and KS5 examinations for creative thinking, risk-taking and originality. As a result some teachers believed that some potential future composers have fallen through the system:

JK: …we might have actually lost some genuine great musicians

Consequently, many teachers encouraged their students to stick to "safer" (T046) and more reliable musical forms that adhered to musical norms and traditions.

9.2.2 Orthodoxy and Complicity

The three myths outlined highlight how unwritten rules, practices and pedagogy may be taken-for-granted, becoming embodied and viewed as the orthodoxy which is

'inherently true and necessary' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002: 321). The study shows how these myths influenced composing pedagogy, promoting ideologies about music and musical learning rooted in the WCT. Burnard (2012a) argued that many of the myths regarding musical creativity are 'based on archaic traditionalist beliefs and myths about classical composers' (p.9), and have promoted a single western classical narrative of composing practice, thus marginalising other forms of musical creativity. Similarly Hargreaves *et al*. (2002) called these myths 'outmoded and hierarchical value systems' (p.13), resulting in misleading expectations (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), and misconceptions (Robinson, 2001) about creative processes.

In order for these myths to stop being reproduced, these taken-for-granted assumptions, and 'subjectivities' (Peshkin, 1988) must be externalised (Moran and Steiner, 2003: 23) and reflected upon. From research outlined, many schools did not appear to value the time needed for teachers to undergo the process of reflection. Even though many teachers felt discontent with assessment pressures they did not appear to believe they had the power to challenge the examination system, resulting in many teachers and students being complicit, using phrases such as "this is the realpolitik of the situation" (T49), and "unfortunately I am in a catch 22 situation" (T211) to explain their position. The phrase "at the end of the day" was said by a number of participants (MRG S9, SH and LP). Students also highlighted that even though they were unhappy with assessment practices most learnt to work within the system in order to succeed, using phrases such as: "it's just got to be done" (MRG S9), "that's fine, there's no better way of doing it" (MRG S9). Demonstrating that they had internalised the implicit 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 1984) in order to achieve and remain in the field through securing good examination grades.

9.2.3 Bias and Symbolic Violence

Teachers in the study were significantly worried about bias and subjectivity in the examination of composing throughout the study. As outlined in the findings, teachers were concerned about bias towards students whose compositions:

1. Did not adhere to Western classical traditions and norms
2. Were not written using Western classical notation
3. Did not have live recordings with the score submission

As discussed above, concerns regarding bias were directed towards Western classical notions, or myths, of composing. Teachers were concerned that these biases could discriminate against a large number of their students due to their socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Over half of teachers (56.2%) in the KS4 survey (see figure 51) encouraged their students to notate their compositions using Western classical notation, feeling it was more reliable for achieving higher marks in the examination. If there were bias towards WCN this would benefit students with previous experience, and those having classical instrumental lessons. It was disturbing to hear about teachers' experiences in bias towards students submitting live-recorded performances of their composition. Live performances would only be available to those with access to skilled instrumentalists, or schools with the funds to afford to pay musicians to come in; therefore, potentially disadvantaging students without funding or access to this resource. In addition, 51.8% of the KS4 survey teachers (see figure 47) believed instrumental skills to be important for composing ability, with many also commenting on instrumental lessons being unaffordable for some students.

As discussed in the findings, many teachers were concerned that the changes in music education could reinforce disadvantage, promoting elitism in music education. Some teachers were positive about changes to the music examinations, especially in terms of the inclusion WCN and Western classical music, with reference to music in schools as being "dumbed down" (T622, T228, T899, T030) in the past due to the inclusion of non-Western styles and popular music. In this notion of "dumbing down" is an apparent inherent belief and implicit assumption that some musics are worth more value, or are more difficult, than others. Western classical music has commonly been associated with high-culture (Soderman, Burnard and Trulsson, 2015) with other musical cultures being viewed as lesser, a view also held by some current government officials in education. Bourdieu would have us challenge the elevation and valuing of the WCT over other musics in the examination as a form of symbolic violence helping to legitimise privilege (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007) and certain forms of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). The argument being that those in positions of power determine the success criteria and knowledge (Apple, 1997) to be taught and learned, allows for the

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'dominant group' to remain 'one step ahead' (Yates, 1985: 212). Spruce (2013b). However, a student's own musical experiences may differ from the perceived correct forms of knowing that are legitimated by examination boards and teachers. Therefore, students who already possess the cultural capital valued by the education system, such as WCN, will be at an advantage:

> …success in the education system is facilitated by the possession of cultural capital and of higher-class habitus (Sullivan, 2002: 144).

This disadvantages certain groups and reinforces 'class and status group distinction' (Burnard, 2012a: 23), through a form of symbolic violence. Taking Giroux's (1992) view of education as a 'technology of power' (p.128), questions pertain as to the extent to which current teaching and assessment practices at KS4 and KS5 are discriminatory.

Similarly, due to A-level being viewed as the gateway to university, teachers felt the examinations should reflect music degree programmes to prepare students; therefore, favouring Western classical music over other forms of musical knowledge. This raises further questions as to what, and who, is classroom music education for as tailoring secondary music for the few that go on to study music beyond KS3 raises ethical questions. For these reasons, Western classical music may act, using Apple's (1996) terminology, as a gate-keeper, and tool for control ensuring only 'certain groups of students' go into higher education (Legg, 2012: 157), thus allowing the WCT to be kept in elitist circles and promoting a self-perpetuating circularity.

9.2.4 Myths Summary

This section brings together a number of theories, questioning the role of formal education in reproducing and legitimising practices, and maintaining power and hierarchy. Bourdieu's (1984) theories are of use for explaining and externalising practices observed in the study questioning who is determining what is valuable knowledge and capital within a particular domain or field. Therefore, the findings of this study can be viewed critically in terms of the power struggles of 'positions' and

'position-taking' (Bourdieu, 1993: 34) within a field. In identifying the role of a teacher's habitus, through the use of teacher archetypes, we can investigate how previous experiences and beliefs about music and music education can influence pedagogy. By critically questioning the cultural bias and conflicts, it was clear that classical music was still viewed by many as a valuable form of cultural capital. The third myth discussed in the chapter (*rules before creativity*) questioned if the purpose of music education is to pass on a 'historical culture' (Fautley, 2017a: 241) to students. Broadfoot (1999) commented that those determining the forms of knowledge are often rooted in 'corporate capitalist societies' (p.64), which consequently promote and reinforce Western practices.

Musical preference is viewed as a powerful form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Apple, 1996), with the WCT being deemed as the pinnacle (Soderman, Burnard and Trulsson, 2015), a reason why WCT is often used as a tool for social mobility. As discussed earlier, the value of capital must first be 'consecrated' (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007; Soderman, Burnard and Trulsson, 2015) and recognised by the 'gatekeepers' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). The legitimators in this study included examination boards, examiners and teachers. If these gatekeepers' disagree with the value of a composition this can cause conflict for teachers and students; however, many of the teachers were complicit with the system.

9.3 Activity Theory

As summarised in the findings (see table 26), and discussed above, conflict was present throughout the study between pedagogical, societal, political, cultural, and historical aspects. Although teacher archetypes, and Bourdieu's (1984) and Burnard's (2012) theories on power and myths helped to illuminate and explain some of the conflicts, they do not account for all of the complexities observed. Using Engeström's (1999, 2001) second and third generation cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) illustrate connections between the ways in which wider societal, political, and school changes influence the teaching and learning of composing in this study, allowing both macro and micro facets into the analysis (Daniels, 2016).

9.3.1 Conflicting Outcomes

The use of CHAT uncovered multiple interacting activity systems involved in the teaching and learning of composing at KS4 and KS5. Discovering a range of contradictions and conflicts between different activity systems was something Engeström (1999) commented on as an integral part of any activity system. In this study four layers of interconnecting activity systems were theorised including: governmental policy agenda, schools, teachers and students. Through the analysis of these multiple interconnecting communities, there were often conflicting nodes within the CHAT diagram, particularly that the intended outcome(s) could vary depending on the subject or community under analysis. These variations in the outcome node caused conflict for both teachers and learners.

Teachers' Intentions

The most significant conflict present throughout the study was between teachers' ensuring students passed the KS4 or KS5 examination, and teaching to encourage students to be independent and creative learners. This conflict is illustrated below:

Examination Focus

Mediating Artefacts:
TTT, formulaic, washback, direct and specific feedback to student, criteria dominated feedback

Subject: Teacher

Rules: Examination and marking criteria, target grades,

Community: School accountability pressures, learners parents, examinations boards, policy

Division of Labour: Master-apprentice teaching approach, teacher-led

Object: Teaching Composing

Outcome

Product: Students reaching target grades

Conflict

Product: Students learning, creativity, enthusiasm

Outcome

Object: Teaching composing

Division of Labour: Student-led, teacher guided reflection, encouraging students' own interest, limited teacher intervention

Community: Learners, school community

Subject: Teacher

Rules: Resources in the room, time limitations, musical parameters, instruments used

Composing Focus

Mediating Artefacts:
Open questioning, experimentation, listening, reflection and evaluation, own and students' previous musical experiences

Figure 66: Conflicting outcomes between teachers' intentions

Although in figure 66 the object node of both activity systems are the same, the outcomes and purposes for the composing are very different, with the left promoting creativity and enjoyment in students, and the right ensuring they pass the examination. When the perceived product, or goal of composing changed, many of the other CHAT nodes differed due to the interconnectedness of the nodes in CHAT, each change in the system had a knock-on effect on another part of the activity, highlighting how teachers' pedagogy can change depending on the previewed outcome of composing at KS4 and KS5. Knowing the pressures placed on teachers from school leaders, the conflict in figure 66 can also be viewed with the right-hand side of the diagram representing the schools' intentions of the activity of composing at KS4 and KS5. The findings of the study revealed that the outcome of passing the examination often dominated teachers' rationale and teaching practices, but this "battle" (LP), or conflict, between these two perceived purposes for composing had the potential to cause serious stress and frustration within the education system, with teachers questioning their own values and beliefs about teaching.

The teacher archetypes proposed how a teachers' practices may change towards more examination-focused pedagogies over-time due to previous experience and/or pressure from school leaders. In some cases, teachers' intentions for the lessons were seen to change over time, as the examination date grew closer. AC highlighted that in the first composing lesson she wanted students to work together to socialise, explore ideas, as well as start to prepare for the examination brief. She used formative assessment during this lesson as a way to assess students' competencies and to plan what to do next in her teaching. What was interesting to note was how these outcomes for the lesson influenced the rest of the activity system, as summarised below:

Mediating Artefacts:
Open questioning, own instruments, technology in room, listening, experimentation, reflection and evaluation, brainstorming ideas, recording device

Product:
Composition with performance and recording

- Formative assessment
- Socialising

Outcomes

- Exploring and experimenting
- Examination preparation (generating ideas based on the brief)

Object: Composing

Division of Labour:
Student-led, natural leaders in the group, teacher guided reflection and encouraged student, limited teacher intervention

Subject: Teacher/students

Community:
Peer support, teacher as support

Rules:
Examination brief "Darkness into Light", the resources in the room, time limitations, musical parameters, instruments used, performance ability

Figure 67: Activity system of group composing at GFS (lesson 1)

Following the proposed aims of the lesson, students' own skills in performing became an important mediating artefact and created specific rules. The divisions of labour were also influenced as the teacher allowed students to work together with very little teacher intervention throughout. The teacher's main pedagogic tool to support students' composing was through open questioning and supporting students evaluating their own music. However, the outcomes of the second and third lessons observed in the study, contradict this. As time went on, the aims of the lessons became based upon producing finished musical compositions that would pass the AS examination. With the presence of examination criteria, it was clear that students felt steered towards passing the examination focusing on the criteria rather than composing a piece they enjoyed and felt proud of. This influenced the rest of the activity system as shown in figure 68:

Product:
Complete composition with a score

Mediating Artefacts:
Sibelius, midi keyboard, notation knowledge, marking criteria used as goals, terminology, specific feedback and suggestions, teacher's previous musical and examination knowledge
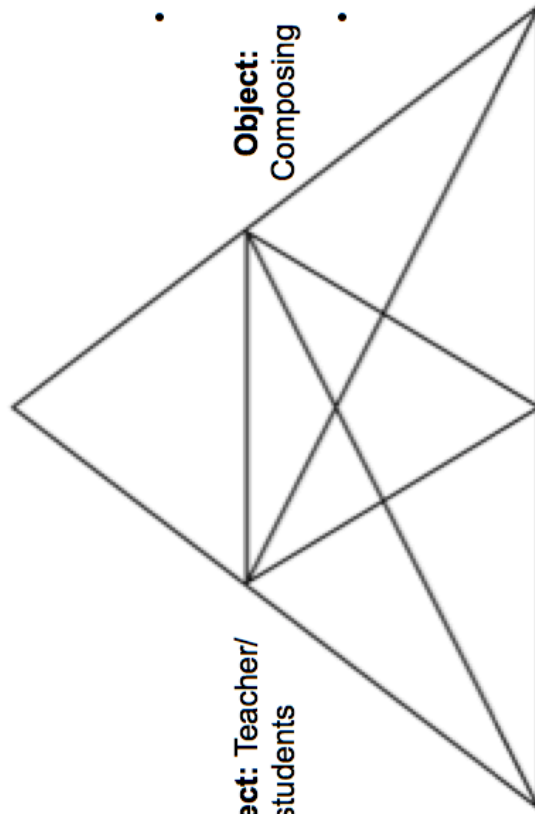
- Create more bars of music

Outcomes

- Pass/do better in the examination

Object:
Composing

Division of Labour:
Teacher-led, master-apprentice approach, examination underlying feedback

Subject: Teacher/students

Community:
Individual composing, one to one teacher feedback, some peer feedback

Rules:
Examination and marking criteria, limits of the technology, time restrictions, controlled conditions

Figure 68: Activity system of individual composing at GFS

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Due to the change in aims and outcomes, the rules became more guided by examination criteria, students also used technology to compose, and divisions of labour changed to become more teacher-led. Through utilising activity theory, it became apparent that the intended outcomes of the lessons dictated the day-to-day practices of the classroom.

An explanation for the change in AC's pedagogic aims and approaches for composing can be explained utilising Thorpe's (2015) model, in which students' informal music making, termed 'social jamming' (p.212), is viewed as a tool for group composing by teachers. In this research, teachers commonly discussed the benefits of group composing as a tool for introducing them to individual composing and developing skills such structuring music and self-evaluation. Therefore, group-composing tasks may be viewed as mediating artefacts for individual composing, as shown in figure 69, rather than developing group composing skills as main outcome:

Group Composing

Mediating Artefacts:
Previous knowledge, examination brief, reflection/
evaluation skills, resources, instrumental
knowledge

Subject: Students

Object:
Individual
composing

Outcomes

Product:
Complete composition with
a score

Rules:
Examination and marking criteria,
limits of the technology, time
restrictions, controlled conditions

Community:
Individual composing, one to one
teacher feedback, some peer
feedback

Division of Labour:
Teacher-led, master-apprentice
approach, examination
underlying feedback

Figure 69: Group composing as a tool

Although discussions around group and informal composing were only a small
element of the findings, the practices observed from AC at GFS contrasted significant
and warranted discussion and highlighting further work to be done post thesis.

Students' School and Home Composing

It was clear in the findings that some students separated the composing done out of
school for themselves, with composing for examination. As demonstrated below, both
settings had different intended outcomes:
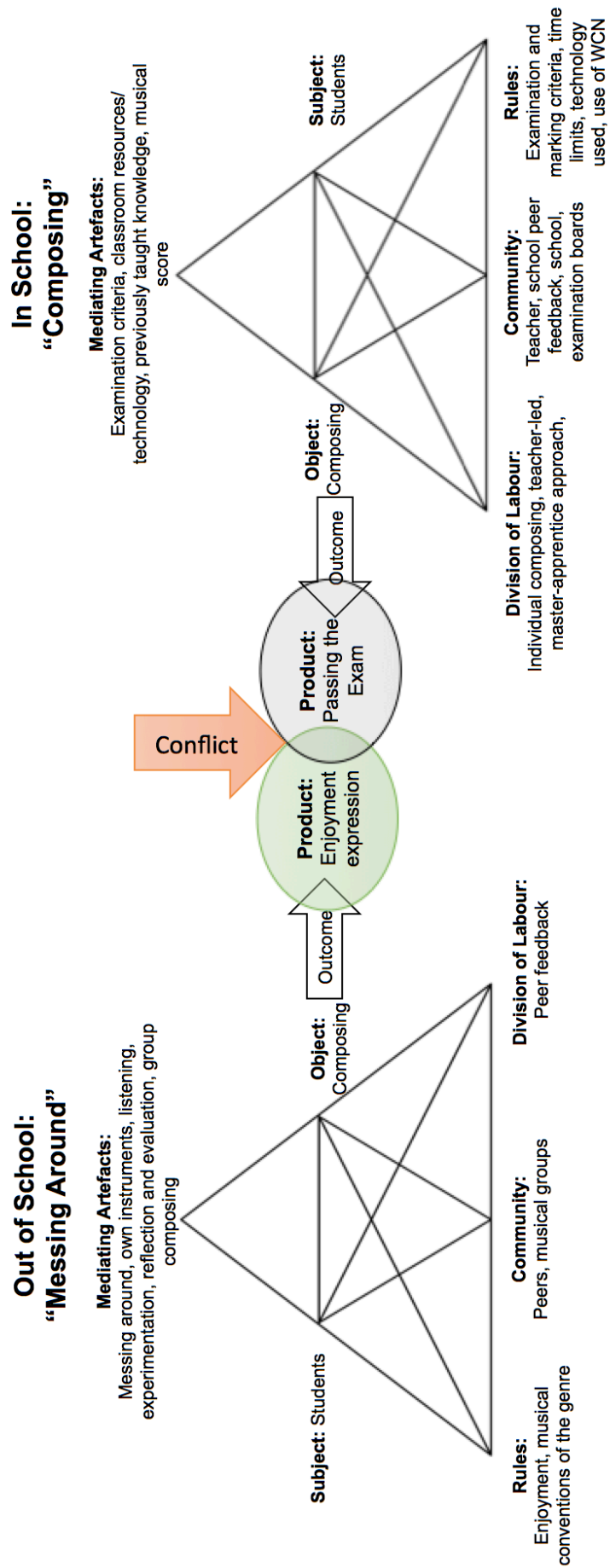
Figure 70: Conflicting outcomes between home and school composing

As with figure 70, although both object nodes are *composing* the aims and goal for the students are very different. The aims of composing out of school, termed as "messing around" by some students, included enjoyment and self-fulfilment, as well as self-expression. In contrast, the main aims for composing in the classroom were to please the examiners and pass the examination, as with the teachers. By using CHAT as an analytical framework, it was possible to uncover the different processes between composing in and out of the classroom, involving different artefacts, rules, community and divisions of labour. The stark contrasts between some of the nodes, explain how classroom composing practices can be wholly unrelatable to students' personal experience of music making beyond the classroom and cause conflict. Students rarely spoke about bringing together their own experiences of composing into their examination composing, instead preferring to learn how to play the 'examination game' (Mansell, 2007) and compose for, and to please their teacher and the examiner. This was further evidenced with many students in the study not identifying as composers, but instead describing their own composing practices out of school as "messing around". In contrast students often associated the word *composition* with individually writing down music and pleasing the examiner. These conflicts question the validity and real-world applications of composing for examination. They also illustrate the difference between composing, and what Fautley and Savage (2011b) called 'examination composing' (p.149).

Using activity theory as an analytical tool, I was able to investigate how differences in outcomes influenced teacher-student interaction, divisions of labour, and the use of mediating artefacts. Unlike Thorpe's research (2017), where teachers sought to bring together informal and classroom composing practices, teachers and students in this study were very aware of the divide and aimed to keep the separation. Due to the pressures of the examinations they explicitly discussed separating the outcomes and practices of composing for KS4 and KS5, with composing outside the classroom, even though they discussed being unhappy with this. This again points to the complicity of the participants in the study.

9.3.2 Mechanisms

As shown above, different communities can prioritise certain outcomes depending on their goals and underlying agendas. There is evidence from the findings that the four communities involved in the study (governments, schools, teachers, and students) each has a specific educational agenda that can filter down. This study uncovered how each community has a specific set of tools, or mediating artefacts, that they used to ensure their intended outcome was achieved. I will call these tools mechanisms of control, and will outline the different tools used to establish power and maintain control.

Governmental Policy

One main educational outcome commonly driven by governmental policy discussed earlier in the thesis is to raise standards of schools and teachers. Test scores can be used as a mechanism (Volante, 2004), and 'vehicle' (Broadfoot, 1999: 64), of control in education. Test results are used as a way of monitoring education standards and changes; therefore, a school's quality is measured against examination results at KS4 and KS5. As the publishing of examination results can potentially damage a school's reputation (Ball, 1990), test results become vitally important to school leaders who aim to work, and succeed, within the system. Therefore, monitoring and publishing examination results at KS4 and KS5 are a mechanism of control, as illustrated in figure 71:
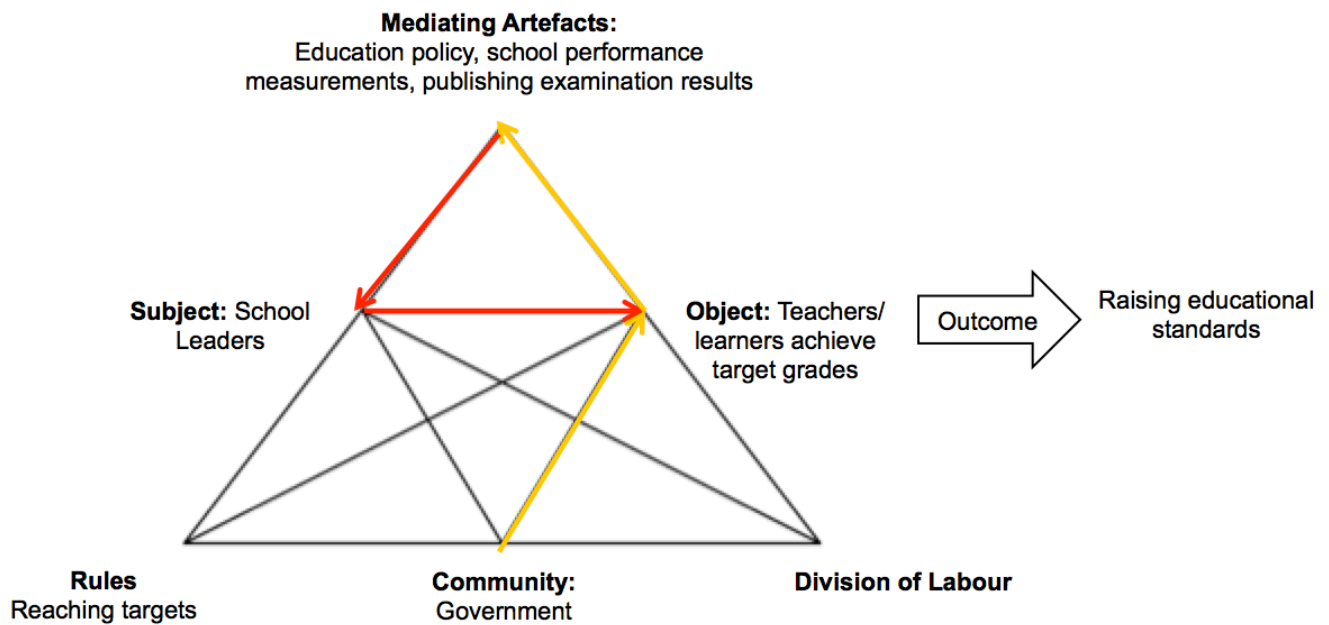
Figure 71: Governmental agenda and mechanisms of control

As shown above, the community (government) outline a specific aim or outcome, in this case: raising educational standards. The outcomes are then monitored, promoted and maintained through the use of the mediating artefacts, in this case through educational policy implementations, and publishing test results, to ensure their outcomes are filtered down to schools and teachers.

Schools

Teachers and composer-educators in the study discussed how the ethos of a school could determine musical practices. SH described how her previous school focused on the students' learning and enthusiasm for the subject, compared to how her current school was "driven by grades" (SH). Similarly, other teachers in the survey commented on their school's main intentions as ensuring students reached their target grades, calling them an "exam factory" (VD). Due to the importance of test results on a school's reputation, this study found school leaders employed methods and tools to ensure students and teachers reached their target grades, as demonstrated below:
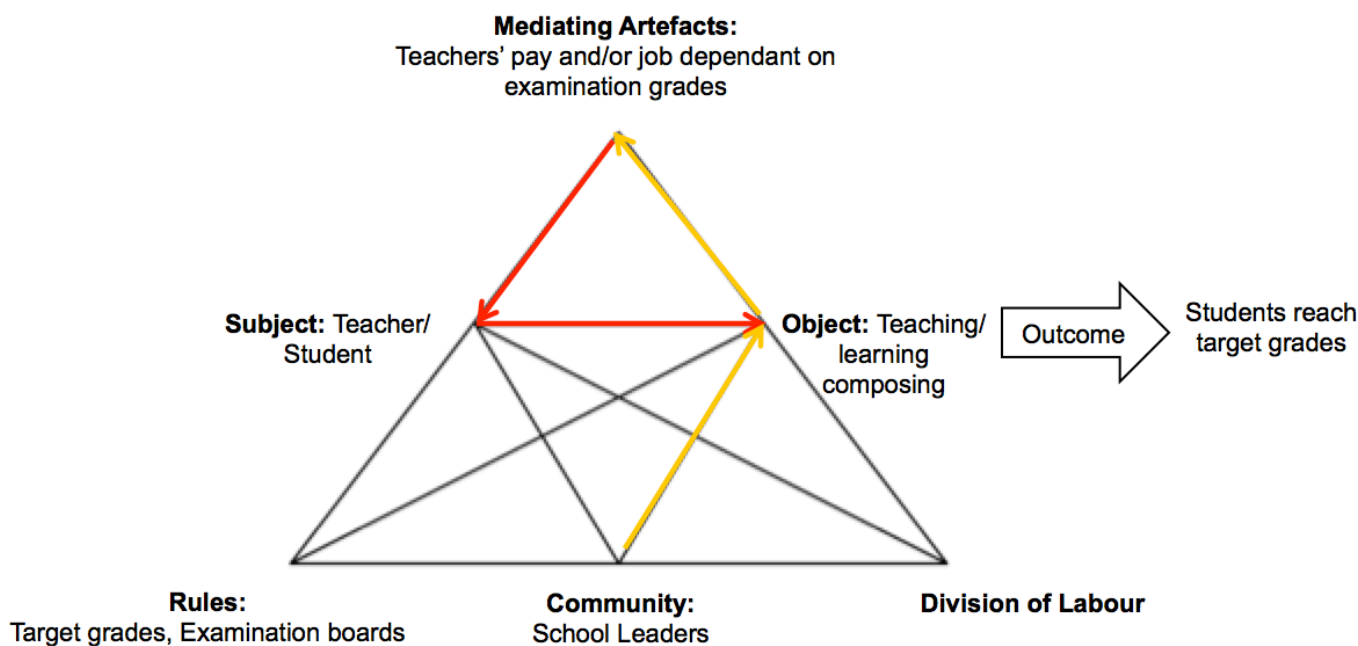
Figure 72: Hyper accountability in schools

Teachers reported that their wider school communities were dominated by accountability measures with high levels of stress and examination pressures, as seen from figure 72, one way of ensuring examination targets were reached was to monitor teachers' results, making them personally accountable for their students' failures and successes. Teachers talked about being punished for failing to achieve predictions through withholding pay-rises and threats to their future employment at the school (VD, LP, SA), clearly demonstrating what Mansell (2007) called 'hyper accountability' (p.14). Therefore, teachers stuck rigidly to the rules outlined by examination board criteria. Figure 72 shows how these accountability measures were used as a tool to monitor behaviour and as a form of control; what Ball (2003b) referred to as a 'performativity culture' (p.216).

Teachers

As seen above, teachers also admitted using methods to ensure their main outcome, of getting students to pass the examination, was achieved. Due to teachers' own personal

and professional requirements to reach target grades, teachers used a range of pedagogical tools to improve students' composition results. These tools, shown below, include strict formulaic teaching approaches, teaching to the test, and washback:
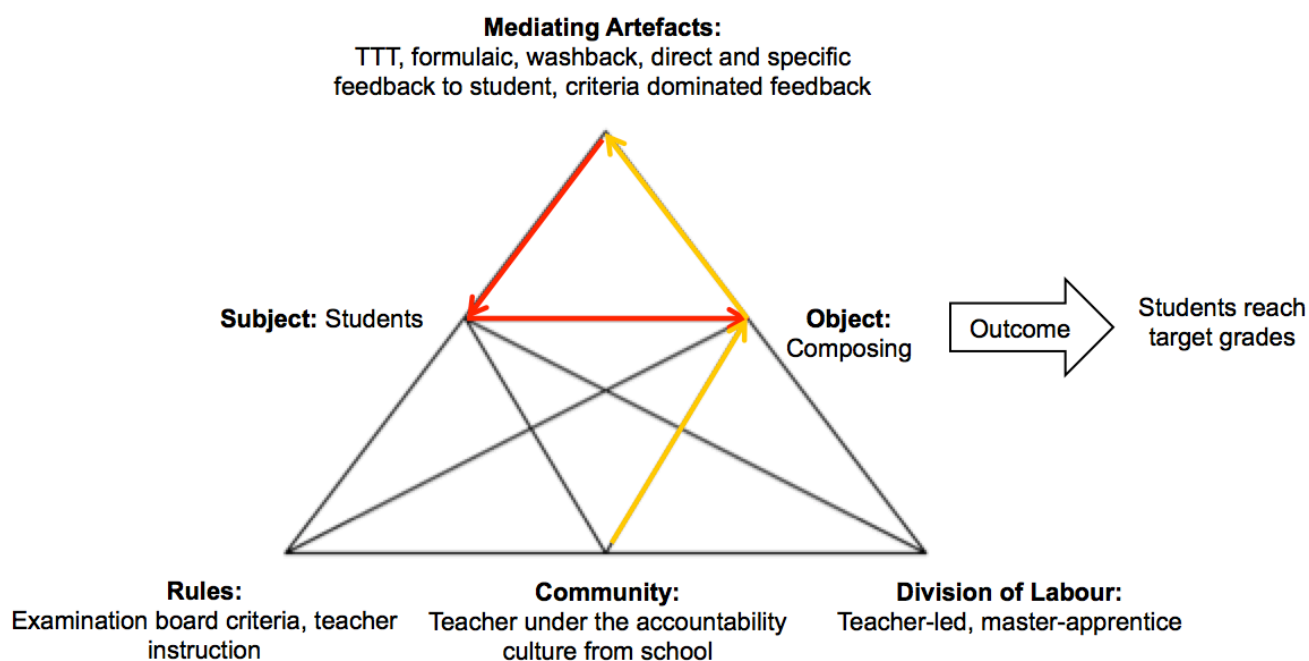
Figure 73: Teachers' tool to ensure students get target grades

Students, controlled by these mediating artefacts, were then driven to compose in certain way and in certain styles with the aim of reaching target grades.

Many teachers in the study took a master-apprentice, teacher-led approach to composing. By observing discourse in turn-taking roles between teacher and student, as well as noting 'contributions of non-powerful participants' (Fairclough, 2001: 38-39), it was clear that the control of conversations was retained by teachers most of the time. An example of this top-down pedagogical approach was most prevalent during the observations at NCA:

>   **AD**: I'm thinking how I'll mark this rather than...I does look like a lot. I could mark it in other ways. It's a little bit, muffly

Student (unidentified): it's supposed to
AD: [interruption] yeah but I think we need a clear. It doesn't look like a lot. I'll probably mark it on dynamics, and rhythm - I can hear that rubato, intended expressiveness.

In this extract, AD interrupted the student, something Fairclough (2001) believed demonstrated dominance. AD also commented that in "9 out of 10 cases" students would "bow to [his] better judgment" and do the changes he suggested. Interestingly, students commented that the key role of their teachers was to improve their own composition grades; therefore some students expected a top-down, teacher-led approach, becoming frustrated when they did not appear to be taught in the way they expected.

The use of CHAT highlights how teaching was underlined by hyper accountability and performativity cultures in schools. By observing the power relations between the different communities, it was possible to theorise how each community sought to maintain control and power of the community through the use of these mediating artefacts. It was clear that a hierarchy determining the outcomes of composing was present; with governmental policy at the top of the chain and the students at the bottom, shown by figure 74:

Mechanism of Control	Layers of community	Intended Outcomes

Government → Raising standards in education

Policy, performance measures, publishing test results

Schools → Achieving performance targets by government

Accountability, hyper accountability and performativity regimes (e.g. pay/job dependent on targets)

Teachers → Achieving performance targets set by school leaders

Master-apprentice, teachers-led approaches, instructional and formulaic teaching

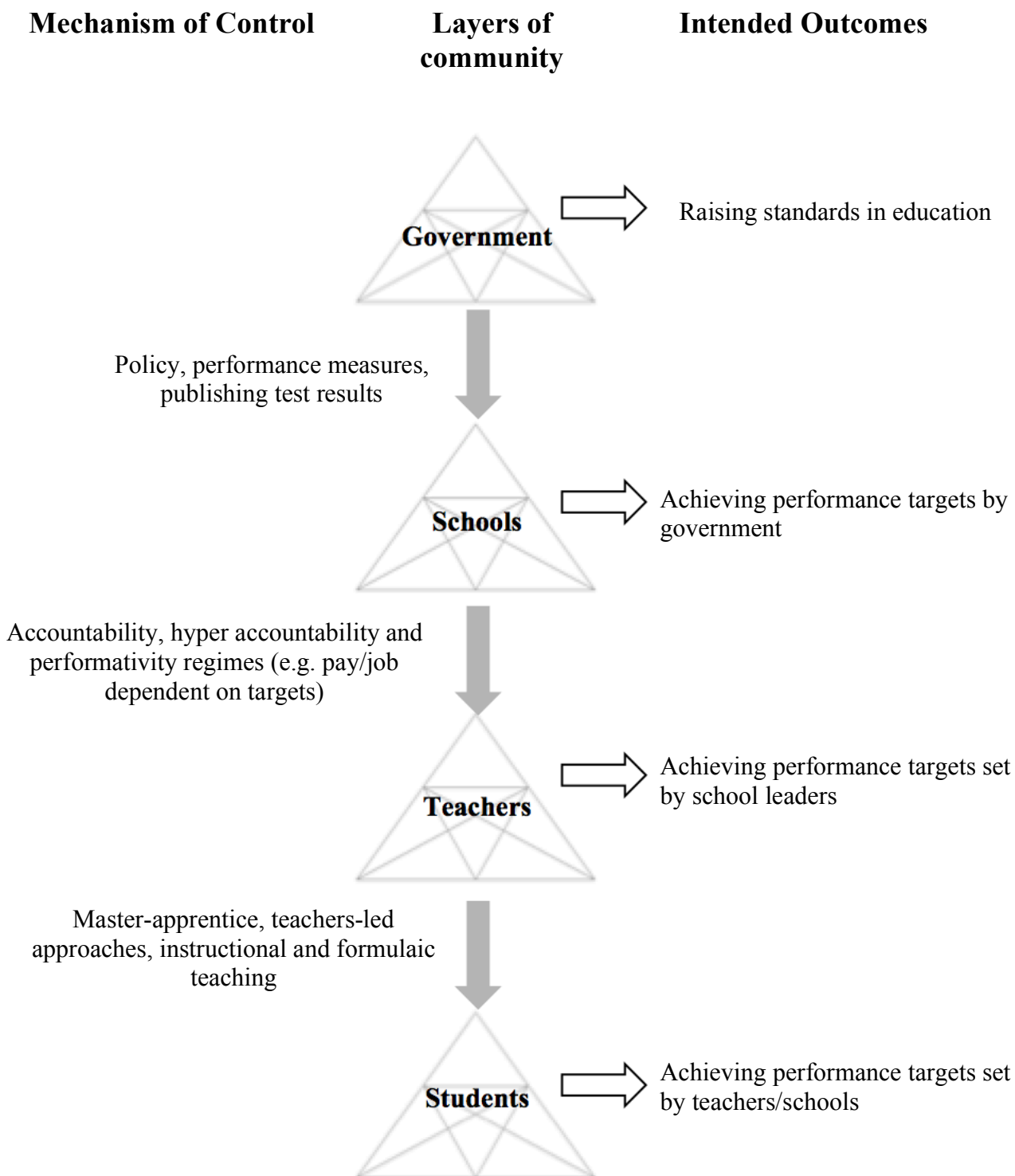**Students** → Achieving performance targets set by teachers/schools

Figure 74: Layers of community and control

Due to these power relations described, the more powerful participant was able to promote their intended outcome through the use of a number of mediating artefacts or *mechanism of control*. Thus, when the desired outcome differed from those above

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them in the hierarchy, this caused conflict. Some teachers were very aware of the authority systems controlling their teaching practices, for example SH called them the "powers that be". Very few participants challenged the system, thus making them complicit with the education and assessment systems in place. CHAT highlights the complexity of communities within the classroom, and their impact on teaching and learning, not just within music and composing, but within formal education more widely.

9.3.3 Explicit and Implicit Rules

As illustrated above, even small changes to the activity system can significantly influence practice, especially when the perceived outcome of the activity is changed. Another area where this was prevalent was in the use of rules. Throughout the findings, the theme of needing to learn the rules of composing before being creative was common. Bourdieu (in Swartz, 1997) identified that both implicit and explicit rules must be learnt in a field, and that habitus is regulated through internalised and unspoken rules (Maton, 2008: 50). Although some of the rules involved in the research were explicit and fixed, such as the examination board requirements, the case studies revealed that these rules could have different interpretations, with some teachers deliberately bending the rules in order to benefit their students. The teachers in this study also brought to their teaching their own set of beliefs, internal rules and codes of practice. The different forms of rules are outlined in table 27

Table 27: Types of rules involved in KS4-KS5 composing teaching

Type of rule	Example
Explicit fixed rules	Examination board criteria and marking scheme
Interpretation of fixed rules	Interpretations of examination board criteria and marking scheme
Implicit internalised rules	Influenced by own experiences/standards
Explicit internalised rules	When an implicit rule becomes external and fixed
Implicit genre-based/cultural norm	Rules connected to specific musical genres and norms
Explicit genre-based/cultural norms	When specific musical features from certain genres become fixed/required

Teachers commonly blurred the lines between what the examination board stipulated and what was based on their own internal assumptions about music and composing, rooted in their own previous musical experiences. It was apparent that not all rules given to students during composing at KS4 and KS5 were explicit but instead came from implicit assumptions from teachers based on previous knowledge of certain cultural practices. Although these rules were not explicitly required in the examination, some teachers made them fixed for their students to follow, thus creating additional rules overlaid over what the examination board expected.

Bending and Misinterpreting the Rules

Teachers admitted that some of the rules could be open to interpretation. One example of this is examination boards requirement for students to work under controlled conditions, defined as 'teacher-supervised internal assessment' (Ofqual 2013: 6). Although this is a fixed and explicit component of the examination there were discrepancies in opinion over its exact meaning, and how it was deployed in the classroom. Teachers commented on the ambiguity and unrealistic nature of the

controlled conditions, questioning whether teachers were able to stick rigidly to the rules set out:

> **SH:** And it would be interesting to see, honestly, how many people stick to that 10 hours

Although SH interpreted controlled conditions as "you shouldn't be talking with anyone else", she also commented on the ambiguity in how much feedback a teacher can give to students calling it a "line between it becoming my composition or their composition" (SH). SH admitted giving some direct feedback to students during controlled conditions but quickly back-tracked realising she was bending the rules:

> **SH:** I would go round, mark them, and give them a point to improve. Although obviously I didn't because it was controlled assessment, so obviously I didn't do that [Laugh]. But every teacher does it, of course we do, its not, if they are meant to come in and do 20 hours in silence

> **SH:** It depends how much your, of their work, you're willing to do. And let's face it, it happens all over the country

SH commented on the absurdity of controlled conditions believing that "every" teacher had bent the rules and knowing some who had significantly changed students' compositions to ensure good examination grades.

AH outlined potential ambiguity in the examination assessment, arguing that he could not stop students thinking of ideas, and working on their compositions away from the classroom:

> **AH:** To be honest they're allowed to take the music away with them and you can't stop someone going away with an idea. And if they do the homework in the head, you can't then say 'well you're not allowed to bring that idea with you and use it in the lesson'

Some teachers commented on how controlled conditions influenced their day-to-day teaching practices. Although AH talked about changing his assessment practices when controlled conditions were first introduced, he admitted stopping this after a while. Instead AH commented that "technically" he did controlled conditions in classroom calling it "low level supervision" and "basically coursework". Similarly, SH was

given advice during examination board training to not let controlled conditions influence her teaching, being told "we've just got to do this because of the QCA guidelines". Another example of interpretation of controlled conditions was at NCA when the teacher commented that the composing lesson "would not count today as one of the 10 hours" (AD) of their controlled conditions. However, students were working on their compositions for the whole lesson which raises questions as to what counts as controlled conditions. An additional interpretation of the controlled conditions was from SH at her old school. SH commented that they interpreted the controlled conditions through two whole days of composing in the classroom, rather than spacing it out over the academic year. The teacher commented that this approach allowed students more freedom and time to be creative, calling it a "composer friendly" and "student friendly" (SH) approach. It was apparent from the findings that different interpretations of the fixed examination rules and requirements co-existed with some teachers actively bending the rules of the examination.

Implicit Assumptions and Explicit Rules

As discussed in the findings, many teachers deemed the marking criteria in the examinations as vague, subjective and open to interpretation. Through the use of CHAT, this research highlighted how teachers interpreted marking criteria differently due to their own implicit and unwritten rules. As identified in the teacher archetypes, AD's own musical background in rock and popular music had a significant influence on his teaching and his interpretation of the mark scheme at KS4. AD's approach to teaching composing was dominated by teaching skills and techniques of specific musical genres, something he highlighted as important in his own musical training. Therefore, AD's previous experience became a key mediating artefact, and tool, for the teaching of composing and setting rules at KS4, as shown on the left CHAT triangle (figure 75):

Mediating Artefacts:
Use of technology and midi-keyboards, knowledge of chords, instruments & musical features listed with associated genre selected

Object: Composing

Subject: Student

'Explicit' Rules:
Start composing with chords, selected genres and musical features

Mediating Artefacts:
Previous knowledge: rock/pop genre-based musical background, own education, limited composing experience, assessment experience

Object: Composing

Subject: Teacher

'Implicit' Rules:
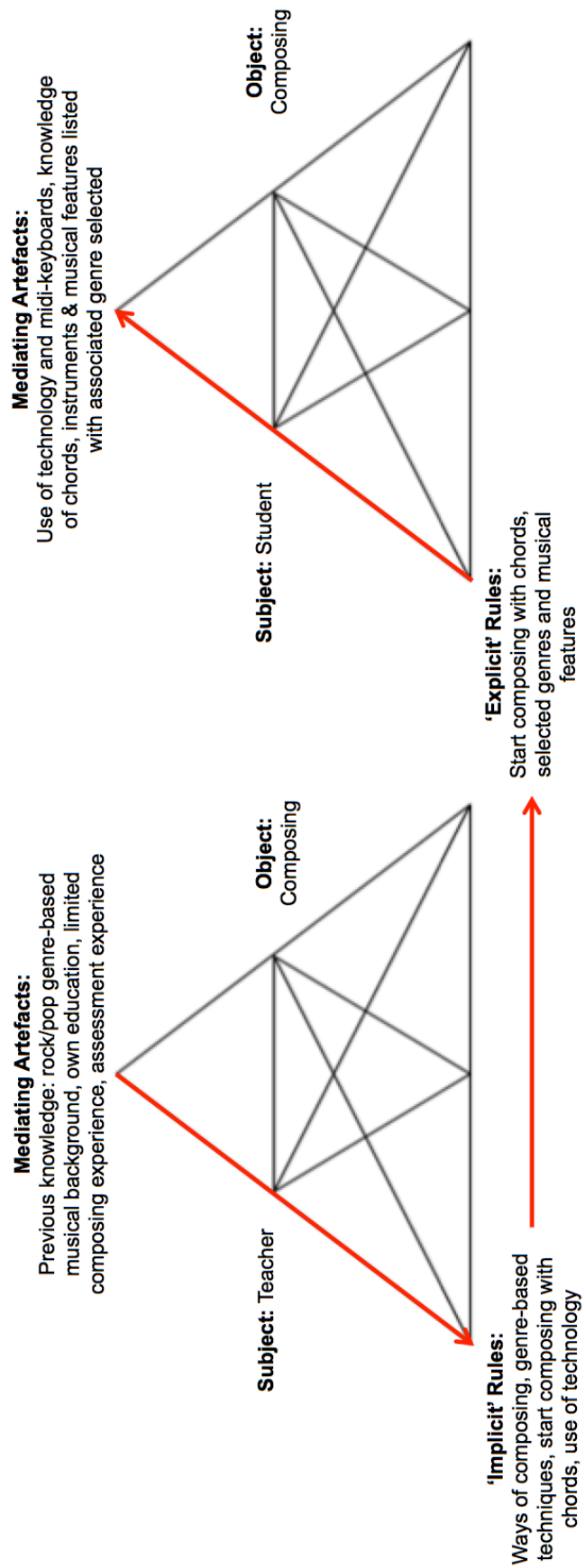Ways of composing, genre-based techniques, start composing with chords, use of technology

Figure 75: Role of previous knowledge in determining the rules at NCA

In his teaching, AD set up very strict and formulaic composing tasks telling students to "just follow" (AD) the rules. Therefore, AD's implicit rules became external and fixed for students. These rules then became the mediating artefacts students used when composing, as illustrated above. Figure 75 also demonstrates how a person's habitus and background, which are driven by 'unwritten rules' (Burnard, 2012b: 116) can become the norm when not questioned or challenged.

Many of the implicit rules from teachers often came from the WCT. When students deviated away from Western musical norms, such as in the use of harmony or instrumental choices, many teachers attempted to persuade students to change their music to fit more conventional styles and, what teachers believed were safer musical styles. There was evidence from the findings that teachers made value judgements, and dismissed music that did not fit directly in line with their own interpretation of the mark scheme. Underlying this was a fear from teachers that examination boards were biased towards Western classical music, and would dismiss or criticise music not following conventions, such as WCN. Due to the openness of the criteria, teachers shared significant concerns that examiners may have their own interpretations and biases. As with the teachers in figure 75, the examiners' own musical background may act as an influencer and mediating artefact in determining what is required to compose a successful piece at KS4 and KS5. As described in the findings, complex layers of interpretation can feed through examiners, teachers, and students and if the teacher's, examiner's and student's own interpretations of the marking criteria differ, this can cause conflict between the activity systems.

Mediating Artefact in Creating Rules

The mediating artefacts used, such as previous knowledge, were powerful tools in influencing the activity of composing. Taking this further, the study highlights how and why certain physical tools and objects are used to compose, and how this influences composing processes. Throughout the study, teachers and students discussed the transition from group composing using instruments at KS3, to individual composing using computers at KS4. Many teachers reported students finding this change difficult. These challenges exist due to the change in mediating

artefact which alters the rules and the divisions of labour, as seen by comparing figure 76, which shows composing using acoustic instruments, and figure 77, illustrating composing using technology:

Mediating Artefacts:
Acoustic Instruments

Subject: Student

Object: Composing

Rules:
Limitations of the performer and instrument, conventions of the instrument, resources available to student, difficulty of the music

Community

Division of Labour:
Group composing, trial and error, peer feedback, exploratory, student-led
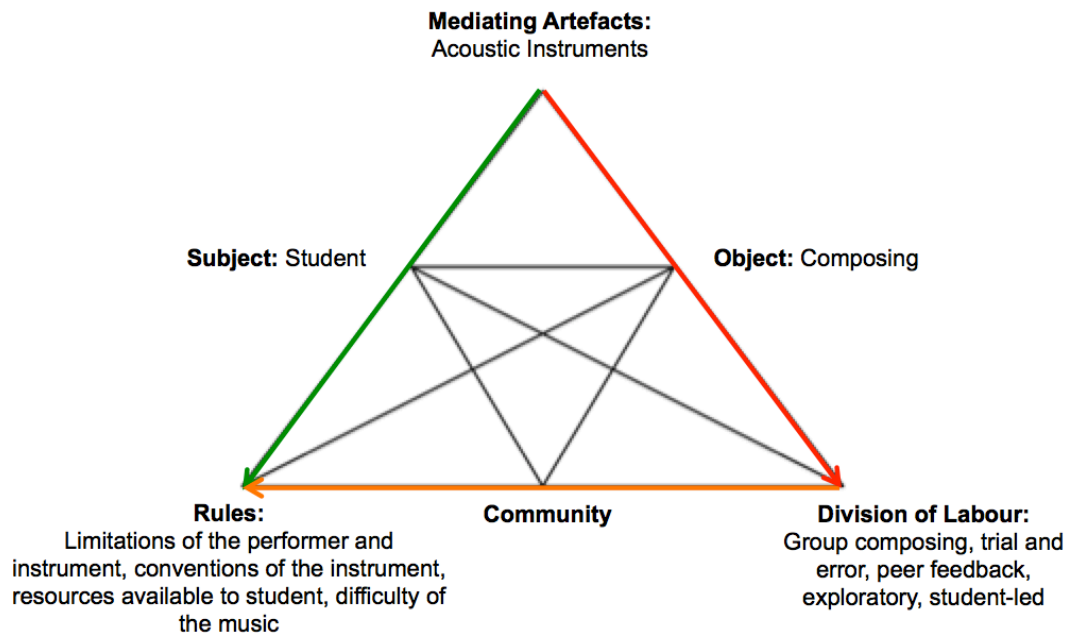
Figure 76: Rules for composing with acoustic instrument

Mediating Artefacts:
Technology/Computer programme

Subject: Student

Object: Composing

Rules:
Limitations of the technology, pre-sets, functionality, medium/genre norms

Community

Division of Labour
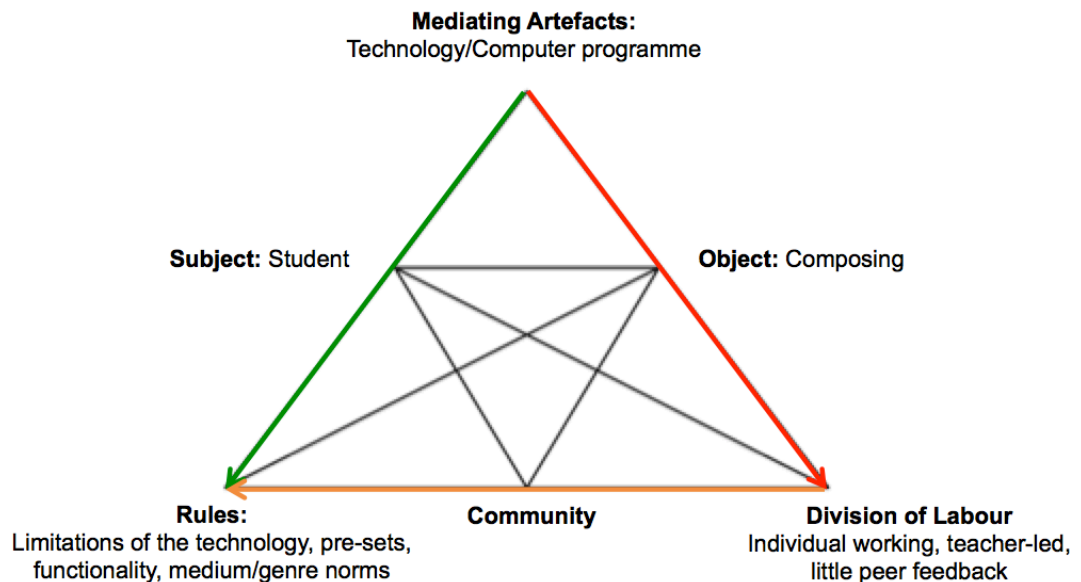Individual working, teacher-led, little peer feedback

Figure 77: Rules for composing with technology

As shown in figure 76, when students used their own instruments they were limited to the resources available and their own skills as the performers. In using technology, a new set of rules and limitations emerge (see figure 77). Within the choice of mediating artefact, it was clear to see how divisions of labour and feedback practices changed. When working on the computer, students' interaction was limited to the teacher with occasional peer feedback, compared to when students worked with their own instruments, making group work and evaluation central. In group work the divisions of labour varied with teachers taking a step back and allowing students space to explore ideas without intervention, highlighting a change in power dynamics between the teacher and learners.

Although it was not an aim to investigate the uses and affordances of technology, there were significant patterns in how students used the software. For example the looping feature of Logic Pro was extremely important and commonly used in the case studies. Midi keyboards were used with Logic, which limit those without keyboard playing skills. Listening and editing were common practices for all students using computer software; however it was also common for students to delete whole sections of music within seconds. As raised in the literature review, use of technology has fundamentally changed music lessons in the classroom including challenged the notion of needed key skills and knowledge before composing can take place. CHAT demonstrates how a change in pedagogic resource, such as using technology, can alter the activity and the activity system. Interestingly, the rationale for technology at KS4 and KS5 was predominantly due to teachers believing it to be better equipped at helping students pass their examinations; therefore, the choice of composing tool was determined by the teacher's intended outcome of passing the examination.

9.3.4 Activity Theory Summary

The use of CHAT has demonstrated how the activity of composing can have multiple meanings and realities depending on the subject's perceived outcome. In highlighting the links between how a community can determine the outcome of composing at KS4 and KS5, it has illuminated different power relations and rules, including multiple layers of power between the communities of government and schools, schools and

teachers, and finally teachers and students. These communities interact with each other, as illustrated by figure 78:
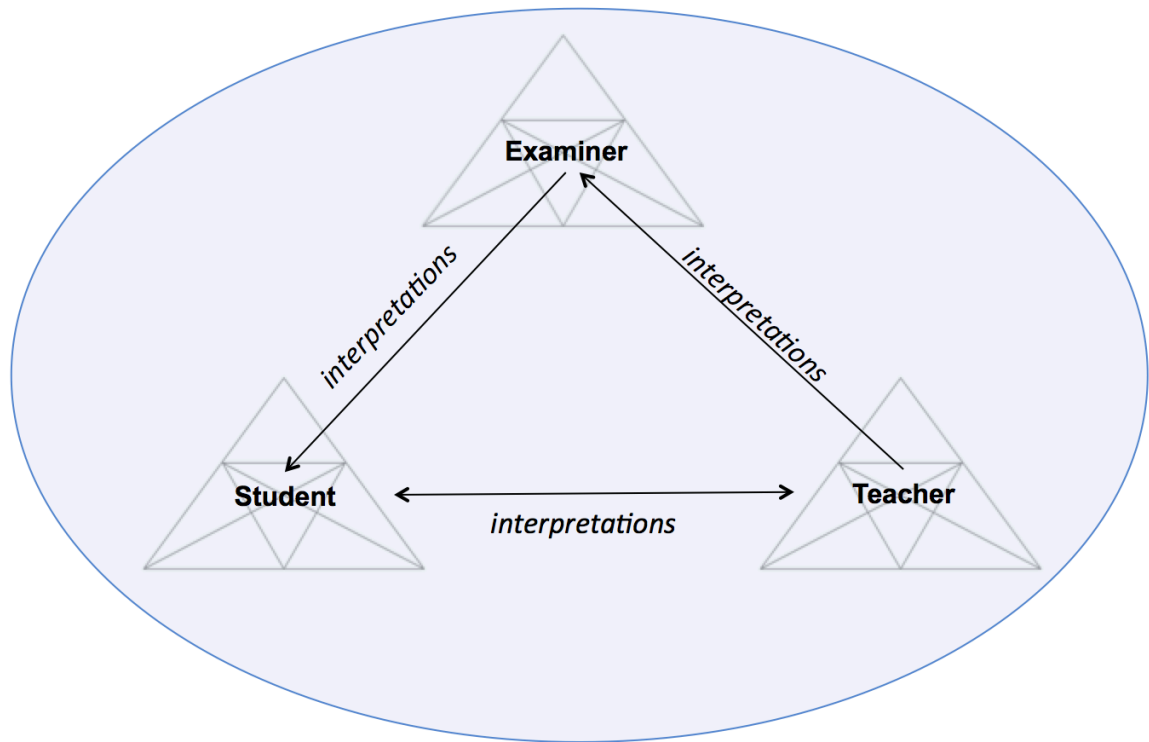

Figure 78: Interacting activity systems within classroom examination composing

As raised in the findings, there are layers of interpretations between each group for example: the teacher and students must interpret the examination criteria, which may be based of their own experiences, students then interpret the feedback from their teachers. The examiner must interpret the marking criteria and the students' musical intentions from the scores and recordings, hence, why contradictions and conflicts may occur within the activity systems.

The composer-educators may also present a different reality and perception of composing that may cause additional conflict and contradictions, show shown in figure 79:
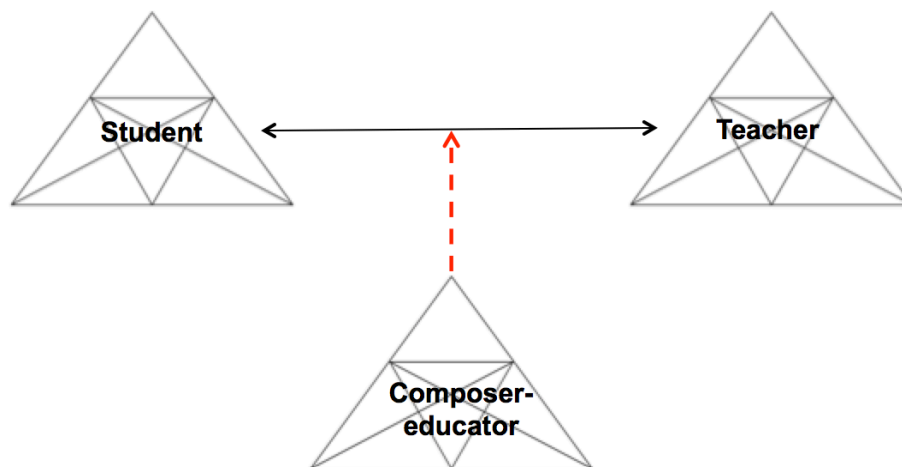
Figure 79: Potential conflict between composer-educator and classroom composing

Although no observations were made of composer-educators working within the school environment in this study we can surmise from the interviews how this conflict may occur with composer-educators potentially bringing their own interpretations into the activity systems, thus raising further potential areas for enquiry in the future.

9.4 Discussion Summary

What can be drawn from the analyses using CHAT, field theory and the teacher archetypes, is that teachers and students often became aware of the implicit and explicit rules needed in order to succeed at composing at KS4 and KS5, allowing them to maintain their positionality in the educational field (Bourdieu, 1984). As commented by Soderman *et al*. (2015) each field has specific behaviours and rules, and those that achieved in the education system had become aware of how to play. As illustrated in figure 80, a teacher may learn how to play the rules of the game, moving from being reflective, to conflicted, and eventually focused purely on the examination. Use of CHAT takes this further by identifying what aspects of a teachers' practice may change, including their use of rules, mediating artefacts, and the divisions of labour:
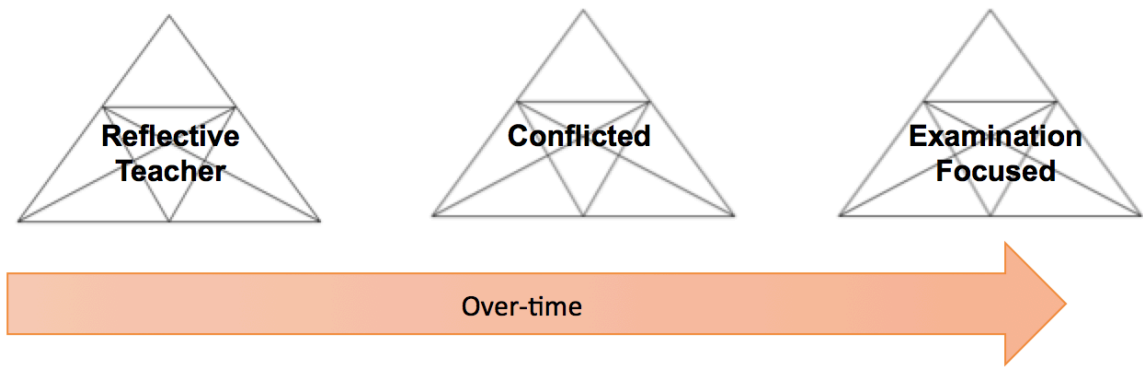
Figure 80: Changes in teacher archetype activity system over time

Figure 80 describes how teachers may learn the implicit and unspoken rules of the game due to past experience and pressures from those in power. Therefore, over time becoming more institutionalised with aspects becoming embedded in their practice. Without space for reflection or risk-taking in their teaching, Kinsella (2014) warns that 'contradictions' may become 'invisible' and 'taken for granted' (p.307), and persist and continue to replicate. These means that for this study not all participants were aware of the contradictions in their interviews, as much of their pedagogy had been internalised. There is evidence from the student interviews that they had also learnt how to play the system by identifying what rules to play. Not all students were aware of this, causing some to experience a 'code clash' (Lamont and Maton, 2010: 67). This resulted in frustration and conflict when the rules of composing had changed; such as between KS3 and KS4, or between home and school composing. This discussion highlights how certain students may be at an advantage in the examination if their own experiences line up with the expectations and interpretations of their teacher or examiner.

With multiple co-existing realities of composing, serious questions are raised as to whose reality of composing maintains dominance and privilege in the examination? Although contradictions and conflict were present, most participants felt powerless to challenge them, making them complicit with the current systems, which may promote bias and inequality.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

This research goes some way to being able to explain and address the three research questions stated in the introduction of this thesis:

1. In what ways does the examination of composing directly affect teaching and learning of composing at KS4 and KS5?

2. Is assessment of composing perceived as reliable and fair?

3. Does composing at examination level reflect real-world composing and creative practices?

The research brings to the forefront, and makes visible, the many complexities and power relations involved in assessment, teaching and learning of composing at KS4 and KS5. The findings from this study have created more questions and have opened out more lines of enquiry in this complex and under-research area. This chapter summarises key findings of the study in light of the research questions, identifying recommendations for future teaching and assessment of composing and further areas of research.

As evidenced frequently throughout the findings and discussion the assessment of composing had a profound and significant effect on teachers' pedagogical practices, which in turn directed and influenced students' learning and experiences. Teachers commonly relied on formulaic teaching processes to guide students through the examination, such as TTT, washback and direct instruction in feedback. Teachers discussed a lack of time available for exploring anything out of the outlined assessment, such as group or collaborative composing. The decision to use technology to compose was also often driven by a pragmatic need to produce examination worthy compositions. Underlying this, teachers shared the accountability pressures they faced from schools ensuring students achieve set grades, thus leaving them feeling conflicted and trapped within the system. Similarly, students showed confliction between composing a piece of music for their examination, against composing a piece they felt reflected their true musical interests.

The reliability of the composing assessments at KS4 and KS5 was a major concern throughout, with many teachers believing it to be unreliable, unpredictable and subjective, with the problem most prominent at KS5. This unreliability also proved to be a major incident in teachers' confidence in teaching composing, often resulting in them changing their practices over time. Many teachers felt that the unreliability stemmed from the vagueness of the marking criteria, which left space for multiple interpretations. As outlined in the discussion, teachers were concerned about bias towards compositions that:

1. Adhered to Western classical traditions
2. Were written using Western classical notation
3. Had a live recording with the submission

This raises serious questions regarding the inclusivity of music at KS4 and KS5. The discussions regarding bias and fairness were cause for concern, with many teachers calling for greater transparency and better training of examiners.

It was clear from the findings and the discussion that different realities of composing exist and these can cause conflict. Teachers and students described different processes for composing in and out of school, creating an artificial separation and reducing the real-world usefulness of the examination. There were also significant contradictions between the teachers' and the composer-educators' view of composing and composing pedagogy. As a result of the complexities identified, it could be argued that having an assessment with high reliability and validity is not viable, as Gipps and Stobart (1993) commented: 'as the task becomes more complex: either the assessment must become more complex or the criteria must become more general and therefore less reliable' (p.76). This is a concern for the practical implications of this study, as a more complex assessment procedure for composing would be unfavourable by teachers who already have significant workloads, and a more open criteria would potentially cause more uncertainty and stress for teachers due to increased unpredictability and unreliability in the examination. This also raises further questions as to the purpose of composing at KS4 and KS5; whether is it to give students a valid experience of composing and preparing them for professional composing work, or for them to learn basic musical 'rules' of the WCT, thus allowing them to pass the examination and move onto the next stage in their education.

10.1 Recommendations from the Research

This study illuminated several key issues, conflicts and concerns regarding the teaching, learning and assessment of composing at KS4 and KS5. From this, a number of recommendations have been produced to help inform practice, policy and further research. As Fautley (2004) outlined: "composing is a complex activity, and no single classroom pedagogy can be considered as universally appropriate" (p.202), therefore, the recommendation for music teachers is to reflect on their own teaching practices. A series of questions are outlined with the aim to support teachers through this reflective process to encourage them to become reflective practitioners. These include:

1. Reflect on your own current teaching practices, considering if specific ideologies, musical cultures or values are being promoted that may disadvantage certain groups
   a. Are you establishing a rich and diverse musical culture that encompasses different perspectives on creativity?
2. Identify key previous experiences and critical moments that may have influenced your own teaching of composing
3. Develop an understanding of the diversity of composing and creative pathways, questioning if your current teaching allows for divergence
   a. Do you offer a balance between setting limitations and offering freedom when setting composing tasks to benefit a range of students?
4. Contemplate your role and methods in supporting the progression of students' composing processes
   a. Are feedback processes dominated by instruction, guided by the examination, or by questioning, encouraging students to reflect and evaluate their own work?
5. Consider if and how washback from the KS4 examinations are infiltrated through to KS3 curriculum design
   a. If washback is present, question the benefits, considering the purposes of classroom music education at KS3, and considering for whom KS3 music is for

6. Examine if composing through KS3, KS4 and KS5 offers clear progression for students to develop

   a. Do composing practices at KS3 differ significantly from KS4, such as the move from group to individual composing?

7. Recognise if and when the teaching of composing has become overly restrictive and driven by the examination, such as using a 'one-size-fits-all approach' (Francis, 2012: 166)

8. Critically question the benefits and negatives of using technology to compose, considering how technology guides composing and creative processes –

As described in the study, if significant change is to take place it must come from those in power. As illustrated by Cremin, Barnes, and Scoffham (2006) in figure 9, the community and ethos of a school can significantly influence the opportunities available to students, and the support for teachers. Schools and school leaders need to consider how they can support creativity and composing in their schools. Recommendations are given for school leaders in order to ensure music and creativity are fully understood, supported, and valued at a management level. These are as follows:

1. Pedagogical practices of composing are complex; therefore, teachers need time and encouragement to reflect on their current practice in order to develop and grow their teaching

2. Time and financial support to attend useful and relevant CPD should be given, and not just for CPD related to assessment

3. Creative and composing practices take time to develop and progress may be non-linear and may include trial and error, exploration and failure. School leaders should have a broader understanding of progress and progression in composing, realising that measurable monitorable progression may not be obviously visible

4. By setting unrealistic target grades usually based on maths and English tests, and making teachers accountable, teachers felt forced to reach the grades through bending the rules of the examinations, direct instructional feedback to students, and TTT practices, even at the detriment of the students' learning

<ol start="a" type="a">
The study highlighted conflict between the target grades predicted by the school, and teachers own predictions based on their knowledge and understanding of their students' musical, instrumental and compositional skills. Target grades should take into account current musical skills

<ol start="5">
Many teachers reported a decrease in student numbers due to pressures for students to achieve the EBacc. A downward spiral can form with many music teachers facing funding cuts, KS4 and KS5 courses being withdrawn, and KS3 curriculum time being reduced. School leaders need to consider the long term effects of de-funding and de-valuing music and the arts on the school community, in order to improve school ranking on league tables
There are significant concerns from the music teacher population regarding the unreliability of composing assessment, most notably at KS5. School leaders need to be aware that this is a national issue that needs addressed by examination boards before making teachers wholly accountable for students' results
With the combination of high-stakes assessment, accountability measures, unreliability, and unrealistic target grades, it is unsurprising that the study uncovered teachers struggling with high levels of stress and mental ill health. The health and wellbeing of staff should be made priority and support offered when needed

Similarly, change in practice must come from policy; therefore, the value of creativity and music within education needs serious consideration from current government, who must acknowledge the detrimental effects of the EBacc and funding cuts on music education in England. Three main recommendation are offered for policy makers:

There is significant evidence that the introduction of the EBacc and Progress 8 has had a detrimental effect on the uptake of music at KS4, resulting in de-funding of music in schools. This has resulted in some schools withdrawing music as an option at KS4 and KS5, leaving only certain schools with the resources to continue. Thus creating inequality in opportunity and making music provision more 'patchy' (Henley, 2011: 5) and a lottery system

    a. More must be done to ensure that high quality music education is available for all, and not reserved for those who can afford it or who are lucky to attend a school with a thriving musical community

    b. The effects of the EBacc on the arts, as highlighted in the this study, along with other recent research (Daubney and Mackrill, 2017) need to be thoroughly investigated

2. With the focus on STEM and the divide between 'academic' and 'non-academic' subjects, the role of the arts and music in education have been de-valued. Government officials need to recognise the important role of creative skills in the workforce and its vital place in the UK economy. I recommend that there are benefits to include the arts in the STEM campaign, thus changing STEM to STEAM

3. Teachers believed that the changes to the KS4 music examinations to become more 'rigorous' (Gove, 2013), have an elitist agenda potentially disadvantaging students without previous experience of the Western classical music tradition. Policy makers need to consider *whom* the changes to the examinations are making it harder for, taking into account the general role and purpose of music education in schools

Some of the issues and concerns regarding the reliability and validity of composing in examinations warrant further and serious investigation. Considering the importance and high-stakes of KS4 and KS5 examinations, recommendation for examination boards include:

1. Further investigation should be undertaken into the marking of composing and the claims regarding unreliability made in the study

2. The study raised concerns regarding subjectivity and bias in marking towards certain compositions and styles. This warrants further investigation

3. More transparency and dialogue is needed between examination boards, examiners, schools, teachers, and students, including being able to receive feedback on markings and sending scripts off for re-marking without being charged

4. Previous examiners who took part in the study commented on a lack of training. In order to reduce test bias (Gipps and Murphy, 1994) more training

is needed for examiners, specifically targeting the marking of compositions in styles less familiar to the examiners' own musical background

5. Although much of the debate in the study considered the reliability of assessment, the validity needs to be address in as much detail [10]

   a. Professional composers from a range of fields, could be involved in the creation of examination briefs and marking criteria

6. Alternative forms of assessment should be investigated to avoid discriminating against other forms of composing creativity, thus encouraging an inclusive approach. Suggestions include:

   a. Considering the potential for the inclusion and assessment of group composing at KS4, as with the NCEA in New Zealand

   b. Investigations into rewarding marks for processes of composing should be considered that allow students' intentions to be made visible to the marker

   c. Marks for creativity and originality should be considered to encourage and reward exploration and creative risk-taking.

Although some teachers in the study requested more objective and measurable marking criteria to increase reliability, this could be detrimental to creative learning and the validity of the examination. Therefore, a careful balance needs to be obtained between open and specific marking criteria. In terms of bias and validity in the assessment, alternative methods of assessment, such as group composing, and assessing the processes of composing, should be investigated and considered as to not disadvantage those with different musical backgrounds.

Contradictions and conflicts also emerged between teachers and composer-educators, thus highlighting discrepancies between formal schooling, and out of school music provision. Areas for attention and reflection for those delivering musical and composing activities out of, or alongside, formal schooling include:

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[10] The controlled conditions in place for the examinations at the time of the study caused some questions regarding the validity of the assessment. Teachers also appeared to interpret the requirements differently. However, it is understood that the new examination requirements have loosened the requirements on this

1. Music organisations and practitioners need to be aware of the complex and high-pressured environments that music teachers work within, ensuring they are sensitive to this

2. Unlike when composing was introduced to the GCSE in 1988, this study discovered that teachers' confidence in teaching composing was not a significant concern. This study found that confidence fluctuated due to their experiences of examination. Music practitioners, when working in a school, must not assume the music teacher has very little composing experience, but instead should work alongside the teacher
   a. The studied also highlighted a need for more CPD on supporting composing in the classroom to share pedagogical tools and reflect on current practice

3. With the current changing landscape of music education, music organisations and practitioners must question their role, and place in providing music provision; even potentially providing opportunities to fill the gaps left by underfunding and withdrawal of KS4 and KS5 programmes
   a. Organisations need to consider the future of the music industry in the UK and how they may navigate future challenges

4. As commented by Fautley and Murphy (2016a) 'It is in times of austerity that we often feel that we need to make the case for music education even louder than we have done before' (p.1). Many of the music teachers openly discussed feeling powerless against the examination, school and accountability systems. Therefore, music organisations and professionals must offer support to the music teaching community to speak out, and potentially speak on their behalf, to ensure their voices are heard.

These comprehensive recommendations consider the usefulness and practicalities of the research findings and will be considered for publication, ensuring the research can have a wider impact on the composing education field.

Although this study has contributed a range of new knowledge to the field of education, composing, creativity and assessment, it has also highlighted essential areas that require further investigation and discussion, including:

1. During the four years conducting the study, the examinations of composing at KS4 and KS5 have undergone change, therefore research needs to be conducted to ensure all areas are still relevant

2. The claims regarding reliability and bias in the KS4 and KS5 examinations are concerning and wider research should be conducted that include perspectives from current and past composition examiners

3. Due to the issues in reliability and bias, alterative methods of assessment should be research taking into account reliability, validity and practicalities of these methods

4. This study demonstrated a lack of understanding from teachers about progression and learning of composing, with many relying on traditional beliefs and myths. More thorough research into compositional learning and progression at this age range is needed, with findings being disseminated and easily accessible to teachers and practitioners to implement into their teaching
   a. More research in young people's composing under examination conditions is needed
   b. More detailed investigation is needed to consider the influence of technology on composing processes in the classroom

5. The study touched upon how teachers may alter their pedagogy over time, this could be investigated in more detail through longitudinal research.

6. Observations of composer-educators in practice within schools could illuminate if and how they work within, or against activity systems in place.

7. This study touched upon current worries of the EBacc and Progress 8 across music and the arts. More research must be conducted to monitor the development and long-term effects on uptake and funding

8. Analysis could be undertaken to expand into pedagogical and assessment practices within higher education

9. Combining the theoretical frameworks of CHAT and Bourdieu (1984) have be a useful tool for uncovering wider social and cultural influencers. More research into composing education could consider using, and developing, similar theoretical models

10. Future research could investigate similar questions using alternative research methods such as action research

These recommendations will aid the development of this important but under-developed field of research.

10.2 Final Remarks

This study took place in a time of significant educational change, especially for the music and the arts. With considerable uncertainty and disparity, I hope that the outcomes and findings of this research can be of use within the current changeable landscape of music education, and give those, who are at the forefront of these changes, a voice. With some of my research already published and presented at national and international conferences (see appendix 12), I hope to continue to develop the research field through my practices as a composer, practitioner, and researcher. My final request is to ask all those involved in the musical learning of young people, to consider the place and purpose of music education, ensuring approaches are inclusive, allowing for diversity of creativities, and that practices are un-discriminatory, allowing young people to enjoy and progress in musical learning that is relevant and meaningful to them. I will end with a quote that inspired me at the very start of my PhD journey, and continues to influence my own teaching, and thinking about music education:

> I want them to have the experience of being a musician: creating, interpreting, and responding to music; joining in performances that everyone feels proud of; feeling 'musical' (Mills, 2005: 15)

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Examination requirements of notation at KS4 and KS5

The Examination Board Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) defined a musical score as: 'any written format that is appropriate to the particular genre of music presented' at GCSE (2012: 16). All GCSE examination boards acknowledge the varied role of notation in relation to the style or genre of music. AQA outlines four types of accepted notation:

1. Staff notation
2. Graphic notation
3. Tab
4. A written account detailing the structure and content of the music

(Adapted from AQA 2012: 16)

Pearson London Examinations (Edexcel) accept scores as a 'notated score, a lead sheet or chord chart, or annotated track diagrams' (Edexcel, 2012: 47), although there is no recognition of graphic notation as an appropriate medium. Composing at A-level offers less clarity. Oxford Cambridge and RSA (OCR) states 'candidates need to develop the skills to communicate their ideas comprehensively, using staff notation' (OCR, 2014: 81). In contrast, Edexcel retains the notion that the score must be 'appropriate to the style of music submitted' (Edexcel, 2013: 44). In AQA the 'compositional techniques' require a score in staff notation; however, the 'free' composition module can 'include an appropriate score and/or chart and/or annotation and a review' (AQA, 2014: 21). In examinations, the musical score seems to hold higher value than the recorded sound:

> In all circumstances, the score should accurately reflect the intentions of the candidate and bear close resemblance to the music presented in the recording (AQA, 2012: 16).

> Where the candidate's intention is only implied and the performer(s) interpret the composition (such as by improvising in a section or by adding accompanying figurations to a set of chords) credit cannot be given (OCR, 2012c: 32).

Appendix 2: Interview questions and prompts

2a: Music teacher interviews

Interviews with Head of Music

1. Please recall your own experience of composing at Post 16.
   a. Did you do composing in your undergraduate degree?
   b. Did you do any composing outside of education?

2. Would you consider yourself a composer?
   a. Why?
   b. What is your definition of a composer?

3. How confident are you at teaching composition at GCSE (and A Level)?
   a. What part of the GCSE (and A level) specification do you the find most challenging to teach?
   b. How confident are you at giving feedback to a student regarding a composition?

4. What support was available to help you prepare to teach composition in your teacher training?
   a. How did it help you?
   b. What support have you had since your training (e.g. CPD)
   c. What did the training focus on?
   d. What resources do you use to support the teaching of composition?
   e. What advice would you give to a newly qualified teacher teaching composition for the first time?

5. How does composing at examination level differ from composing in lower secondary school?

6. What do your current and past GCSE/A level students struggle with the most in their composing module?
   a. How do you help them overcome theses challenges?

7. Do you think composing in the classroom reflects real composing practice:
   a. What are your opinions on controlled conditions?
   b. Are there any concerns about how much feedback you should give them?
   c. Do you think the assessment requirements accurately reflect the quality of a piece of music?

8. In your opinion, how important is the learning of composition for all music students?
   a. What do you think students gain from composing?

9. Would you like to see anything else included in the music specification in composition?

2b: Student focus-group interviews

Interviews with Students

Name:
School Year:
Do you play a musical instrument? If yes what do you play and for how long have you been playing?

1. What does the word 'composing' mean to you?
   a. Would you call yourself a composer?

2. Do you compose in your spare time (outside the classroom)?
   a. What do you compose? How?
   b. Is it different from composing in school?

3. Have you had any of your compositions performed live?
   a. How did you feel when hearing it live?
   b. Did you learn anything from it?
   c. If no – then why?

4. What are you composing for your examination?
   a. What method are you using to compose the piece?
   b. Do you feel you have to compose in a certain way for the exam?
   c. Do you compose in a certain style?

5. When you first started your GCSE/A Level composition how did you feel?
   a. Why?
   b. Has this changed over time?

6. Are you enjoying composing as part of your (GCSE/A Level) course?
   a. Why?
   b. Have you come across any challenges?
   c. How have you overcome the challenges?

7. What kind of support do you get to help your composing module from your teacher?
   a. What is most helpful?
   b. What would you like more help with?

8. Do you have any worries about composing for your exam?

9. Do you ever use technology to compose?
   a. Are you using technology as part of your examination?
   b. Why is technology useful?

10. Do you think composing is important in schools?
    a. Do you think performers should learn to compose?
    b. Why?

2c: KS4 telephone interview questions

KS4 Composing:
Possible Telephone interview questions

General Location

1. Overall, many teachers are content with the reliability moderation of composing at KS4, however some worry that formulaic approaches to composing are more reliable in terms of achieving set grades and easier to manage in the classroom:
   a. What are your thoughts on the 'creativity vs skills' argument?
   b. Do you have any comments on pastiche composing?
   c. Do you feel the criteria restrict creativity in composing?

2. Some teachers use the phrase 'ticking boxes' or 'composing by numbers' when talking about composing for KS4 examination. What are your feelings on these comments?

3. The use of technology has become a prominent aspect of composing in the classroom
   a. What do you take technology to mean? (what software?)
   b. What role does technology have in composing in your school? How do they use it? Is it integral to the composing process?
   c. Are their any barriers/benefits to using technology for composing?

4. What are your thoughts on the relationship between notation and the assessment of composing?
   a. Why do you/not encourage standard classical notation in composing?
   b. Have you any concerns?

5. **In the survey you said that (very few/many) students have their music performed live. Please can you expand on why this is?**

6. Many teachers have mentioned the lack of time available for group/collaborative composing at KS4. Would you like to see more time available for group composing?
   a. Would you be interested in group composing becoming an option as part of the KS4 assessment process?
   b. Benefits?
   c. The jump between individual and group composing (KS3 & KS4)

7. Do you have any thoughts, comments or concerns about the introduction of the EBacc in your school?
   a. Is there a danger that the EBacc may endanger music as a subject in your school?

Questions for AS/A level Composing Survey respondents

- You said in the survey that ... Please can you expand on this?

- Has inconsistent/subjective marking had any impact on your teaching of composing at AS/A level

- Has inconsistent/subjective marking had any impact on your student' experience of composing at AS/A level?

- Some teachers use the phrase 'ticking boxes' when talking about composing at examination level. What is your feeling on the comment?

- Is there anything that can be done to ensure marking is reliable?

- Do you think the examination element of composing allows students to be experiment and be creative

- What do you think the examiners value/look for when marking?

2d: Second focus group interview questions at MEH

2nd Focus Group interview with students

1. Draw the journey you took during composing your examination piece including how you composed, the thoughts you had, when/why things changed, when you enjoyed/did not enjoy it. Describe it.

2. Now that you have finished your piece do you feel proud of what you have done? What did you enjoy about composing it?

3. Did you have a goal/aim when you started the piece? Did you achieve it/did it change?

4. Did you ever have 'composers block' and how did you get out of it?

5. What did you find challenging? Why?

6. Using your score/piece can you give an example of how you overcame the challenges?

7. As a group did you listen to each other's pieces or help each other?

8. Did you feel you had the freedom to explore music you were interested in and compose in the way you wanted to?

9. What do you feel you learnt from composing?

10. What would you have liked to have done differently?

Case Study: City North Academy (2)

Teacher: Aaron Dixon   *Date: 08.02.16*   *Times: 9.00-10.00*
Year 11   *Exam Board: Edexcel*

Overview of lesson:

- Half students do performance, other do composing coursework

- Teacher outlines some aspects of the criteria (e.g. length)

- Log onto logic to finish what they have been working on

- Some students using keyboard attached to computer. Good piano player playing some but not recording. Unfocused and waiting for feedback

- 1 2 1 feedback from the teacher

- Teacher gets around 5 of the 9 students to feedback

Timing:

Time	Task	Notes
9.00am	Log onto computers	Teacher: 'Get logged on guys'. '4 weeks, not a lot if time in reality'. Sense of panic in the room to finish
	Hands out evaluation sheet (see picture).	'Make some notes…can we scribble down some thoughts, doesn't have to be amazing' (reflection). No one does this that I see
9.08	Listens and edits student 1 piece - automation on logic.	
9.17	Student 2	
9.28	Student 3	

9.39	Student 4 (piano student who has been unfocused all lesson)	
9.50	Student 5	

Student Quotes:

'Lets listen to this crap' (about his own work)

KD: where is the music going next? (female student)

Student: I need to end back on the original keys.

KD How do you want it to end, what sort of feel?

Student: Don't know.

KD: Where would you want this piece to be performed?

Student Don't know?

KD How do you want your audience to feel?

Suggested she could reverse the structure (leave 1 by 1) tries it out. Very looped piece of music.

Students come back in from performance practice and listens to student's piece (who didn't see the teacher all lesson): 'It's good. It's like 3 mins long, it's good though.'

Teacher Quotes:

To student 1: 'What you need to do', 'it's lacking melody, it is very chordy, needs some melody.' Plays some examples on the keyboards. Repeat section and plays 'strong melody, around E'. You are in 3/4 which is slightly…'.

'Improvise something. 1 bar, 3 bar melody you can loop.'
'Change of feel but it works'. Listens and comments on what they have done. 'My suggestion is to stop that'. 'You have a bit of melody, change the second note.'
Editing logic file.

'You've got some clashes there.' Analyse chords for student, suggested octaves, experiment and see what works.

'Loose the harpsichord so it sticks with the classical.' Suggests student 'copy and paste' for ABA ternary form. 'Timewise that is 2 mins. You only have a max of 4 mins so aim for bar 50 and develop copy and paste so section A comes back. Nice accomp. A nice string melody over the top'

To Student 2: 'Very film musicy. I'd mark this in dynamics and I don't normally, I don't tend to use dynamics very much, with dance music it is often harmony…but this uses crescendos and contrast. I'd mark this on dynamics.'

'Looking at shortening it. You will have to shorted it, maybe the beginning, bring things over.'

Teacher: '…you change to 12/8 here
Student: 'is the change in dynamics part of the time signature as well?'
Teacher explains what he means.

> Teacher uses a lot of technical terms - do the students know?

Teacher: 'I'm thinking how I'll mark this rather than...I does look like a lot. I could mark it in other ways. It's a little bit, muffly'
Student: 'it's supposed to...'
Teacher: 'yeah but I think we need a clear. It doesn't look a lot. I'll probably mark it on dynamics, and terms and rhythm - I can hear that rubato, intended expressiveness.'

'Get the timing right.'

Student across the room: would it not get marked? I don't think a minute is long enough.
Teacher: I've always aimed for 1.40mins - 1.30mins. I've never sent off work exceeding that time frame. I understand you might want to compose 4 min piece but we have to obey the rules of the exam board.

To student 3: (9.28) 'What is the area of study? Classical. What composer see influenced by? So you got strings....Right if you want my opinion.' Finds the melody and listens again. 'Right erm...the chords are...(looks at the notation on logic). It feels very improvisatory. No repetition. I'm looking for patterns, shape.'

Student: (9.37) 'Do I have to redo it?'

Teacher: I wouldn't re do it, it's a little random, it does stay in one place. **Student**: Should I take that and get rid if this.

Teacher: I wouldn't delete it - you have to be careful of plagiarism. It's the same chords, you have to be careful, like I said there are only so many chords and so many notes. I would start , you want contrast, that is what will get you marks. Don't get rid of it, don't delete it.

The student hadn't been working on the piece until teacher came, just on the piano.

To Student 4: 'So you want to change your chord here, you want to change the basis of the pattern.' Student didn't say anything about changing it.

Teacher plays on keyboard and tells them what he has on chords. Still talking about chord sequence...'music is based on 16 bar phrases and the it can change at that point. You can have a fade out too. That would be the right timing. Loops some bars more to make the length. Some good stuff in this, it's got the fundamentals of dance music, a chord sequence, the appropriate tempo.'

One student wanting to be seen for whole of the lesson and boy speaks up so he goes to him. Promises to start with her next lesson.

Student 5: 'what I would suggest...it's a bit lost. It's not quite quantized, slightly out of time. Can you hear it? The contrast is good.

Student: Explaining and talking a bit more that the other students.

Teacher: We've got the main things.

Student: 'it's 3 mins, is that ok?

Teacher: No far too long. Double the amount. We are up against the time. We need to cut it up a bit.

Teacher at the end of lesson expresses how he can't send off a score as it is logic, 'so we an A4 commentary. Get them to write as they go along on the form. They don't always know what they have done. Sometimes I have to analyse it form them. Their theory is low.'

Considerations/Thoughts:

I chat to one student, classical focus, epic film score intro. Coming up with a new section next as he feels he needs it. Only composes at school. Controlled by time/restrictions.

Not much student chatting or listening (peer support). Teacher leads feedback on telling them what to do.
No one writes notes for the commentary after the teacher said to.

In interviews ask to bring the sheets or about the sheets if they find it useful?

KS5 Survey Telephone Interviews:
LG

Participant: LG (female)
Date: 01-10-15
Length of Interview: 28 minutes
School Type: Private recently turned into academy
School Location: Bristol
Interviewer: Kirsty Devaney (KD)
Key Themes:

- Conflicted
- Subjectivity – Examiner bias, live recordings, vague criteria wording
- High ability getting lower marks – validity?
- Formulaic

Speaker	Content	Coding Analysis	Researcher Comments
KD	I've got a couple of questions linked to the answers you gave in the survey and I've got a couple more general questions to. So in the survey you said that, you are talking about the assessment of a student that was quite weak and composed very formulaic compare to a student that was maybe much more, bit more out there, a bit innovative, the grades didn't seem to add up. Do you want to talk about I little bit more?		
LG	Yes absolutely. So, we have found as time has gone on that exam boards do tend to lean towards the things that are more formulaic. That really gifted student for example he has since, before GCSE was winning competitions and having works performed by kind of national organisations and is passionate about composition. He composes, he has a very distinctive style which is very, very dissonant and very very clever but it isn't, it's always going to be	4.1 5.1 3.1	Validity – example of gifted student

	unified so if he unifies his compositions with his use of dissonances. For example with intervals he would augment things and he's just very very clever and will spend hours kind of digging into the detail. At the first listen anyone who is not very musically educated would go "Oh god that just that sounds like a lot of noise, it is very dissonant, it doesn't have recurring melodies". Whereas at the other extreme you've got a student not passed her grade 5 theory by one mark and that was after she completed the A-level. And compose a very formulaic kind of – right eight bars, starting the tonic key, go to the dominant, and by the end of the eight bars return, put a perfect cadence at the end, modulate to the relative minor, then come back, so it was ternary form, and then do variations. And we were very prescribed so we gave a sheet and said follow these things and we almost felt as teachers at that point, we were almost crossing some kind of line because we are being so prescriptive it doesn't feel like composition any more, it feels like kind of doing technical exercises as prescribed by us. And then in the actual composition result of the student who come out with the formulaic piece actually got an A in composition, which we were staggered by and the student that has been composing and based, pinned is in entire life on like being an innovative young composer has got a C and it just come out we really struggled with that and, this is over year ago now and it still, it covers quite a lot of smaller ones that are very similar. But then what we did in year 13 was saying with this boy, his confidence really took A wobble, it's really shaken him. Composition has always been his thing so this year with the composition we come out we got him to write a script in front of his composition so that, because normally you just handing your school and your recordings, so we asked him to record and to write an introduction to it so by saying i've melodically develop my ideas throughout these parts, you'll see in bar one and bar seven you've got the reoccurring ideas. We try to make it really very explicit how he was meeting each of the criteria and still it came up as a B grade. It's really hard but that's, that's really hard for him and it's really hard for us as well, because I almost feel like it's kind of results and a bit of a loss in confidence because we've been telling him for two years that your fantastic you're the best young composer with ever met and then, and then he is confronted with a low result and the impact of that so.	3.1 4 5 4.2 5 2.2 2.1 3.4 3.4 2.1	Weak student Too much support from teacher? Confidence
KD	Thank you, there's a lot in that and like you said it's kind of extreme example but really shows a lot of issues involved in that as well.		

LG	Yes definitely I think one of the difficulties we find as well, so that like I said that's dramatic but that does seem to be the general trend that students that are really innovative don't perform as well as very very functional. And I do think a lot depends on who is actually marking it because we are increasingly aware that the person that marks the composition could be a, a 20th century specialist who's got a Masters in composition, they can equally be someone who's done a pop music degree and has done a lot of contemporary music, it could be Church organist who teaches in a private boys school. You never know who's going to be at the end marking it and I think sometimes, sometimes students are even taken on to teaching degrees here maybe aren't quite where they should be and you wonder who is marking get some times and if that has any biased as well. I wouldn't have a clue where to start marking something with lots of music technology effects for example. And I love marking choral pieces because I've got a choral background so I think that's one of the dangers you fall into as well if you don't know who you're getting. Formulaic is very, it's just very obvious isn't it? But then it isn't composition any more if it's all going to be formula. I can easily keep ranting. [Laugh]	3.2 3.1 6.2 4.4	Ability Subjectivity & Bias
KD	No, that's fine please rant ahead. Things for me to write about. And again you've put here in question number six about subjects of marking in creative work and a little bit about the criteria, you said that it was wally with words like imagination. Do you want to maybe just explain.		
LG	Yes absolutely. So it's, it must be so difficult to mark composition I do get that and the whole point of composition is that it's meant to be the most creative thing you can do musically and to mark that is incredibly difficult. And if you go to university and study composition and if you put produce something even remotely functional they will walk you out the door and you start again. That's how it is expected at that point. So they call it composition A-level but I think it's almost need to be stop teaching composition and start teaching compositional techniques so that they are using. I mean they do chorales and so on as well, but it's, if it's been marked on kind of been very functional and be in the classical right answer, in teaching composition and start teaching compositional techniques so that they are using, in inverted commas, then that's what we need to teach too. So for things in the, so for example if you look at, if you look at structure so there will be standard structure, it's a clear and proportional structure, that's quite easy to	3.2 3.3	Difficulty of assessing creativity Definition of composing? Composition techniques

	say it's on proportional it's not isn't it? But then you go to things like where it says it has an imaginative structure or it has an imaginative Melody. And I think that comment that, I don't know what an imaginative structure is, does that mean it has lots of sections? Does that mean that it has to have contrast? If you have a piece that is with a really wacky structure well it might not be proportional any more. So it kind of contradicts itself as well and then we've, we've tried to do my best because as a department we really don't want to let our kids down, i've done a lot of marking with other schools and I've gone on all the training courses and so on and so on. With all kind of done them to death. And we mark others so we check on each others and we all have different ideas about what an imaginative Melody is. Really hard because composition should be free, it should be open, it should be, it shouldn't have to be confined by rules but if you're marking it according to your criteria you almost have to do I think. It's really hard I don't know what I would do if I was the exam board really.	1.1 3.3 4.4 3.5	Letting students down
KD	Okay, so you may have touched upon some of these already and I can overlap a bit but I've got here have the inconsistent marking and subjective marking had any impact on your teaching of composition at AS and A-level?		
LG	Yes, we are constantly trying new ways of doing it. So we tried, it's really hard to just try one approach because we don't really know what we are going towards and some years all of our marks, we had a bit of a car crash, we've been, it's not so much the way that we teach it, it's the way that we engage with the students so with the students we are, we are very careful with them is not promise them grades so we no longer will say to students as part of their review this is. Normally you would give them a feedback sheet along for the course and you say this is a seven, this is an eight, this is the six, this is, we think this is a B. What we are doing now is we are being very much we think it's going to be this, we do have to see if it holds. We don't want to worry them, we have enough worries without worrying young teenagers they are stressed enough as it is, we don't want to say we don't have a clue sometimes. But we are quite open and we say we think it's going off at this. And we don't do, we do a lot of **assessment for learning** so you give them a sheet and say it's this mark, it's this mark, it's this mark that I do that at GCSE and performance. You've got a six there, and the seven there-do this to get an eight do this to get a seven, do this to get a six. I didn't give really explicit feedback.	2.1 2 1.1 / 2.3	Practice changed Giving feedback Student pressure Assessment for learning?

	Where is composition it's more we think this is in between the 30 to 35 mark it mean break down like this. So it's not quite as precise and students are very driven by, by very good feedback. So a performance if I say it's 36, no it's 36 and if you want 40 do that do that, do that. They will go away, the good ones will go away and I will do that so it's the manner in which we feedback as opposed to what we teach I think.		
KD	And sort of related to that, you may have answered it, has the subject of marking had an impact on the student's experience of composing at AS and a level?		
LG	Yes, yes. So some are just, I think students are, the thing about working with young people is that they are creative. And that's when it's at its best the subject, when there isn't a right answer, where they can just be expressive. But I think that some students do find it very frustrating so for example with got one student who is a passionate just musician. A Very, very gifted, playing in the National Jazz Orchestra having lessons with really good people, like top of his game already and he wants to go on and study music further but even, where saying to him in his compositions you need to stop rambling and you need to have coherence. You need to cook that improvisation and you need to have proportional sections. And he looks at you as if what do you mean this is Jazz, I'm not a jazz specialist, he looks at me as if you don't know what you're talking about. And I think he feels like I'm really stifling him and I try really hard to say you can compose what you want for pleasure but when you're composing for an exam board this is what you need to do. And I feel awful saying that because I feel like I'm really clipping their wings really and as I said this exceptional student I mean he's just, I just feel like he's been let down by the whole thing. He wanted to be go on and be a professional composer and he's now, and he's decided, despite being really having his confidence knocked, he is going to go for it and applied to do a composing, applied to the Royal Northern to do a contemporary music course there and I'm going to write him an amazing reference saying how good years and I will be quite explicit and say look the stuff he is writing it so because engage. I fully recommend him don't look at his GCSE grade. I have heard rumours actually from like when I talk to people like on Twitter and any other social media teachers, I have heard rumours that actually universities do you take composition grades with a pinch of salt. In terms of composition and I do try and even though that's more sort of hearsay I do try and say to students that anyone that	3.2 5.1 5.2 5.1 4.4 5.1 4.4 2.1 5.2	Nature of creativity Validity / conflict Applications at Uni Purpose of A level? A level the gold standard? The key to uni?

	achieves in a composition A-level doesn't necessarily mean anything really. So I think universities have cottoned on which is, which is something at least I hope.		
KD	Yeah, from my experience as well I've been at Birmingham and another places yeah, you sending your pieces that you want but they are quite clued up about the assessment.		
LG	Yeah, what's what. Exactly. Yet no absolutely. It feels like in terms of students, it does tend to work with our needier students, our weaker students, I think they have a better experience you know – compose a melody, eight bars, modulate here, do this, do you fat, do the other. But I do think I will most creative student to do. They don't **enjoy** composition at this level now because they are, they are being hemmed in all the time by criteria.	4.1 4.4	Low ability students
KD	Great, my next question statement really is when I've been talking to teachers about this area some teachers of use the word ticking boxes when talking about but the composing. How do you feel about that comment?		
LG	Yeah, I think I've used it many times it is. Like I said do you have to tick the "structure box", you have to tick the "melody box". And we do teach to that comment we say to students you know you need to improve this aspect to get the marks say on this aspect. I going to a practice room with a child composition and I say let's listen to it, let's mark it, let's see what you need to improve, and it is all the time I'm ticking - improve the structure, improve the melody, I'm not listening to it holistically as a piece of music and giving real musical critique. I am looking at those books says that they get marked down and taking them. But as I said those are still quite subjective. But if anyone knows what an imaginative structure as I would love to know.	3.3	
KD	Do you think the examination element of composing allow students to experiment to be creative?		
LG	I think to a point as long as it's within a certain framework. I still think it needs to fit the brief, it still needs to be functional, whatever functional is, but I don't think there is room to be really innovative in my experience. I do know one teacher, I've got a good friend who had 40 student last year and that was really a, that was quite innovative that was a theme and variations. So it still had, it still underpinned. It was very, loads of instrumental techniques, really use the instruments but it	4.1 3.2	Creativity - taking a risk

	was still a theme and variations, it was still largely diatonic so I think, I think many teachers she would speak to would find it would, they would be quite cautious. It's just safer. I've got a student this year and I'm **debating**, the jazz musician, and he just said shall I just write a functional classical piece because I can do that and if that's going to get me the marks I'll jump through the hoops to get the marks. And I really don't know what to say. A part of me thinks, well yeah I think you might have to do, but it's a bit, it's a bit **soul destroying** that.	4.1 4.4	Conflict
KD	Is it sort of that certain compositional styles are a little safer?		
LG	Yeah, I would say absolutely. So theme and variations, things in sonata form and so on. Things like songs for voice and piano or string quartet. Like really functional ensembles seem to be the best.	3.1.1	Styles/structures
KD	Thank you that's really useful and not just in terms of genre like jazz, pop, rock, it's actually sort of the specifics light theme of variation and like that. That's really useful. My last question is just come out if you in a dream world and you could design the assessment what would you like to see in the assessment for composition?		
LG	Erm, I think it would help if, if it was. That so difficult that's a really good question. I think having really clear terms of what is needed and maybe some **examplas** as well. So saying you know, having this structure which would be something like this or even having a bank of compositions that we know are certain grades in lots of different styles as well. So here is a choral piece that's got full marks, is the colour piece that's got a C in his one that got an E and an explanation as to why. I think the criteria is woolly but I think I think it can work I just, I have less faith in the people marking it than the criteria. I think. I think. And it's about, I'd like to see it completely and saying all students have to do a theme and variations or all students are given, I don't know, like a four bar phrase and then what can you do with that and then having that marked on creativity and use of tonality, whatever it will be, it would be quite exciting. Or having the teachers mark the work because we do it GCSE and we do the performance at A-level, so we mark the work. I wouldn't mind writing a paragraph justify each mark just to explain and then have that moderated. I think with things like the Sibelius as well quite often students will write something on Sibelius, especially vocal pieces and they will sound horrendous, and if we don't provide a live one, then	4.1 3.1.1 3.3 / 3.1 4.1 3.4 3.1.2	Different styles Increasing reliability – may not be TTT Teachers to mark the compositions

	obviously that doesn't translate as well. I think as teachers we live with these pieces for an entire year, we know how these pieces have evolved, we know what the point of them is, and with an examiner how long are they listening to 2 or three times. So I think in an ideal world I'd like to see teachers marking them and then external moderators moderating our marks against each other. But much more careful use of words. Yeah even the ranking system or something, a mark out of eight for this, one would be this 2 to would-be this, three would be that, and then a best fit. I think.	3.4 6.2 3.3	
KD	And you said just briefly about the Sibelius sounds, the vocal sounds. Have you found that do you think that might impact the examiners obviously because they met on the listen to that recording?		
LG	Well the party line for the exam board is it doesn't effect anything, however as a musician I think if you had something in that is, you know soprano alto tenor bass, with that hideous voice sound on Sibelius, I can't see how that would give the best impression of the work. So what we have done in ours, just because it's been so, so really unsure about composition marks and being quite desperate to do everything we can come at the last two years we've recorded both the Sibelius and live recordings of everything, apart from a couple of orchestral pieces that were just impossible. And even if they're not, so a student wrote a piece for choir and piano and on Sibelius it sounded fine but I got the School chamber choir to sing it with the pianist. It was littered with mistakes but at least we could go well here it is live and here it is, you just know you're giving it the best chance before it starts. The more we can do to get confident I think the better so we just don't take any risks now. With anything.	3.1.2 1.1 2.2	Bias Access Risk
KD	It sounds as if you're doing as much as you possibly can to help your students through it.		
LG	I hope so, it's just so important to them I just don't want to let them down.	1.1	Letting students down
KD	That's all the questions I have now is there anything else you want to talk about or something as I maybe have covered or missed?		
LG	No, I wonder, I'm thinking about your question about in an ideal world what with the assessment look like. It does feel sometimes like jumping in that year 12 is just a huge	4.1	Washback

	leap into the unknown and I wonder if there's a way that if I could rule the music education world, if you could almost thread assessment right the way through so it kind of goes from key stage four to key stage five, because in GCSE it seems to be right, it seems to work. On my part anyway, again we market and its externally moderated but students are genuinely achieving exactly what they should be achieving, what they think they are going to achieve, and the criteria is a lot clearer so maybe if there was more of a, arrive at year 12, half the students have only just dragged through GCSE, you've got some but you've got "I'm A-level I'm going to compose like an A-level student," and it's a bit of a car crash, and there are some that are already university standard so it will be quite nice if there was a way of kind of threading it especially. Obviously the A-level is going to 2 years now so that may make a bit more of a difference but. Who knows.	5.2	Uni standard students
	END OF INTERVIEW		

Appendix 5: Coding stages – themes

KS5 Telephone Interviews: Stage 1 coding	Stage 2 coding
1 Specific examples of inconsistent marking	Effect of inconsistent Marking
2 Formulaic apporaches - more reliable	TTT
3 Creativity - a risk	Subjectivity
4 High ability students doing well outside of school (validity)	Validity
5 Use of dissonance	Subjectivity
6 Whos composition is it?	TTT
7 Negative influence of marking on student	Effect of inconsistent Marking
8 Student confidence	Effect of inconsistent Marking
9 Subjectivity of examiner	Subjectivity
10 Bias in styles of music	Subjectivity
11 Difficulties of assessing creativity / composing	Subjectivity
12 Links with university/further study	Validity
13 Subjectivie terms "imaginative"	Subjectivity
14 Not letting students down	Pressure
15 Assessment and feedback based on exam marks	TTT
16 Pressure on the students	Pressure
17 Home vs. school composing	Validity
18 Nature of creativity	Subjectivity
19 Students being limited/stifled	Effect of TTT & incons
20 Faith in examiners	Subjectivity / Trans
21 Training of examiners	Transparency
22 vague critera	Subjectivity
23 Exampar scores needed	Subjectivity
24 Teachers to mark students' compositions (like GCSE)	Subjectivity
25 Bias in live recording	Subjectivity
26 risk taking	Subjectivity
27 KS4 - KS5 jump	TTT / Pressure
28 Washback	TTT / Pressure
29 Accountability	Pressure
30 High-stakes of the examination - implications	Pressure
31 Emotion/stress of unpredicatble marking	Effect of inconsistent Marking
32 Downward spiral effect - TTT	TTT
33 "winning recipe"	TTT
34 Assessing the process of composing	Validity
35 School processes - not educated about creativity	Pressure
36 Enjoyment	Validity
37 Ownership of the composition	TTT
38 Time constraints - pressures	Pressure
39 Students relient on being told	TTT
40 composition = sensitive subject matter	Validity
41 Independent school - paying for grades (pressure)	Pressure
42 Intentionality of the students	Subjectivity
43 Made to go on training courses	Pressure

Stage 3 coding

Pressure	High stakes, accountability, lack of time, risk of job, school pressure/targets
Effect of inconsistent marking	Student and teacher confidence, stress, turn students off for life - linked with pressur/high stakes e
Subjectivity	Bias from examiner, genre, live performances, assessing creativity, vague criteria wording, intenionality of the students, creativty a risk, teachers to mark the compositions
TTT	More reliable, ownership, cheating, out-guessing examiner (linked to Subjectivity), "winning recipe", replication, limiting creativity
Validity	Out of school composing, links to uni and Conservatoires, purpose of GCSE, ownership/enjoyment
Transparency	Training of examiners, remarking costs,

1. Pressure
- 1.1 High stakes
- 1.2 Accontability
- 1.3 Time
- 1.4 Job at risk

2. Effect of inconsistent marking
- 2.1 Student confidence
- 2.2 Teacher confidence
- 2.3 Stress

3. Subjectivity
- 3.1 Bias from examiner
  - 3.1.1 Bias in genre/style — Creativity a risk/?
  - 3.1.2 Bias towards live performances
- 3.2 Assessing creativity / composing (difficulties)
- 3.3 Vague criteria
- 3.4 Intention of students unknown to examiner
- 3.5 Outguessing the examiner

4. TTT
- 4.1 Increase reliability
- 4.2 Question ownership
- 4.3 Replication — Pastiche??
- 4.4 Limits creativity
- 4.5 for lower ability students

5. Validity
- 5.1 Out of school composing
- 5.2 Further education

6. Transparency
- 6.1 Lack of transparency

Appendix 6: Example of reflective diary entry

I have now completed one full interview with a teacher and done a number of observations.

Certain aspects have arisen such as:

1) what do I do when a student asks me a question, how in the background do I appear
2) what do I do when some students are off task and distracting each other? As a teacher my instinct is to try and get them back on task.
3) what am I trying to get from the students? I am there to understand their process and their enjoyment. Will They be honest with me?
4) what am I observing in the class. Do I need to observe the same aspects in each school?
5) if these are case studies then is it ok to vary what I look at and ask?
6) how much do I go off the structured interview and respond to what they have said.
7) tried repeating what they have said to then, in a bit of a different way to ensure I have not misunderstood.
8) do I every offer my opinion or thoughts?

With the interview with SH there are occasionally distractions such as other teachers walking into the room, asking questions. SH does not seemed phased by this and is very able to continue exactly where she stopped. This maybe because she is a teacher and used to distractions.

I had to do SH interview in two parts due to time constrictions. 2 weeks apart. I transcribed the interview through the week and gave her a quick recall of what we talked about in session 1.

Some contradictory statements in the second interview. E.g. She said she did not get a lot of support of composition teaching and in conferences she tends to avoid the composition workshops. When asked about giving advice to a new teacher, she said to get as much experience and training as possible.

She suggested I come back in 6 months to discuss certain questions to see if things have changed or she has a clearer idea how to answer it. Such as 7c - do you think the assessment requirements accurately reflect the quality of a piece of music?

Some questions on the interview were covered by earlier questions.

One question Sarah wasn't sure about what 'real composing practice was'. I wanted to offer my opinion but decided to hold back.

Appendix 7: Ethical approval

BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

Date: 8th October 2014

Dear Kirsty Devaney ,

Thank you for submitting an application for Ethical Approval to the ELSS Faculty Research Ethics Committee. This letter is to confirm that your application has been approved as a Category B research proposal. The Chair has requested that copies of separate information and consent sheets for each of the different types of participants to be sent to for the committee to review.

Yours sincerely,

Professor John Clibbens
Chair of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 8: Informed consent

8a: Information letter for schools

Dear Sir or Madam:
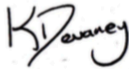
I am a PhD student at Birmingham City University under the supervision of Professor Martin Fautley and Professor Janet Hoskyns. My research will involve looking at composition in GCSE and A Level music lessons. I have been in contact with the head of music regarding the research and would like to use your school as a case study. All pupils, teachers and the school will remain anonymous throughout the report and the study will involve approximately 6 visits for observations and interviews with students and the head of music.

If you are happy for the research to go ahead at your school I will require a signed letter of consent on school headed paper.

If you would like more information on the research please ring me on 07977175692 or via email: kirstydevaney@gmail.com

Thank you for your time,

Kirsty Devaney

8b: Informed consent form for schools

Kirsty Devaney PhD Research - Birmingham City University

Purpose of the Study:
This is a study into composing at upper secondary school music lessons (GCSE, BTEC and A Level). The study is being conducted by Kirsty Devaney as part of her PhD research at Birmingham City University under the supervision of Professor Martin Fautley and Dr Janet Hoskyns. The purpose of this study is to examine the issues around the teaching and learning of composing and produce recommendations to aid the development of young musicians and composers in a school setting.

Process:
Six schools involved in providing the primary data and each school will form a case study on composing in the classroom. Interviews will be undertaken with Heads of Department approximately twice, and interviews with a focus group of GCSE, A level and/or BTEC music students will also take place in each school approximately twice ideally toward the beginning of the academic year and towards the end of their composing module. A smaller number of observations of the composing taking place in lessons will take place (approximately two in each school). Data collection will take place between September 2014 – July 2016.

Alongside the school case studies, interviews with 5 composer-educators will be conducted alongside a UK national survey for music teachers teaching composition in school.

Confidentiality:
All information disclosed during the course of the research will be treated as confidential. All participants and participating schools will be anonymous in the report which will use a coding system to protect the identities of individuals and organisations. All transcribed interviews with teachers and composer-educators will be sent to the participant to check and edit to ensure no misrepresentation. Students in the focus group will be given an overview of the issues raised at the end of the interview.

Data will comply with the 1998 Data Protection Act to protect confidentiality. Participants will be informed as to how the data is being used and can have access to the information about them. Data will be destroyed on completion of the research.

If sensitive information is disclosed by a student during the course of the study and requires legal action, confidentiality may be affected in order to protect the participant.

Right to withdraw:
All participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time. Participants are not obliged to answer all questions or continue an interview right to the end.

How the findings will be used:
The results of the study will be primarily used for the research and completion of a PhD thesis by Kirsty Devaney. It is possible that parts of the thesis may be used in other publications or academic journals. If these are published schools will be informed. Schools will be informed of the outcomes of the research upon completion and will have access to any reports or other publications arising from their participation.

Contact information:
If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact Kirsty Devaney via email kirstydevaney@gmail.com

Please sign to say that you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate in this research, with the knowledge that you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

8c: Online informed consent information

1 By clicking on the 'agree' button you consent that: 1) Have read the above information and agree to the terms 2) You agree to participate and understand you can withdraw at any point 3) You are/were a secondary school music teacher and have experience of teaching composing at Key Stage 4

Appendix 9: Composing briefs and criteria

9a: Edexcel GCSE music specification (2012)

Area of Study 1	Area of Study 2	Area of Study 3	Area of Study 4
Western classical music 1600-1899	Music in the 20th century	Popular music in context	World music
Set works			
G F Handel: Chorus: And The Glory of The Lord from Messiah, HWV 56	*A Schoenberg*: Peripetie from Five Orchestral Pieces, Op. 16	*M Davis*: All Blues from the album Kind of Blue	*Capercaillie*: Chuir M'Athair Mise Dhan Taigh Charraideach (Skye Waulking Song) from the album Nàdurra
*W A Mozart:*1st Movement from Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550	*L Bernstein*: Something's Coming from West Side Story	*J Buckley*: Grace from the album Grace	Rag Desh Suggested listening: • *A Shankar*: Rag Desh from the album Live at Carnegie Hall • *S D Dhandhada and H Dhandhada*: Rag Desh from the album Mewar Re Mira • *B Wertheimer and S Gorn*: Rag Desh Parts 1-3 from the album Priyagitah: The Nightingale
F Chopin: Prelude No 15 in D flat major, Op. 28	*S Reich*: 3rd Movement (fast) from Electric Counterpoint	*Moby*: Why Does My Heart Feel So Bad? from the album Play	*Koko*: Yiri

9b: Edexcel AS unit 2 brief (2015)

Area of Study 1: Instrumental Music

Topic 1: Composing expressively
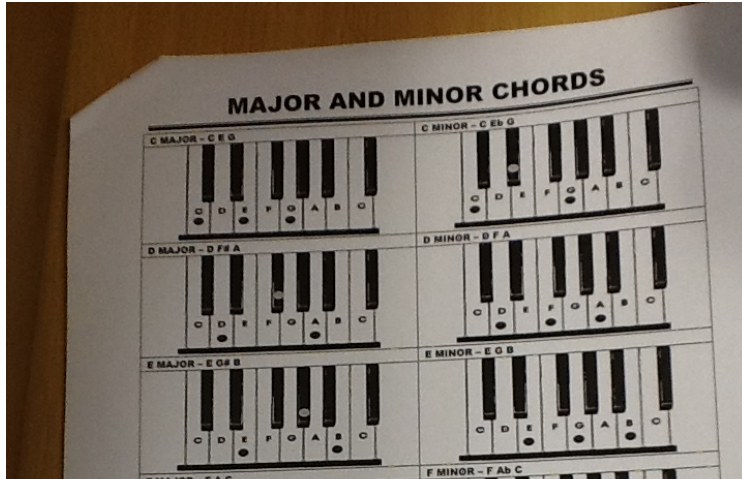
Composition brief 1:

Compose a piece suggested by the title *Darkness into Light*.

• The piece may be in any style

• Choose **instrumental** timbres and textures to create atmosphere, alongside other musical elements such as harmony, melody and rhythm

• Use one or more instruments, acoustic and/or amplified and/or synthesised.

(40)

422

Appendix 10: School composing hand-outs and worksheets

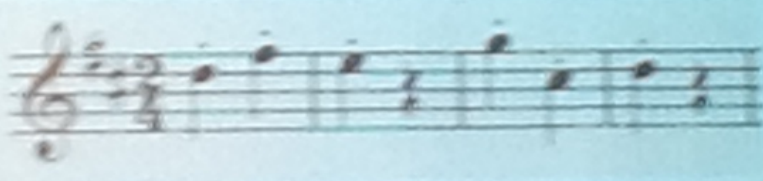**10a: NCA chords handout**

10b: MEH Composer's Notebook handout

10c: CMC melody writing task

Appendix 11: KS4 survey teacher information

11a: School types

2 What best describes the school you currently teach at?

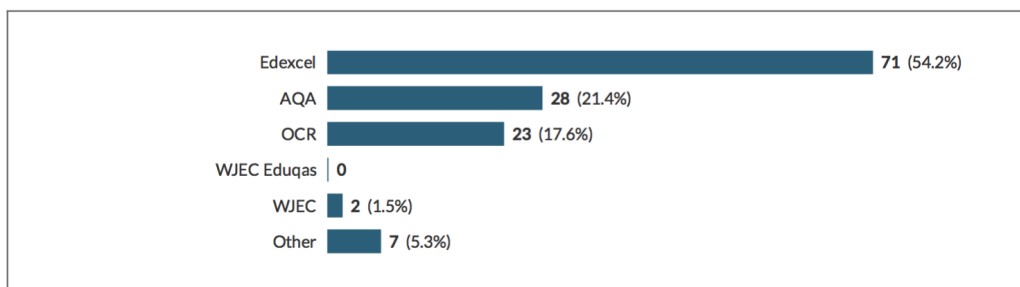| School type	Count
State comprehensive	35 (31.3%)
Academy	49 (43.8%)
Independent	11 (9.8%)
Free School	1 (0.9%)
Grammar	7 (6.3%)
Other	9 (8%)
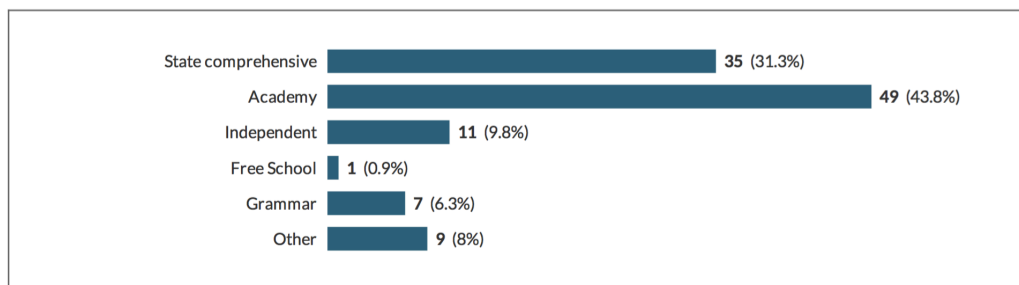
11b: Qualifications taught

3 What music qualification(s) do you teach in your school? (select all that apply)

Qualification	Count
BTEC	21 (6.8%)
GCSE	102 (33.1%)
AS-level	64 (20.8%)
A2-level	62 (20.1%)
GCSE music technology	4 (1.3%)
AS-level music technology	21 (6.8%)
A2-level music technology	22 (7.1%)
Other	12 (3.9%)
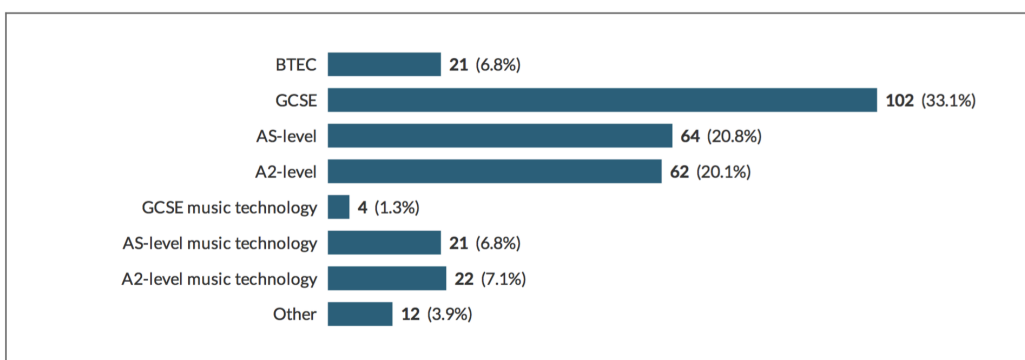
11c: Examination boards taught

4 What exam board(s) do you currently use for Key Stage 4? (select all that apply)

Exam board	Count
Edexcel	71 (54.2%)
AQA	28 (21.4%)
OCR	23 (17.6%)
WJEC Eduqas	0
WJEC	2 (1.5%)
Other	7 (5.3%)

425

Appendix 12: List of publications and conferences presentations

Date	Conference	Presentation
Jun-14	Bristol University: Research in Education - Across Boundaries	Paper
Dec-14	Birmingham City University: RESCON	Poster – 2nd place prize
Apr-15	Research in Music Education (RIME) 2015 conference	Poster
Nov-15	Incorporated Society of Musicians	Article: *Music A level composing - research into teacher attitudes*
Dec-15	British Academy of Songwriters, Composers, and Authors Magazine 'The Works'	Article: *'Clipping their wings' - How inconsistent marking of composing at AS and A-level impacts teachers' jobs, and limits students' creativity.*
Mar-16	European Association for Music in Schools (EAS) conference	Paper
Jul-16	International Society for Music Education (ISME) World Conference on Music Education	Paper and published article
Jul-16	Birmingham City University: CSPACE Education Conference	Paper and poster
Sep-16	British Education Research Association (BERA) Annual Conference 2016	Paper - Winner of the Anna Craft Award for Research into Creativity in Education and shortlisted for BERA Early Career Researcher Presentation Award 2016.
Apr-17	Research in Music Education (RIME) 2017 conference	Paper
Apr-17	International Symposium on a in Music Education (ISAME): Context Matters	Paper and Poster Paper published as part of selected papers (in production)
May-17	Listen Imagine Compose for Teachers	Paper
Jun-17	Birmingham City University: CSPACE Education Conference	Paper

Music A level Assessment of Composing – Research into teacher attitudes

Kirsty Devaney and Martin Fautley Birmingham City University

Executive Summary

This paper reports on and discusses the results of a nationwide survey of secondary school music teachers' experiences in the assessment of composing in UK A-level music examinations. Data were collected through an online survey in May 2015 and 9 follow-up telephone interviews. The nationwide survey garnered 71 responses from teachers with experience of A-level music exams across a variety of state and independent school contexts.

This paper reports that the majority of music teachers have experienced inconsistent external examination marking, and, as a consequence, do not feel confident to accurately predict student grades. It also found that teachers feel external examination assessment requirements are not clear, and that many schools send compositions back for remarking after results are in. Follow-up interviews affirm that inconsistent marking has a direct impact on how composing is taught at A-level. Secondary school music teachers face increasing pressure to fulfil requirements set by examination criteria, but also wish to give their students a fulfilling creative musical experience. Past examiners of A-level composition who responded to the survey reported a lack of confidence in the system and their training. The results bring into question the subjectivity of assessment in this aspect of the music examination and the place of composing and creativity in A-level assessment.

These results come at a time when governmental focus on 'rigorous and demanding' examinations in the arts, and the introduction of the EBacc, are putting an increased strain on classroom music teachers.

Survey and Discussion

The survey began by asking the question "Have you ever been surprised by an examination grade for any of your pupils for composition at AS or A Level?". The

results are quite overwhelming:

Figure 1:

Yes	64 (90.1%)
No	3 (4.2%)
Maybe	4 (5.6%)

Over 90% of responding teachers say that this has been the case. In assessment terms this does beg questions as to issues of validity, and, importantly, reliability of this assessment.

Teachers were given a free-text opportunity to expand on any surprises that they had with A-level composing grades. The 'top 10' results of this are shown in figure 2.

Figure 2
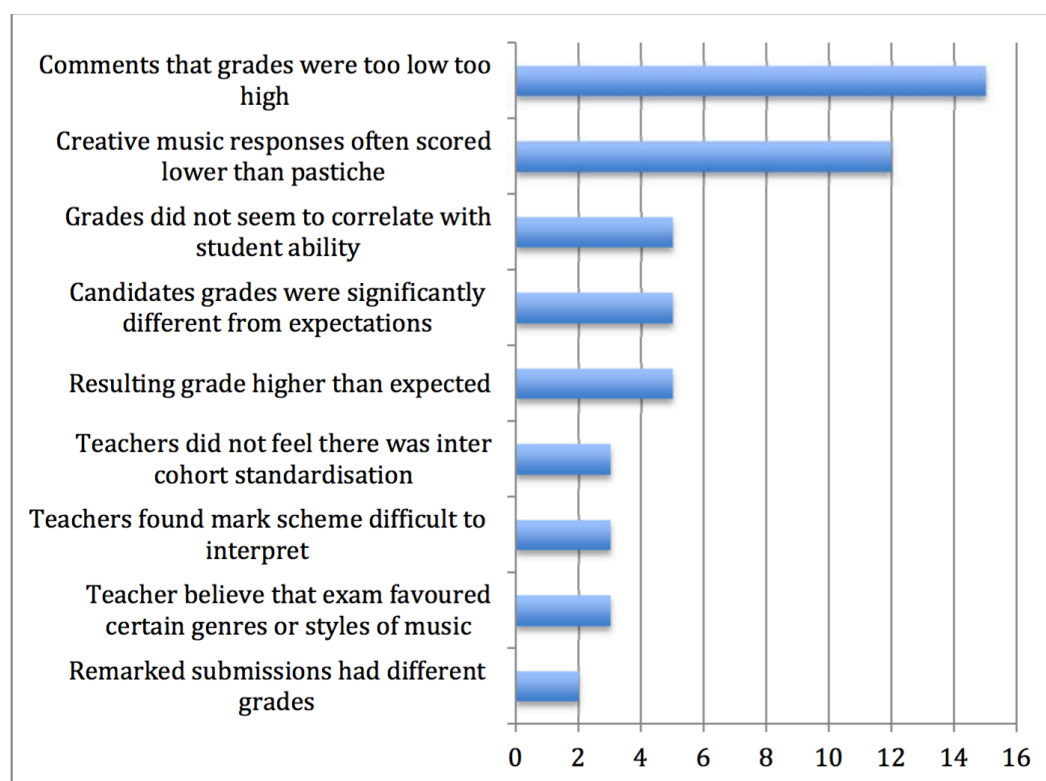
A number of the comments made by teachers here are most revealing. Here is a representative selection:

"Individual voice amongst the best students seems to go unrecognised. Examiners are confident dealing with a mixture of the banal and pastiche."

"I have had a surprise on several occasions. The most memorable are a very weak student who composed a very formulaic piece getting an A with an estimate of a hopeful D. The same year an outstanding and innovative composition from a student who had won national youth composition awards got a D."

"Every year there is a lack of consistency. We never know where we stand"

"3 compositions were submitted for AS from 3 students. 2 I expected to gain near full marks and one around a C. One gained a C, one an E and one a U. As a trained composer I feel I really understand this area of the course well and could not comprehend the grading."

"Mark was significantly lower than I had expected. The student, I felt, had real flair and talent in composition, and this was not recognised. I had the work remarked, and the mark went up significantly."

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A-level music marking 'lottery' stops young composers getting top grades, study warns

Academics find teachers have little confidence in 'unreliable' external marking of compositions at AS- and A-level

Sarah Cassidy Education Correspondent | Friday 25 December 2015 18:48 GMT | 💬 1   comment

Young composers are missing out on top A-level grades because "inconsistent and unreliable" marking of music assessments is a "lottery", researchers from Birmingham City University have warned.

Music teachers have little confidence in the external marking of sixth-formers' own compositions at both AS- and A-level, with many claiming that grading is inconsistent and unreliable, academics from the university's School of Education found.

The composition element of A-level music typically makes up 30 per cent of the overall grade, meaning inaccurate marking could have a significant impact on a student's final grade and could cost them their university place.

Almost three-quarters (74 per cent) of teachers interviewed said they did not believe results from exam boards were consistent, while two-thirds (66 per cent) said they felt assessment requirements were unclear, leaving some lacking confidence in predicting students' grades.

READ MORE

Campaign forces A-level music syllabus to include female composers

One teacher said she had been forced to appeal as the initial mark had been so poor. She said: "The student, I felt, had real flair and talent in composition, and this was not recognised. I had the work re-marked and the mark went up significantly."

STORIES

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The Telegraph Equity

Professor Martin Fautley, a professor of education at Birmingham City University, said: "The findings from the research are concerning and questions need to be asked about the way composing is externally assessed."

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