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UNSETTLING 'NECESSITIES'

A Poststructural Analysis Of Curricular Policy And Its Implementation In State Secondary

Level Music Education In Malta

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<u>Abstract</u>

This research project has grown from my professional concern to grapple with the 'necessities' through which curricular policy and music education operate. As a Maltese citizen whose personal and professional identity is deeply intertwined with the institutional practice of music education, I take its curricular context as the site of analysis. Existing scholarship pertaining to the Maltese context takes policy as a taken-for-granted framework for speaking about and researching music education. As a result, there emerges a lack of analytic concern on two fronts: how the 'necessary' changes proposed regulate possibilities for the curricular practice of music education, and how taken-for-granted assumptions about music and music education shape acts of implementation. In an attempt to unsettle the assumptions that structure existing research practices and address resulting analytic lacunae, I first direct my focus to the concept of policy as a diverse and tension-laden landscape of practice. Drawing primarily on the work of Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010) and Michel Foucault, I evaluate policy through three different perspectives. I then propose the 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' (Bacchi 2009) and 'Poststructural Interview Analysis' (Bacchi and Bonham 2016) frameworks as useful apparatus for the analysis of its proposals and effects, and I discuss how these have been adopted and applied within this research project.

The outcomes of my analysis are presented in four sections. In the first section, I put forward my analysis of the 'Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' (2015), which constitutes the latest published curricular policy document relating to music education in Malta. This serves as a useful text for analysing the *'necessary changes'* proposed by the current National Curriculum Framework and their *'rationalised'* implications for music education. In the second section, the focus of my analysis shifts to the corresponding syllabus for the end-of-cycle assessment of music (Secondary Education Certificate) as a site of

implementation at secondary level. In section three, I bring together the outcomes of each analysis and make use of interview transcripts to discuss the effects which these two sets of proposals carry on 'educators' and 'learners'. The final section draws on marginalised perspectives to unsettle the 'necessity' of these proposals and emphasise their inadequacy in light of the discussed effects. I conclude with a set of reflections and recommendations for further research.

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List of Abbreviations

EU: European Union

EGPA: Music: Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment, Music

FESM: Framework for the Education Strategy of Malta 2014-2024

LLE: Lifelong Education

LLL: Lifelong Learning

LO: Learning Outcomes

LOF: Learning Outcomes Framework

MATSEC: Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate

NCF: National Curriculum Framework

NPM: New Public Management

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PIA: Poststructural Interview Analysis

RfAF: Respect for All Framework

SEC: Secondary Education Certificate

SEC:Music: SEC Syllabus for Music

SLO: Subject Learning Outcome

UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WPR: What's the Problem Represented to Be?

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Chapter 1: Defining My Concern for 'Necessities'

This research project presents and addresses an analytic concern for the 'necessities' that pervade the conceptual and analytic landscape within which curricular policy and music education exist and interact. The term 'necessities' here refers to proposals that presuppose something to be 'necessary'. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the term 'necessary' describes things as *'absolutely needed'*, *'of an inevitable nature'*, or *'determined or produced by the previous condition of things'* ('Necessary' 2024). The term's use hence implies that what it seeks to describe is assumed to hold a particular exigency within a given context of practice or a specific form that is indisputable and that is shaped either by its internal qualities or by the external conditions within which it exists. By presenting things as requisite, inevitable, or pre-determined, proposals operationalise presuppositions about the form and function of that which they seek to represent as necessary; what it has been, what it is, and what it ought to be. Proposals which conceal and rule out the possibility that things could be otherwise, encourage people to assume them as taken-for-granted foundations for their thinking. Furthermore, by eliminating conceptual and analytic space for scrutinising and contesting these foundations, 'necessity' contributes to the ossification of established practices, and the further marginalisation of alternative possibilities.

This research project shall address an analytic concern for two categories of 'necessities'. The first relates to assumptions and presuppositions relating to the form and function of music education, while the second relates to taken-for-granted understandings of governmental policy that function to define and describe its proposals and practices as 'necessary'. These two categories form the main focal point of this research project because they have each played a significant role in the ways by which I, as a music learner, performer, educator and researcher, have been able to make sense of my field of practice. The curricular and extracurricular educational experiences I was afforded across my formal education have

had a formative impact on the ways by which I have and continue to know, value, and practice music, education, and research, as well as my subjective position within them. The 'necessities' that characterise the analytic and conceptual landscapes that shape music education in Malta, my native 'home', have therefore held a strong impact on my personal and professional identity. Owing to my longstanding and sustained relationship with its educational field of practice, the aforementioned analytic concerns are elaborated primarily in relation to the Maltese curricular context. It is important to note that, while the necessities that shape this national context hold a unique specificity, they are also characterised by frameworks of assumptions that hold complex relationships to contexts of practice outside this nation-state. Thus, while my analysis shall be specifically linked to Malta, its outcomes hold implications that similarly transcend its national boundaries.

My relationship with those necessities that have occupied a formative role in the development of my identity has evolved in response to various significant encounters. By enabling me to make sense of my field of practice in alternative ways, these encounters have led me to question and unsettle the absolute, requisite, inevitable, or pre-determined properties of that which I had been led to assume as necessary. As a result, the 'necessities' that had previously formed the normative foundations for my routine practices became a conceptual and analytic concern that I sought to question actively. This research project presents a significant part of this process, and can therefore be understood as a direct response to these encounters. Before I explain how I have sought to question these 'necessities', it is important to shed further light on what they are and how they became concerns. In the following section, I shall present two sets of significant encounters that have played a particularly salient role in unsettling 'necessities', and discuss how they have shaped the analytic perspective employed within this research project. I shall conclude with an

outline of the chapters that follow and how they shall elaborate on, and address, my analytic concerns.

1.1 Defining How My Concern Emerged

My identity as a musician was initially cultivated within a limited set of curricular experiences across primary and secondary schooling, as well as a state-funded extracurricular programme of music education that I attended twice a week after school. Across both educational contexts, music teaching and learning was exclusively focused on music theory, harmony, and composition, as well as instrumental technique and performance. These practices operationalised a framework of assumptions derived from 'western classical' music that define what music is, how it is done, and how it ought to be taught and learned. These assumptions formed the normative conceptual framework through which I was encouraged to make sense of music. Following several years of post-secondary, undergraduate, and post-graduate education, I formalised my relationship with music as an instrumental musician specialising in classical and contemporary performance.

The contingent nature of what I had assumed music to be 'necessary' only became evident to me as a result of a set of encounters with traditions of musical practice other than my own. While undertaking my postgraduate degree, I was invited to participate in three intercultural music-making residencies within which I was afforded the opportunity to collaborate with various groups of musicians situated within different musical traditions and cultures of practice. The purpose of these residencies was to collectively devise and perform music that reflected the unique confluence of musical perspectives present in the room. These experiences were significant because they cultivated space for participants to share and explore different, and at times conflicting, ways of understanding, making sense of, and doing music. As a result of engaging with music through lenses other than those I held to be

'true', the 'necessities' I have assigned to music and music education ceased to be self-evident, obvious, and uncontentious. In response, I sought to engage reflectively and analytically with the assumptions that structured my day-to-day practices, as well as the values and beliefs they operationalised. These encounters therefore proved to be an important incubator for my emerging identity as a researcher.

As a central part of this process of self-inquiry, I sought to revisit my formative education to better understand how it has shaped the taken-for-granted ways by which I have come to make sense of music and music education. This process yielded two primary outcomes. Firstly, while I sustained my professional identity and practice as an instrumental musician within 'western classical' traditions of practice, I actively sought other ways of knowing music. By doing so, I pursued conceptual spaces that enabled me to reconsider what, how and why I 'do' music in new and productive ways. This has also been a particularly formative process for my emerging identity as an educator, leading me to carefully consider the 'necessities' I encourage learners to engage with.

Secondly, this process cultivated a profound concern for the 'necessities' that pervade existing music education practices in Malta and the analytic landscapes within which they are researched and analysed. Borg's (2014) undergraduate dissertation represents one of the few forms of local research which engages critically with Maltese music education curricula. The author points out that 'western classical' music forms the taken-for-granted basis for academic curricula across Maltese schools, sixth forms, and higher education institutions. These curricula, argues the author, promote 'elitist' educational practices which eliminate space for considering alternative conceptualisations of music and music education. Despite the local field of music education research being populated by end-of-study dissertations written by music education candidates, Borg's sociological study is one of the very few pieces of local research that adopts a critical perspective towards these normative

foundations. The significance of this work is further highlighted by the fact that the author is situated primarily within the academic field of sociology rather than music education, indicating that the 'necessities' proffered within 'western classical' music may hold a strong position within the institutions and corresponding practices that constitute the latter.

This understanding cultivated a profound animosity and frustration towards coherent, insulated, and totalising perspectives akin to those that dominated my formative education. In response, I sought to engage in this doctoral research project as a means of engaging with the 'necessities' that populate this context of practice. I initially directed my analytic interest towards the 'necessities' operationalised within the examination syllabus for music education as an optional subject of study at secondary level (Years 9 to 11[1]). Widely referred to as the *Secondary Education Certificate* (SEC), this syllabus details the objectives and expectations learners are expected to meet by the end of their programme of study and how their achievements shall be assessed. The syllabus was identified as the primary site of research because of three primary considerations. Firstly, a preliminary analysis demonstrated the strong presence of the 'necessities' I sought to unsettle and problematise. The syllabus is written by the syllabus board for music education, which is appointed by the Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) unit within the University of Malta. Therefore, the document's intimations are reflective of the assumptions and value commitments structuring music education at post-compulsory levels of education. This formed the second consideration. Third, as the main examination pathway for learners to access music education within post-secondary and tertiary levels of study, the SEC music syllabus is particularly influential within local music education practices.

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[1] Years 9 to 11 refer to the final three years of compulsory schooling, typically attended by learners aged thirteen to fifteen ('Organisation of the Education System and of Its Structure' 2023).

My analytic interest in the SEC syllabus coincided with the impending implementation of a national curricular policy reform that specifically targeted examination syllabi and assessment practices within compulsory years of schooling. Legislated in 2015 as a *'necessary'* change within compulsory educational structures, the Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) reform sought *'to free schools and learners from centrally-imposed knowledge-centric syllabi and to give them the freedom to develop programmes that fulfil the framework of knowledge, attitudes and skills-based outcomes that are considered national education entitlement of all learners in Malta.'* ('Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' 2015, 5). Central to its objectives was the displacement of subject syllabi as the principal guiding frameworks for curricular practices within compulsory schooling, and their subsequent revision following a set of proposed changes to curricular structures and assessment practices. Therefore, its proposals opened up new conceptual and analytic spaces for unsettling and seeking alternatives to the normative commitments through which syllabi-led practices have historically functioned.

Seeking to grapple with the complex relationships between these two documents, their authors, and practices of implementation, I initially shaped this research project through three overarching research questions. The first addressed the 'pre-reform' SEC syllabus and questioned the normative commitments through which it operates, as well as the impacts these carry for classroom practices. The second addressed the LOF reform and the forms of curricular change it sought to induce through the revision of assessment syllabi. The third addressed the 'reformed' SEC syllabus and sought to understand how the reform's implementation had impacted the syllabus and the subsequent impacts this carried for classroom practices. To address these research questions, I designed an empirical study that made use of textual analysis, interviews, and observations to analyse the trajectory of the LOF reform within its contexts of production and textual formation, its implementation

within the revised SEC syllabus, and the ensuing effect on practice within SEC music classrooms. The goal of this research design was to evaluate the impacts of the proposed reform on the 'necessities' that pervade the music education syllabus and the classroom practices it seeks to direct.

In the process of recruiting participants for the empirical aspects of this research project, I encountered several significant hurdles that impacted the feasibility of the aforementioned research design. The first related to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on school-based research. Due to the restrictions, changes, and increased workload impositions that accompanied the pandemic and its subsequent hangover, COVID-19 significantly impacted the willingness and availability of schools and targeted stakeholders to participate in research. Limitations relating to the pandemic were accompanied by push-backs in the planned implementation date for the LOF reform at the secondary level, as driven primarily by union contentions and the pandemic's impact on schools. The final, and perhaps most significant hurdle relates to the percentage of student uptake for music education at the SEC level in the 2020-2021 academic year. The absolute absence of Year 9 students choosing music as an optional subject of study across secondary schools nationwide, predicated possibilities to conduct interviews and observations with SEC music learners post-reform implementation.

In response to these circumstances, I sought to reconsider my analytic approach through alternative policy research methodologies that may enable me to successfully circumvent the limitations that emerged within the field of study. In an attempt to identify such methodologies, I engaged with different analytic and theoretical perspectives that reframed my understanding of policy in useful yet unexpected ways. These conceptual encounters drew attention to the normative assumptions that had underpinned my initial approach to research. This included the policy proposals I had assumed as a taken-for-granted

starting point from which this research project could proceed, and what I had assumed to be 'necessary' about them. My initial analytic stance presupposed policymaking to be a process through which state actors identified pre-existing problems and chose the most suitable forms of action through which they may be addressed. Owing to the political exigency and obviousness attributed to policy practices, I had assumed the solutions proposed by the Learning Outcomes Framework reform as necessary and indisputable. These proposals were perhaps more easily assumed and sustained because the contentions through which they were represented to be necessary were well-aligned with the analytic concerns that structured my own approach.

In response to my engagement with alternative theoretical perspectives and approaches to policy, the analytic concerns I sought to investigate through this research project changed. As well as unsettling the normative assumptions through which music education curricula in Malta operate, I also sought to grapple with the 'necessities' that more broadly structured the position and definition of curricular policy within music education. This dualistic concern for 'necessities' forms the existing shape of this research project.

1.2 Thesis Outline

In the chapter that follows, I elaborate on how these two 'necessities' intersect to form the conceptual and analytic landscape of practice within which music education and curricular policy operate and intersect. I start by considering how the rhetoric of 'necessity' pervades the textual representation of Maltese curriculum reform and corresponding initiatives for educators' professional development. I then go on to evaluate the position of curricular policy within local music education research and its impact on the kinds of questions which educator-researchers typically ask. Drawing on the work of authors within the international field of music education research, I discuss how this position is more

broadly symptomatic of prevailing assumptions relating to music education, policy, and research, and why these assumptions are considered to be problematic. I conclude the chapter by presenting the three overarching research questions through which I seek to analyse this landscape of practice and scrutinise its 'necessities'.

In Chapter 3, I present the formalised outcome of the second set of encounters defined earlier in this chapter. I explore and discuss policy practices through three distinct analytic approaches, with the aim of unsettling the 'necessities' that structure the widely prevailing relationships between music education research and policy: *Teleological/Outcomes-focused*, *Relational/Process-focused*, and *Discursive/Discourse-focused*. Within each approach, I evaluate policy through distinct conceptual and theoretical lenses and discuss their implications for understanding and researching policy. I conclude the chapter by discussing how the conceptual and analytic perspectives presented may offer useful alternatives to prevailing approaches to policy research, and define their position within this research project's conceptual foundation.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the methodological tools I have chosen to make use of. Drawing on the work of Carol Bacchi, Susan Goodwin, and Jessica Bonham, I define two useful frameworks for addressing the proposed research questions. The first framework, titled *'What's the Problem Represented to Be?'* functions as a useful tool for scrutinising the assumptions that typically structure and sustain proposals as taken-for-granted. The second framework, titled *'Poststructuralist Interview* Analysis', directs the analyst's attention to the role of taken-for-granted assumptions in structuring what is and can be said within the context of an interview. I therefore argue that these frameworks therefore offer useful analytic tools for evaluating the constitutive function of 'necessities' in shaping how subjects are able to make sense of their fields of practice. After presenting each framework, I discuss how they were adopted and applied to address this project's research questions.

In Chapter 5, I present and discuss my analysis and its outcomes in four sections. In the first section, I address the 'necessities' through which curricular policy in Malta is proposed through an analysis of its proposals for change and its rationalised implications for music education. In the second, I address the 'necessities' that constitute music education by analysing how these proposals are implemented within the context of secondary-level music education. In the third section, I offer an analysis of how these necessities intersect to shape the possibilities afforded to educators and learners for making sense of music education in relation to themselves and others. Finally, in the fourth and final section, I draw on an alternative perspective to unsettle the 'necessity' of proposed changes and their corresponding implementation within secondary-level music education.

I conclude in Chapter 6 with a set of reflections on my analysis, and proposals for ways forward.

Chapter 2: Locating These 'Necessities'

In this chapter, I shall discuss the rationale for this research project by evaluating the two sets of 'necessities' defined in Chapter 1, defining where they emerge and how they intersect. I shall start by considering how Maltese curricular policy is presented, drawing attention to the role of 'necessity' in its proposals for change, and the conceptual relationship it cultivates with music education research. I shall then evaluate how music education is conceptualised and represented within this relationship, drawing particular attention to how its 'necessities' are proposed and preserved within existing scholarship. The chapter shall conclude by proposing and elaborating on the three overarching research questions I shall seek to address within the following chapters.

Evaluating Intersections: Policy Proposals and Music Education in Malta

'Against the background of Malta's historical development and on the basis of the curriculum and EU documentation, the National Curriculum Framework seeks to provide strategic direction by rationalising the necessary changes and their implications for area/ subject content, pedagogies and assessment.' ('Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' 2015, 5)

This statement is derived from an ancillary curricular policy document that was published in 2015 as part of the 'Learning Outcomes Framework' reform. The 'necessary' changes mentioned within this statement refer to a set of proposals for curricular reform initially put forward by the National Curriculum Framework, a governmental policy text legislated in 2012 that details the principles, objectives, and standards to which all educational practices in Malta are to be aligned. Among its proposals is the proffered need for a *'Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) as the keystone for learning and assessment throughout the years of compulsory schooling.'* (5). The ancillary document from which this statement is derived

currently forms the most recently published curricular policy text for music education. It details the changes sought by the proposed reform, as well as their 'rationalised' implications for curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment across all years of compulsory schooling.

This statement is significant because, in describing the role of curricular policy and its legislated outcomes, it sheds light on the qualities attached to policy proposals, their form and function. Here, Samuel Hope's (2002) definition of policy is useful in highlighting these qualities, as well as the assumptions through which they typically function. Hope claims:

> *A policy is a decision about how to proceed, based in part on knowledge or research and in part on values and opinion. Its existence presupposes potential action aligned with the decision reached. Policy is made because of a perceived need to act.* (11)

By representing policy as *'a decision about how to proceed'*, the author draws attention to how policy can only exist in the presence of a perceived need to proceed differently. Hope's definition therefore draws our attention to how policy proposals presuppose their field of practice to be problematic and in *'need'* of change. Such presuppositions function to represent proposals as obvious and uncontentious responses to the problematic qualities of a given field of practice. The term 'necessary', as presented in the statement quoted earlier in this chapter, functions to not only describe its proposals but extends to describe the external material conditions which it seeks to address. Its use implies that the problematic qualities which characterise these material conditions demand an urgent and specific political response. It is therefore implied that these problematic qualities are sufficiently known and that this knowledge forms the basis for labelling changes as 'necessary'.

The pervasive presence of such presuppositions is further attested within the National Curriculum Framework document, which represents its proposals as *'a response to the changing demands of individuals and society, rapid changes in our education system driven*

by globalisation, ICT development, competition, shift of traditional values and new paradigms.' ('A National Curriculum Framework for All' 2012, iii). The document also claims that these proposals form '*a reference for action based on general consensus and the contribution of stakeholders as well as those committed to its implementation'* (iii). While this indicates that proposals are considered to be 'necessary' by merit of their responsive relationship to external conditions, this relationship is not represented to be unmediated. Hope's reference to *'knowledge'* and *'research'* alludes to the use of a variety of tools in the process of defining something as problematic and *'rationalising'* the appropriate forms of change. In addition to *'knowledge and research'*, the author draws attention to the role of *'value and opinion'*, which highlights the presence of subjective, political, and often pre-established positions, beliefs, and goals that shape how something is considered to be problematic, and what kinds of action may be admissible. Material conditions can only be understood to be problematic when assessed against pre-established ideals. By operationalising such value judgments, policymakers exert an influential and constitutive impact on the rationalisation of necessary changes. This leads us to consider that the 'necessity' of action is not determined by the internal qualities of problematic material conditions, but is mediated by the political practices of its makers.

The statement quoted at the start of this chapter indicates that, within the curricular context of Malta, proposals for change emerge within the policymaking relationships which the Maltese government holds with the European Union (EU), of which it is a member. This is more broadly representative of a shift in local-global relationships that has formed what Ozga and Lingard (2006) have defined as a *'new spatiality to politics'* (65). The authors argue that, within contemporary contexts of government, policy-making decisions are no longer taken within the political boundaries of the nation-state, but occur more broadly within inter-national relationships such as those formed within the EU. The policy statement points

specifically towards the influential role of European policy texts, directives, and financial incentives in defining policy problems, appropriate change, and *'strategic direction'*. While holding significant influence over national policymaking, Ozga and Lingard point out that entities such as the EU do not simply inject policies into local contexts (2006). The statement's reference to the influence of local historical development alongside *'EU documentation'* attests to this, and alludes to the role of local contexts, narratives, and perspectives in defining what strategic directions are necessary and how they may be best achieved. It is from within this complex national-international policy-making context that proposals for change emerge, as well as the knowledge, research, and broader conceptual frameworks through which they come to be understood as 'necessary'.

Attard Tonna and Bugeja (2016) argue that most curricular policy proposals that had preceded the LOF reform were formed through the political belief that centrally defined and bureaucratically imposed forms of action were the most suitable ways of achieving desired changes. The authors contend that these assumptions are the reason behind the historically unsuccessful legacy of curricular reform in Malta. As project coordinators for the LOF reform, the authors sought to address a longstanding political concern for the effectiveness of reform practices by displacing centralised governmental practices in favour of more participatory and de-centralised modes of action. The overarching strategic direction pursued by the LOF can be broadly defined as a model of government by outcomes which seeks to 'empower' schools and teachers with the curricular autonomy necessary to exercise creative judgment within their day-to-day curricular practices ('A National Curriculum Framework for All' 2012). Outcomes-led models are premised on the belief that 'necessary change' can be most effectively achieved when practitioners hold the autonomy necessary to navigate their micro-contexts of practice (Lindblad 2018). Therefore, within this model, policy proposals do

not prescribe curricular practices, but rather describe desired goals or outcomes and provide guidelines for how these may be best achieved.

Such decentralised models of government can only operate effectively if they achieve a substantial degree of alignment between their proposals and their application within contexts of practice (Lindblad 2018). Lindblad, Ozga, and Zambeta (2002) argue that de-centralisation is often misinterpreted as de-regulation; a mode of government that frees micro-contexts of practice from the shackles of bureaucracy and assigns them with an absolute form of operational freedom in their routine decision-making. Rather, the authors claim, de-centralisation encompasses the reformation of previously bureaucratic and impositional techniques into more enigmatic forms of control. Henry et al. (2013) draws attention to how reform makes use of a *'rhetorical language'* to represent policy proposals *'as the only plausible response to the social and economic changes described.'* (Chapter 1, Introduction, Paragraph 10). In doing so, the state *'presupposes legitimacy and invites support for the ideas propagated in the particular policy.'*. As argued earlier, 'necessity' assumes a strong position within this language, operationalising a set of presuppositions that encourage people to assume policy proposals as a taken-for-granted foundation for thinking. 'Ownership' and 'responsibility' similarly occupy a strong position within rhetoric, as exemplified by the work of Attard Tonna and Bugeja (2016). The authors argue:

> *'[…] while we tried to guarantee that the principles of the NCF were safeguarded, at the same time we tried to develop an implementation strategy which moved away from regarding schools and educators as adopters and implementers of externally determined reform. In order for schools to be effective, they need to own change and take responsibility for change.'* (172)

Through consultative practices and training initiatives, the authors sought to cultivate a more pronounced space for stakeholders to establish productive relationships with policy proposals. One such initiative is the 'Train the Trainer' programme, which was launched as part of the LOF project to 'empower' school practitioners with the knowledge and capacity necessary to secure the successful application of proposed changes within their routine practices. Premised on the principle of 'ownership' as a basis for 'democratic leadership', such initiatives sought to ensure that practitioners internalise and securely align their practices to the sensibilities of 'necessary change'.

While these rhetorical tools and practices are primarily directed towards curricular, pedagogical, and assessment practices, their effects extend to the form and function of academic inquiry. It is important to note that the existing pool of published music education scholarship in Malta is small, and is primarily populated by end-of-study dissertations written by music teacher education candidates in fulfilment of their course of study at the University of Malta. Within this field of research, very few authors choose to engage with policy. Those who do engage with policy assume its proposals as a taken-for-granted framework within which music education research may operate. Several researchers take policy proposals as a self-evident and valuable rationale for their own research projects (see Agius 2020; Portelli 2012; Aquilina 2006). Others assume policy proposals as a framework within which music education content, pedagogy, and assessment may be evaluated and improved (see Agius 2020; Cucciardi 2020; Buttigieg 2016). Many of these authors also assume policy proposals as a taken-for-granted framework within which the value and purpose of music education may be justified, defended, and advocated for. These researchers typically cite policy texts and empirical data to claim that the form and function of music education correspond positively to broader curricular goals and aspirations (see Aquilina 2006; Bajada 2019; Rapa and Portelli 2016). Buttigieg's (2016) article, titled '*Music in Maltese State Secondary*

Schools: Developing the Syllabus and Raising Standards', is one such example. As a preface to her analysis of existing music education syllabi, the author draws on the outcomes of several empirical research projects to claim that music education has been '*proven*' to carry '*academic, social, and personal benefits*' that '*facilitates learning in other academic subjects and enhances skills that children inevitably use in other areas.*' (320). These alleged contributions are represented to be particularly valuable when set against the '*cross-curricular*' and '*lifelong learning*' goals set by the National Curriculum Framework.

Claims to the 'proven' ability of music learning to contribute to students' achievement within other curricular areas hold a particularly strong position within the existing pool of music education research. Similarly to Buttigieg, Aquilina's undergraduate research (2006) is structured by a '*strong body of evidence [...] which establishes positive associations between music and spatial-temporal reasoning, achievement in Maths, achievement in reading and the reinforcement of socio-emotional and behavioural objectives*' (15). The author claims that while curricular policy situates value in the 'expressive arts' as an integral part of curricula, music is marginalised within secondary school curricula. Driven by the proclaimed value of music's extrinsic effects, Aquilina puts forward several suggestions for modifying educational provision in order to augment music's curricular status. This is represented to be a necessary step towards ensuring that all students are afforded sufficient access to its claimed effects. Bajada (2019) similarly claims that the curricular space assigned to general music education in Malta is insufficient. Drawing on a body of evidence that allegedly attests to the contributions of music and music education to cognitive and neural development, self-discipline and self-esteem, language development, sensory development, creativity, and logical thinking, the author claims that music education owes its marginalised status to stakeholders' insufficient understanding of its positive contributions to academic achievement. To address this issue, the author sought to evidence the effects of music

education on Maltese learners' examination results, attendance, and graduation rates through a set of focus groups with students from four post-secondary institutions across the Maltese islands. Reported outcomes illustrated that there were generally marginal differences between those students who did and did not study music from a young age. Additionally, one of the focus groups demonstrated a negative correlation between music education and academic performance. Nevertheless, Bajada presents the results as affirmation of music education's positive contribution to academic achievement, and as a basis of evidence to advocate for its continued curricular presence and enhanced status within schools.

Assuming and Preserving 'Necessities': Advocacy and Music Education Scholarship

The academic scholarship discussed thus far stands as testament to the taken-for-granted position that policy assumes within music education research. To speak of music education as valuable, researchers tacitly assume that its practices must correspond positively to policy proposals and their value judgments. In doing so, researchers establish and perpetuate a responsive relationship between music education and policy. This stance is not unique to music education research in Malta, but more broadly characterises patterns of practice internationally. Speaking of music education in the United States, Branscome (2012) contends that music education policies in the United States have typically followed a similarly responsive pattern of practice.

> *Tracing back to the beginning of formalized music study in the public schools, it is clear that the music curriculum has been directly shaped and moulded by significant societal events and developments, particularly in the education reform of the past thirty years.* (115)

Driven by a desire to sustain its curricular status, the author argues that music education has historically mirrored educational policy and the changes it has proposed in response to these

'societal events'. This is typically followed by the formation of new advocacy campaigns *'supporting the importance of music education in light of current events and curricular needs'* which function to induce more permanent modulations in its curricular structures (116). This is often perceived to be the necessary means through which music education may demonstrate its relevance to contemporary education and hence sustain its curricular presence. The need for such responsive practices becomes particularly pronounced when proposals for change are accompanied by a modulation of values and objectives that do not resonate particularly well with its existing form and function. Horsley (2009) claims that music education holds a particularly tenuous relationship with the ideological commitments through which policy in most western educational contexts operates today. The author claims that these ideologies situate value in visible, observable, and demonstrable forms of achievement and have been increasingly operationalised through empirical forms of accountability. Such discourses, argues Fautley (2019), have not been particularly friendly with music education, and in many cases have led to an abatement in political and financial support from the central government. Aligning music education with these ideological commitments has therefore become an important prerequisite to securing its survival within this political climate.

Gee (1999) claims that governmental policy and arts education have long been steeped in a tenuous relationship. The author claims that the political marginalisation of the arts in the US has historically prompted a *'fervent search'* for strategic opportunities to re-establish political intelligibility for the arts (5). Driven by *'an eagerness […] to place the arts in service of public purpose 'de jour''*, the arts entered a state of conceptual metamorphosis that sought to realign its meaning and value to the modulations brought about by political reform (5). Since the *'political kiss'* of recognition carries with it promises of legislative, political, and financial support, Gee observes that it has held a particularly strong role in

forming and reforming how practitioners and advocates speak about and make sense of 'the arts' and their position within educational practices. Research has played a particularly important role in this process. The status attributed to empirical evidence as a legitimated measure of value and validity led to the widespread use of research to strengthen and sustain advocacy efforts. Echoing Horsley's aforementioned claims about empirical accountability, Hope argues that the *'methods of science are preeminent, and every discipline or activity seeking public approbation attempts to present itself and its reason for being along scientific lines'* (Hope 2002, 15). Historically, Gee (2002) claims, cognitive research has been *'the great white hope for many music advocates'*, seeking and pronouncing even the faintest of correlations between music education and the forms of cognitive development, improvement, and capability so dearly valued within educational spheres (7). Advocates have held a particularly strong relationship with the experimental psychological research of Frances Rauscher and Gordon Shaw, whose conclusions claimed a correlative relationship between forms of musical training and spatiotemporal modes of reasoning deemed valuable within mathematical and scientific fields of practice. Popularly referred to as the 'Mozart Effect', and framed through the eye-catching and popular rhetoric claiming that *'music makes you smarter'*, Rauscher and Shaw's research has and continues to receive extensive publicity (Gee 2002, 7).

The dominant position of cognitive research is clearly attested within the local music education research discussed earlier in this chapter, which draws on empirical evidence such as that proposed by Rauscher and Shaw (1998) as a self-evident basis for illustrating the curricular value of music education (Buttigieg 2016; Bajada 2019; Aquilina 2006). These claims are however echoed without due consideration for the limitations and caveats that accompany the researchers' proposal of evidence, as well as the bodies of critique that typically follow (Gee 2002). For example, Rauscher and Hinton (2006) sought to clearly

differentiate between research on music listening and music instruction, arguing that the outcomes of one do not necessarily carry direct and unmediated implications for the other. Moreover, as Gee rightly points out, references to such implications often occur in the absence of consideration for the implications such claims carry for music education and the form it may assume within curricula.

> *'If we are sincere in our conviction that arts education can and should promote those outcomes, then we need to consider the commitments that will need to be made to move more deliberately toward those ends.'* (Gee 2002, 4)

In attempting to envision a curriculum structured by a *'spatiotemporal rationale'*, Reimer (1999) claims that music education would need to be significantly altered if it were to successfully actualise their claims (24). The author argues that a commitment to achieving the outcomes desired within such a rationale would reduce music teaching and learning to engagement with symmetrical and sequential musical patterns. The resulting music education would be devoid of much of what is valued today, and *'would leave music educators with little to do[...] But music educators would have the satisfaction of knowing that their radically redefined profession would be finally contributing to something "really useful,"'* (25).

Value, and its relationship to policy and policy advocacy, have been a particularly potent bone of contention within arts education policy. While music education has historically held a responsive relationship with governmental policy, it has also been populated by critical contentions that have sought to question these practices. Branscome (2012) claims that advocacy campaigns seeking to align music education with policy concerns have historically been accompanied by critical counter-reactions that question the 'true' purpose and function of music education. These counter-reactions typically serve as a conceptual basis for the

subsequent formation of new philosophical paradigms in music education. Gee (1999) describes a historical tension between arts education scholars and bureaucrats, arguing that while the latter sought advocacy as a means of securing political and financial support for arts programs and organisations, scholars have been hostile towards such acts of commodification. Critics of bureaucratic advocacy have often argued that the value of arts education has been thoroughly misunderstood and misrepresented. They claim that, by deriving legitimacy from policy proposals, bureaucrats contribute to the ossification of external measures of value at the expense of those more immediate and unique to arts education (Hope 2002). Scholars claim that its value ought to be derived not from its contributions to qualities, achievements, and outcomes outside itself, but from artistic practices and the knowledge, skill, experience, and meaning gained from engaging in them (Gee 2007).

Several authors have argued that, in order to strengthen the curricular status of music education, it remains necessary to establish a direct and proactive relationship with the social conditions and public concerns within which it exists (Kos 2010; Glenn 1991; Burton, Knaster, and Knieste 2015). However, these authors contend that the alignment of music education to broader problem-solving efforts does not necessarily imply the assumption of instrumentalist discourses that render music education subservient to qualities of value outside itself. They argue that development campaigns which demonstrate a willingness and commitment to proactively engage in problem-solving provide an important strategic position through which advocates may be better placed to secure political resonance, all the while confronting and seeking alternatives to the substantial trade-offs accompanying instrumentalism. Gee (2007) similarly argues in favour of educators and advocates who are able to establish and communicate valuable connections between music education and

people's lives while evading the instrumentalist discourses that render music subservient to outcomes outside itself.

> *Let us, within reason, whisper what they need to hear but strongly and steadily beat the drum for the intrinsic qualities and contributions of art study and practice.* (Gee 2007, 10)

Gaztambide-Fernández (2013b) points out that, by assuming intrinsic contentions of value, such arguments claim to offer a valuable counter-argument and a point of resistance to the hegemonic discourse of instrumentalism that pervades contemporary policy practices. Within these arguments, an understanding of arts education in terms of its contributions to objectives and outcomes intrinsic to itself is perceived to be more valuable to the profession, its political viability, and longevity within social, cultural, and educational contexts. The author points out that advocates of the 'intrinsic value' of arts education typically base their argument on the following assumption: Since art is inherently valuable, its presence within curricular practices and programmes of education is automatically justified by its contributions to capacities, objectives, and sensibilities that are immediate to itself. While these advocates may perceive themselves to be free of the shackles of instrumentalism, Gaztambide-Fernández claims that this assumption is misguided. The author argues that all acts of persuasion need to adopt a rhetorical frame that sets the logical boundaries within which persuasion may proceed. He claims that the instrumentalist logic that pervades contemporary policy practices is characterised by a 'rhetoric of effects', which functions to establish the terms of persuasion for both intrinsic and extrinsic contentions of value. Through the rhetoric of effects, advocates can speak of the arts as valuable because of what the arts are able to *do*. *'In fact,'* the author argues, *'when advocates holding apparently opposing views argue with each other, they do not disagree over whether the arts have effects but over what effects should be the focus of the argument'* (217). Therefore, notwithstanding

whether music education is justified by its intrinsic or extrinsic effects, advocates of both assume two sides of the same rhetorical coin.

Gaztambide-Fernández (2013b) claims that the rhetoric of effects functions to not only establish the terms of value for arts education but is also determinative of how music education is defined and assigned with meaning. Most significantly, it encourages advocates to conceptualise, represent, and communicate about arts education as a coherent and homogenous object. By assuming that the value of arts education resides in its contributions to qualities and outcomes immediate to itself, these arguments presuppose that insofar as the arts are present, these effects will follow. In doing so, advocates are absolved of the need to qualify what 'art' is, which of its variable manifestations may induce these effects, and how it ought to present itself within education. Bowman (2005b) similarly argues that claims to music's intrinsic value constitute a form of *'sleight of hand'* because they circumvent questions of meaning and value through claims to an objective, intrinsic, and essential core of value that presupposes all music education practices (127): If 'music' is inherently valuable, then its education is unequivocally valuable, notwithstanding how people choose to shape its practices. Bowman however points out that, since music education is composed of human action, its meaning and value are inherently tethered to the form it assumes within practice. Therefore, it is entirely possible that the universalised form we assume 'music education' to take may not necessarily accord with the value assigned to it.

Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) argues that, however useful such practices may be within acts of persuasion, a universal and coherent arts education, and corresponding claims to its effects, is unachievable.

> *'[…] there is nothing intrinsic about something called 'the arts', at least nothing that can be known without someone, in some place, for some purpose, and under specific*

circumstances engaging in, with, or through something that someone – with the social

stature and culture and authority to do so – calls 'the arts'.' (222)

The impossibility of a coherent and universal 'arts education' hence jeopardises the utility of claims to intrinsic forms of value. Moreover, since a rhetoric of effects encourages advocates to speak of music education in terms of what *is* rather than what *ought to* be, the author claims that advocacy practices also function to ossify the 'necessities' that constitute its existing form. By saying that 'arts education' does something, its advocates represent it to be a coherent whole from which its effects proceed. This coherence is presumed to transcend the various contextual variables that may shape educational provision within a given context. As a result, 'arts education' is assumed to be an essence with which learners can be inoculated to achieve the desired outcomes. Since claims lose weight when conceding the contingency of effects, attempts to contend with the complexities of value, form, and meaning muddle the clear waters within which advocacy thrives (ibid). As a result, advocates are encouraged to perpetuate a reifying cycle oriented towards a defence of what is, rather than an evaluation of what may and ought to be.

This homogeneity pervades the forms of advocacy identified within the aforementioned body of local music education research. As previously argued, in her article, Buttigieg (2016) claims that music education universally and unequivocally carries constitutive effects that contribute positively to broader curricular competencies and outcomes deemed to be valuable within the NCF. These contributions are presupposed as taken-for-granted markers of value that attest to the importance of music's continued presence within curricular programmes. Such evidence of music education's value forms the conceptual basis from which the author proceeds to advocate for sustaining the form but improving the level, of the existing syllabus for secondary-level music teaching and learning. The author recognises that music syllabi in Malta *are mainly linked to the British system,*

particularly recognised institutions, such as ABRSM, Trinity and London College syllabi'
(325). The author therefore presupposes a direct correlation between the claimed 'benefits' of
music education and the forms of music education proffered within the aforementioned
syllabi. This presupposition functions to preserve what the author assumes to be 'necessary'
in music education. Aquilina's (2006) dissertation, titled *'Music: An Indispensable Tool for
the Cognitive And Emotional Growth of the Student'*, similarly animates assumptions about
the universal effects of music education while presupposing music education to be an
education in aesthetics. In an attempt to strengthen its curricular status, the author advocates
for curricular and pedagogical practices that cultivate more direct relationships with student
interests and practice, all the while preserving assumptions pertaining to its form and value.

By marginalising complexity in favour of a tacit form of idealisation, the rhetoric of
effects *'flattens-out'* possibilities for knowing, making sense of, and practicing 'music
education'. Echoing Bowman's contentions, Spruce et al (2021) argue that the problem of
advocacy lies *'not so much [in] the failure of advocacy discourses to deliver on their
promise, but the corrosive influence they have on the wider discourses of music education
and their potential to envisage new possibilities for music education'* (69). Benedict (2009)
draws attention to the embedded presence of taken-for-granted assumptions within the
dominant narratives that structure music education policy more broadly. The author argues
that policy practices within the field of music education in the US are structured by normative
assumptions about the value and purpose of music education. These assumptions align music
education to policy and orient its practices towards the mythologised endpoint of an absolute
state of acceptance and curricular presence. This false determinism, argues the author, is
premised on widely accepted claims to truth, sustained not by validity, but by merit of their
embedded and undisturbed presence in routine practices. These truths are particularly
significant because they carry a significant impact on inquiry; on the kinds of questions we

are encouraged to ask, and the kinds of questions deemed to be admissible within a particular field of practice (ibid). They typically establish a necessity for research practices that seek to contend with the implications of policy for music education as a field of practice (e.g. how it can accommodate proposed changes, and how it can be improved and optimised). While these questions retain relevance and utility within the field, and hence ought not to be dismissed, Benedict points out that their ubiquity eliminates the conceptual space necessary to trouble the taken-for-granted truths through which music education operates.

2.1 Proposing and Framing My Research Questions

Within this chapter, I have sought to locate where the 'necessities' that populate music education and curricular policy intersect, primarily within the existing pool of research in Malta. I have first drawn attention to the rhetorical role of 'necessity' within curricular policy and how it directs educator-researchers to assume its proposals and value judgments as a taken-for-granted basis from which their research may proceed. Drawing on broader music education scholarship, I have argued that such tools function to cultivate unidirectional and responsive conceptual and analytic relationships between music education and policy. Policy proposals and the assumptions they operationalise tacitly form the terms within which music education and research may be understood and analysed as meaningful and valuable. By assuming policy as a taken-for-granted framework from which research may proceed, music education scholars contribute to the ossification of policy proposals as 'necessary'. Furthermore, I have argued that these relationships are particularly conducive to preserving, rather than questioning, what music education is presupposed to be within this framework. These two sets of 'necessities' form the two primary research questions that this project shall seek to address. The first question addresses the 'necessary changes' proposed by local curricular policy and the implications these carry for music education, with the aim of

shedding light on how policy discourses form the conceptual framework within which music education operates.

> *Research Question 1: What does curricular policy represent to be 'necessary' and what implications are rationalised for the content, pedagogy, and assessment of music education?*

The second research question extends beyond an analytic concern for the 'necessities' that pervade policy proposals to consider their implementation within music education and the domain-specific 'necessities' operationalised within such practices.

> *Research Question 2: How are the proposed changes and their rationalised implications implemented within music education?*

It is important to consider how these two research questions may represent policymaking and implementation as two distinct sites of practice. This dualism reflects more conventional conceptualisations of policy that have historically established strong boundaries between these sites and who may and may not practice within them. Attard Tonna and Bugeja (2016) argue that, by shaping policymaking as a decision-making space that may not be accessed or influenced by school practitioners, Maltese curricular policy has formed a conceptual rift between these two sites of practice. The body of local music education research referred to above stands as testament to the firm placement of the music education practitioner-researcher within fields of implementation rather than decision-making. As I have argued earlier in this chapter, the LOF reform project, as described above by Attard Tonna and Bugeja (2016), has sought to unsettle this duality by establishing spaces for educators to take on a more active role in decision-making processes through consultation. Notwithstanding such efforts, owing to the extensive responsibilities and demands which educators are faced with, it is important to consider that they may not be willing or able to

engage in such processes (Shaw 2020). However, this does not eliminate opportunities for policy participation altogether. Shaw (2020) points out that in their day-to-day practices as agents of implementation, teachers already occupy an important position within policy. While it is important to recognise the significance of this position, Shaw argues that, as a result of their absence within policymaking conversations, music educators relinquish policymaking decisions to other stakeholders. Since these decisions may carry restrictive and undesired effects on their field of practice and implementation, the author recognises and highlights the importance of music educators' presence in decision-making.

Schmidt (2017) similarly draws attention to the repercussions of educators' absence in decision-making contexts. The author claims that the significance of policy decision-making is derived not merely from the ways it impacts day-to-day realities through the distribution of resources, but from its ability to shape how teachers understand and make sense of these realities. This is accomplished through the use of rhetorical instruments that function to present its arguments as uncontentious, thus veiling their political (and hence contingent) qualities. More importantly, the author argues that, by sustaining *an illusion of consensus* (14), policymakers encourage practitioners to misunderstand their role within policy and consider their involvement in decision-making as unnecessary. These practices contribute to the preservation of policymaking as an exclusive and inaccessible space populated only by those holding 'appropriate' forms of expertise and political prowess. Schmidt therefore argues that, in order to empower the music practitioner to occupy a more active space within decision-making fora, we need to unveil and unsettle the enigmatic practices that sustain these misunderstandings.

'Understanding how unidirectional discourse creates the illusion of consensus is key,

particularly as it encourages passivity by presenting opinions, practices, and general

realities in sharp contrasting tones. In other words, when policy is unidirectional, it more

easily stifles participation and distributive decision making.' (14)

Schmidt and Colwell (2017) similarly argue that:

'*Failure to have a working understanding of policy today is to be left at the margins*

of a critical and powerful aspect of education.' (6).

The authors claim that music education practitioners have typically participated in policy

through practices of advocacy, which further highlights that the conceptual and analytic

relationship characterising music education research in Malta holds parallels internationally.

Such strategies, they contend, function to preserve a responsive relationship which further

secures the absence of music educators within decision-making processes. The authors

therefore ask:

If we learned to demystify the notion of policy as a rarefied area of influence and

something beyond our reach, could we come to see it as requiring active and personal

participation? If we become convinced that advocacy done by others is insufficient,

would we not invest in developing our own policy savvy? (6)

Unsettling normative assumptions represents an important starting point for securing music

practitioners' participation within contexts of policy formation.

Shieh (2023) claims that a common feature of narratives across much policy research

is a dualistic representation of policy as an act of *making*, and practice as an act of

implementing what has already been made. The author however contends that this dualism

misrepresents the complexities through which policymaking and implementation practices

operate. What we typically consider to be implementation does not merely entail the sanitised

injection of proposals into contexts of practice by inducing a clear-cut change in the conduct

of its practitioners. Since curricular practices are human practices, the processes of

understanding and responding to policy are complex, pluralistic, and idiosyncratic. Drawing

on the work of Ball et al. (2011), the author argues that, in the act of implementing proposals,

educators enter into a dialogic relationship with policy, through which they are able to change

it, and in turn be changed by it. The presence of such bidirectional relationships implies that

the role educators already occupy within policy is not merely tied to implementing decisions,

but entails an interpretative and creative process of *re-making* them in response to various

contextual idiosyncrasies, as well as other institutional and subjective variables. Therefore,

the author claims:

> *We do not suddenly become policymakers at some point, but rather decide to engage*
>
> *with policymaking, connecting our work to ongoing policy efforts, knowing ourselves*
>
> *already to be in them.* (23)

Given the necessity of teachers in actualising educational policy, Shieh argues that the

dismissal of their existing contribution to policymaking within policy scholarship is quite

ironic. Analytic inquiry should seek to not only secure practitioners' presence within

decision-making contexts, but also ensure that the significance of their existing role is

appropriately recognised. This recognition represents an important first step towards

countering the prevailing unidirectionality and securing more critical and conscientious

approaches to policy implementation. Forari's (2007) study of Cypriot music education is one

such example, shedding light on how policy changes across the various contexts of

formation, implementation, and reception. The author contends that the values, perspectives,

and goals held by its actors within various sites of its trajectory have a constitutive impact on

the form and function of policy. Hence, rather than an object that sustains its coherence

within sites of implementation, policy ought to be conceptualised as a *'polymorphous'* object

that is continually shaped by acts of contestation, compromise, and appropriation across its

various contexts of practice. Recognising these qualities, argues the author, is an important

prerequisite to achieving more collective, participatory, and hence meaningful relationships to policy.

Spruce, Stanley, and Li's (2021) evaluation of structure and agency offers useful tools that lead us to consider the complex relationships between policy and implementation more carefully. Driven by an interest in professional learning and its role in the 'empowerment' of music educators, the authors claim that under-theorised conceptualisations of teacher agency often tend to perpetuate a conceptual dualism. This operates through clear-cut boundaries separating and differentiating between the constitutive function of structure, and the operational freedom of agency. The authors however claim that this dualism is misrepresentative of the various complexities that characterise education. Drawing on Gidden's theory of structuration, and its application to teacher agency within the work of Biesta and Tedder (2007), and Priestley et al (2015), the authors claim that all practices are rooted within, and hence limited by, the structural constraints that form their context of practice. Within educational contexts, these structures encompass material impositions as well as more enigmatic conceptual structures such as policy proposals, past experiences, and prevailing conceptual frameworks. Therefore, within contexts where decision-making practices are self-directed, possibilities for action will always be somewhat limited by these constraints. However, while limited, action is never pre-determined by structural constraints. Furthermore, how a practitioner chooses to act within these structures carries a constitutive impact on the constraints they operationalise. By recasting agency and structure in terms of a dialogic rather than a dualistic relationship, agency is no longer sought outside of structural imposition, but is sought within the practitioner's capacity to understand and operate within the constraints they impose.

Within the context of policy thinking, Spruce, Stanley, and Li (2021) encourage us to be sceptical of a clear-cut conceptual separation of policy-making from practices of

implementation. Within governmental contexts that operate through de-centralised models which seek to confer education practitioners with autonomy for decision-making, policy and implementation can easily be conceptualised in terms of the structure-agency duality which the authors criticise. Within such a duality, policy is typically represented to be an imposing force that exerts constraint on action, while implementation emerges as an autonomous space in which freedom from the direct imposition of such constraints endows practitioners with a degree of control. The author's proposed reconceptualisation of structure and agency leads us to reconsider this relationship in terms of the complex overlaps through which these two processes and practices may interact. Furthermore, since agency is sought within the practitioner's capacity to understand and navigate structural constraints, the authors lead us to consider that all attempts to enhance educators' capacity for policy participation through implementation must include efforts to bolster educators' understandings of the structural qualities of policy.

Spruce, Stanley, and Li (2021) argue that alongside constraints that form the present, we must be particularly attentive to structural impositions rooted in our past. This is because our past is host to formative processes that have shaped the fundamental bodies of knowledge and understanding through which we subsequently conduct our day-to-day practices. Therefore, in order to foster a capacity for agency, we must not only attend to the structural impositions that emerge in the present, but also the deeply embedded beliefs rooted in the past. Within the context of policy, fostering agency implies the capacity to understand and contend with the immediate constraints posed by its proposals, as well as the pre-existing beliefs that may shape how practitioners make sense of these proposals. For example, Cutietta (2017) argues what we assume music education to *be* is a function of the contexts within which we practice rather than anything intrinsic to music education itself. Underpinned by assumptions pertaining to the form, meaning and value of music education,

these practices form part of institutional structures such as teacher training programs which establish strong habits of practice. Drawing attention to collegiate level teacher education, the author argues that the institutionalisation of such practices subsequently forms closed feedback loops which make it increasingly difficult to think about music education and policy in alternative ways.

In addressing the absence of policy-related dissertations, Jones (2017) explores the ways by which dominant cultural practices encourage music education majors to adopt a conservative and hostile relationship towards practices harbouring critical perspectives. The author contends that the *'overwhelming majority of music teachers are trained in the Western art music tradition in tertiary music units that [...] mostly share a common classical music training culture'* (244-245). By pursuing the performance, replication, and perpetuation of cultural practice, *'students appear to have understood academic studies in music as being a support system for proper performance, not for purposes of critiquing or challenging the discipline and practice of music'* (247). The absence of conceptual space for cultivating critical dispositions forms collegiate echo chambers in which assumptions about music education, as well as the 'necessary changes' it is tasked with implementing, are affirmed.

As argued in Chapter 1, Borg's (2014) undergraduate dissertation represents one of the few forms of Maltese research which engages critically with the forms of 'meaning' and 'value' attributed to music education within curricular practices. The author argues that music curricula across primary, secondary and tertiary levels have and continue to be primarily defined in terms of homogenised lenses that equate music education with 'western classical' traditions of practice. These curricula, argues the author, promote 'elitist' educational practices which subvert and marginalise alternative forms of music education. Borg's dissertation is written in fulfilment of a degree in sociology; a poignant reminder that voices of dissent emerge primarily from outside the institutional circles which comprise music

education. Most of the local research outputs cited within this chapter (as well as the majority of scholarship relating to music education locally) are end-of-study dissertations written by music teacher candidates at the University of Malta, indicating the presence of echo chambers and feedback loops akin to those defined by Cutietta and Jones. It is therefore important to consider how institutional practices function to perpetuate the prevailing conceptual schema through which the music researcher-practitioner may make sense of music education policy.

The arguments presented within this section have drawn attention to the urgency for analytic practices that cultivate capacity for more informed, conscientious, and agentic modes of engaging with policy. While several authors draw attention to the importance of cultivating space and capability for music education practitioners-researchers to participate in decision-making, others seek to cultivate space and capability within the various spaces within which policy and practice overlap and enmesh. The two research questions proposed within this research project shall therefore be addressed with this in mind: addressing the 'necessities' that form curricular policy proposals and music education practices as interwoven rather than insulated spaces segregating policy-making on one side, and implementation on the other. This emerging concern for the ways policy and practice overlap is expressed and addressed through a third research question.

Research Question 3: How do these policy proposals and their implementation interact to construct possibilities for knowing, understanding, and doing music education?

This final research question directs attention to how these two groups of 'necessities' form the context of practice, drawing attention to their intersections and constitutive qualities in structuring music education within Maltese curricular practices.

Chapter 3: Reconsidering the 'Necessities' Attached to Policy

This chapter presents my response to the taken-for-granted position attributed to policy within music education research, particularly within the context of Malta, and its role in tethering the music education practitioner-researcher to receptive and responsive stances. In order to unsettle its position, I shall engage with three contrasting approaches to policy that function to pluralise its definition and shed light on the various implications each approach carries, including implications for inquiry. I shall draw particular attention to how these approaches may function to recast our understanding of policy in productive ways. To conclude, I shall evaluate the outcomes of this evaluative process to define and justify the approach that has been applied within this research project, discussing its broader utility for analysing the taken-for-granted.

Reconsidering Policy: Three approaches

In *'Working for Policy'*, Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010b) contend that policy work often operates through taken-for-granted assumptions about what policy is, and what it does. The authors argue that, while the term *'conveys a sense of clarity and stability, […] its exact meaning (and its implications for policy work) is not always clear.'* (12). The authors draw attention to how the term assumes different forms of meaning when approached through different situated perspectives, and how these different perspectives carry a significant impact on the ways people make sense of, act upon, and communicate about policy. MacDonald (1971) claims that theorists often work in 'cross-purpose' ways because they fail to disclose the assumptions which underpin their use of terminology and conceptual language. If terms may be imbued with various meanings, then cultivating effective fields of inquiry requires researchers to explain the intentions underpinning their use of a given term. Furthermore, they must consider the conceptual possibilities which such usage may afford and deny.

Dwayne Huebner (2020) is similarly cautions of the illusive qualities of those broad and all-encompassing terms that typically occupy our fields of practice. The author defines these terms as 'wastebasket terms', arguing that it is important to take heed of how the use of such terms in the absence of definition jeopardises their utility and effectiveness within contexts of research and analysis.

> *The words hold too much "stuff." Their "pointing function" is limited. When using either term what does one look at or see in their imagination or in reality, for the landscapes are too complex to behold in a single gaze.* (Huebner 2020, xi)

Heubner uses the term 'stuff' to refer to the broad and complex landscapes of practice to which 'wastebasket terms' typically refer. These landscapes are formed through a myriad of things (such as concepts, relationships, and practices) that may take multiple, and hence potentially contradictory forms. By making use of terms without contemplating and defining what they are intended to refer to, their function as symbolic tools is muddled. Huebner's argument draws our attention to how the broad and complex qualities of these landscapes of practice imply that the pointing function assigned to a wastebasket term draws attention to specific things at the expense of others. Therefore, notwithstanding whether the assignment of a pointing function is the outcome of an active choice or a passive assumption, it represents a political act that may be contested.

Peters and Jandrić (2018a) argue that contestation over the conceptual foundations of a given term represents an important political and intellectual pulse that ought to be preserved.

> *'Once the intellectual battles over the concept or theory have been laid to rest and the life has been drained from the debates, then the concept becomes institutionalized, ossified, and only a matter of historical interest.'* (150-151)

This highlights how the use of wastebasket terms without due recognition for the various perspectives through which it may be considered serves to de-politicise the term's use, marginalising significant aspects of its complex landscape. As a result, the various perspectives that may shed light on the complexity of this landscape become ossified as an artefact of historical interest which merely illuminates how its normative form came to be (ibid). The act of situating politics in the past absolves people of the need to consider their use of important terms and the impacts which such forms of use may carry. More significantly, it marginalises alternative possibilities for looking at, making sense of, and asking questions about its landscape of practice.

In this chapter, I shall seek to unsettle normative assumptions pertaining to policy and the 'necessities' they function to sustain by reconsidering the term through three approaches, each of which sheds light on its complex landscape in different ways. The first two approaches are derived from the work of Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010c), who claim that policy work is typically contested by *'two very distinct approaches to thinking about policy practice'* (228). Labelled as 'teleological/outcomes-focused' and 'relational/process-focused', these approaches are derived from the perspectives of policy actors situated within different sites of policymaking, and form prevailing approaches to making sense of policy and engaging in policy work.

Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) claim that poststructuralist theory may serve as a particularly useful tool in encouraging *'policy workers and policy analysts to ask novel and challenging questions about the roles they play in policy development and how they do their work'* (3-4). Prompted by this contention, I draw on the work of poststructural theorist Michel Foucault and its application within the fields of policy studies to propose a third perspective. This shall be defined as *discursive/discourse-led*, reflecting the concept's centrality within his theoretical work. The conceptual foundations of this approach emerge from Foucault's

dissatisfaction with the theoretical perspectives available to make sense of government within 20th-century Europe. I shall evaluate how this work, and its application in the study of policy, form a useful alternative to prevailing approaches.

Each of the three approaches emerges in response to particular configurations and changes in the social, cultural, and political contexts within which policy operates. However, it is important to note that these approaches are not intended to provide a complete, linear, or evolutionary account of policy. As argued by Colebatch, approaches tend to overlap, coincide, and co-exist with each other, thus cultivating a field of practice characterised by multiplicity and tension (Colebatch 2006). The term 'approach' shall be used to highlight that different ways of making sense of policy carry implications which extend beyond perspective to encompass its application in practice. All three approaches shall be discussed in terms of how they shape understandings of policy, and the implications these understandings carry for practice, as categorised within various evaluative focal points.

Colebatch (2006) points out that an attempt to make sense of policy represents an attempt to make sense of the practices through which it occurs. Its practices, argues the author, are fundamentally interwoven with practices of governing, broadly defined by the Cambridge dictionary as those systems of management or control that operate within a defined jurisdiction and in relation to a specified group of people (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Therefore, argues Colebatch, policy is *a construct mobilized, both by academic observers and by practitioners, to make sense of the activity of governing'* (Colebatch 2006, 31). Within western democratic contexts, such as that found in Malta, the act of governing encompasses relationships between governmental actors, including the state as a governmental authority and the populations they seek to govern. Therefore, in order to make sense of policy within this context, it is important to make sense of how these relationships are configured. Each approach shall be discussed in terms of its implications for making

sense of 'the activity of governing' and 'governed populations and practices'. These form the first two focal points for evaluation.

Henry et al. (2013) argue that policy does not refer to all activities of government, but refers more specifically to those activities that seek to act on or intervene within the field of government. The authors contend that, in order for policy to exist, the field of government must be perceived to be problematic and hence in need of action or intervention.

> *'[T]o put forward a policy is to acknowledge that a new policy was needed or that the old policy needed to be revised in response to the changes occurring in society'.*
> (Henry et al. 2013, Chapter 1, Introduction, Paragraph 11).

It therefore follows that different ways of making sense of policy carry different implications for making sense of the governmental problems which policy presupposes. Hence, each approach shall also be discussed in terms of its implications for making sense of 'governmental problems'. Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010c) argue that inquiry has historically held a strong position within the activities of government. The various ways by which its problems, practices, and relationships have been conceptualised within different contexts of practice have carried significant implications for policy research and analysis. It is important to consider how different approaches may cultivate different possibilities for making sense of inquiry and its role within policy. Each approach shall therefore be discussed in terms of its implications for 'the role of inquiry'. This forms the fourth and final focus point for the evaluation of each approach.

3.1 A Teleological/Outcomes-Focused Approach to Policy

Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010) define an outcomes-focused approach as a way of making sense of policy tools, techniques, and practices in terms of their contribution to achieving a pre-defined outcome or a set of outcomes. These outcomes may be broadly expressed as *'goals or strategies'*, or more *'specific acts such as decisions, announcements and statutes'* which define what is to be achieved and how (12). Within this perspective, policies may also be shaped through *'an overriding logic of action'* referring to a broad disposition towards a field of practice *'(e.g. 'our policy on the environment')'* or a more specific *'structure of practice'* within a given context *'(e.g., 'the school's policy on late essays')'* (12). Therefore, the authors argue that policies may be expressed, communicated, and dispersed in a number of different ways. These include material representations such as policy texts, which preserve, represent, and communicate governmental decisions in visible and coherent ways, as well as more enigmatic modes of communication and dissemination that are unwritten, inferred in practice, and tacitly understood.

Making sense of governmental problems

An outcomes-focused approach operates on the belief that a given field of government holds problematic qualities that need to be solved through appropriate intervention. To ensure that these problems are addressed, governmental actors need to devise appropriate courses of action *'to bring public authority and resources to bear upon these problems'* (Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf 2010, 11). Within this approach, *'the focus of attention is on the problem being addressed and how the measures proposed would contribute to its solution.'* (228). Policy is therefore represented to be a tool that responds to existing problems through appropriate courses of action to achieve the desired 'problem-less' outcomes.

Making sense of the activity of governing

Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010) argue that an outcomes-led approach to policy forms the conceptual basis for understanding the activity of governing in terms of an '*authoritative instrumentalism'. Instrumentalism* refers to how policy is understood to be a tool for the state to pursue and affect a pre-defined political vision through governmental action (Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf 2010b). This political vision functions to shape how governmental problems are addressed and the resulting outcomes desired. *Authoritative* refers to the legislative and symbolic gravitas attached to the governor's decisions. Within the context of public policy, the authors claim that government is typically defined in terms of the state bureaucracy as directed by the authoritative decisions of a political leader or a group of leaders. Such representations of government therefore represent policy as a set of practices directed by those actors who hold decision-making authority within the state. Henry et al. (2013) argue that such an understanding presupposes the field of government to be characterised by functionality, consensus, and coordination. Governmental organisations, agencies, and institutions within and outside the state are represented to be well-functioning cogs ensuring that the social body, as directed by the state, operates in stable ways. Therefore, all forms of social action are represented to be well-aligned with state decision-making and appear to align their practices with policy with the aim of bringing it to fruition.

Authoritative instrumentalism, argue Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010), holds *'great normative power'* within policy work and is often accepted as a taken-for-granted basis for understanding activities of government within formal policy discussions (233). This is echoed by Shore, Wright, and Però (2011), who argue that various bodies of published and influential policy scholarship stand as a clear testament to this. The authors draw particular attention to the Oxford Handbook of Public Policy, published in 2006, which

defines policy as those programmes *'by which officers of the state attempt to rule'* (Moran, Goodin, and Rein 2006, 3 as quoted in Shore, Wright, and Però 2011, 6).

<u>*Making sense of the role of inquiry*</u>

Authoritative instrumentalism establishes 'policy' as *'a series of discrete episodes with the policymakers identifying a problem, considering the alternatives, choosing, and implementing; it is a story with a beginning and an end'* (Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf 2010, 233). While this approach centres its definition of policy on the decision-making practices of governmental leaders as policymakers, Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf contend that:

> *'the narrative also recognizes that these proposals emerge from the work involved in governing, and are channelled through officials, whose function is to 'advise' political leaders. This means the recognition of a variety of 'policy advisors.'* (2010, 13).

The authors refer to three types of policy advisors: those who hold expertise within the specific field of practice the government seeks to intervene in, termed 'functional experts', those who hold expertise in governmental politics and the formulation of policy proposals, termed 'process experts', and policy analysts. The latter are characterised by a capacity for identifying governmental problems and compatible solutions, and their ability to evaluate and compare various potential solutions. Such expertise is considered to be necessary in enabling analysts to define which course of action is best suited to solving the problem, what is needed for this solution to be implemented, and what outcomes are expected as a result of implementation. The policy analyst's role is therefore premised on the assumption that the social domain is characterised by problematic qualities that *can* be known, and that this knowledge is an important tool for successful policymaking. They claim that *'he or she would be comparable to the scientist in the laboratory'* (2010, 13).

Carusi, Rawlins, and Ashton (2018) contend that the assumptions through which the policy analyst typically operates hold a high degree of compatibility with positivism and corresponding approaches to empirical research. While positivist theory is traditionally used to explain and understand the physical domain, when applied to make sense of the social domain, it functions to represent social practices as an objective reality that can be accessed through appropriate empirical techniques (ibid). Within the context of policy research, evidence is represented to be the tool necessary to access valid and reliable explanations about social problems, and define the efficacy of proposed solutions. By taking evidence as a tool for measurement, policy analysts operationalise a '*reality that evidence reveals to be objective, rational, and apolitical. A reality where policy in its formation and implementation is evidence-based, and evidence is the middle term between reality and policy* (Carusi, Rawlins, and Ashton 2018, 344). Fischer (2003b) argues that the kinds of knowledge that positivist empiricism claims to generate are represented to be accessible, replicable, and hence applicable across different governmental contexts. The claimed 'validity' and 'reliability' of empirical knowledge presupposes its independence from the immediate context from which it is drawn, and hence bolsters its political efficacy.

Carusi, Rawlins, and Ashton (2018) contend that the attractiveness of such approaches to policymaking is further reinforced by its alleged distance from politics as a result of a claimed sanitation from subjective contentions of value.

> *By grounding evidence as neutral, and politics as epiphenomenal to evidence, policy is enabled by a ground that is apolitical, natural, empirical, rational, and real which in turn informs subsequent decisions that go into the policy-making process.* (345)

Within this perspective, research emerges as the practice necessary to eliminate the biases of partisanship through technicism and data-driven policy-making. Notwithstanding the

pervasiveness of such claims, Andrews (2007) argues that scientific approaches to policy

analysis have not contributed to the elimination of politics from policymaking. Rather, they

have formed clearer operational distinctions between decision-making and analysis. The

author claims that the former retains its function as the realm of *reason* within which

decision-makers employ value judgments and moral arguments to establish a set of political

rules to which policy practices adhere. Contrastingly, analysis is defined as the realm of

rationality, within which analysts are tasked with problem-solving while adhering to these

rules. The moral legitimacy of a given policy goal is therefore situated outside the analyst's

jurisdiction, establishing clear demarcations between the political practices of authoritative

leaders, and those who generate evidence to inform their decision-making. The distinction,

rather than elimination, of politics from policy analysis, coupled with the political

attractiveness of positivism, rendered policy science particularly compatible with

authoritative instrumentalist modes of government.

Owing to this compatibility, as well as a series of historical events and convergences

that cultivated the need for evidence within governmental practices (see Bogenschneider and

Corbett 2010; deLeon and Vogenbeck 2007), positivism came to hold a dominant position

within governmental policy. According to Andrews (2007), this *'great modern urge to bring

science to bear on society's problems'* holds deep roots in a historical impulse which runs

through the writings of influential advocates such as Plato, Bacon, Marx, and others, and their

steadfast credence in a *'scientifically guided society'* (161). Premised on the belief that new

knowledge is a necessary prerequisite for social progress, such a historical impulse assigned

science and scientific modes of inquiry a great deal of legitimacy. Rizvi and Lingard (2010)

contend that the dominant position of positivism within policymaking can be traced back to

the 1950s and 60s when policy science emerged as a strong response to governmental

demands for tools to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their policy practices and

programmes. Owing to its ontological commitment to social practice as an objective domain, and its assumed capacity to know this domain, positivism held a strong political allure (ibid). Its claimed ability to bolster the efficiency and effectivity of decision-making was derived from the 'proven reliability' of scientific knowledge in tackling problems within fields such as medicine and engineering, and the presumption that similar outcomes can be achieved through its involvement in social policy (Head 2022).

Policy science, as structured by positivism, is shaped through *'a set of scientific methods that serious scientists and scholars agree constitutes a proper way for helping us distinguish fact from belief.'* (Bogenschneider and Corbett 2010, 4). Only those experts holding scientific competence, *'embodying neutrality, authority and skill in a wise figure, operating according to an ethical code 'beyond good and evil'* (Rose and Miller 1992, 187), hold the legitimacy and expertise necessary to speak on behalf of this community. Andrews (2007) points out that, within such configurations of policy analysis, scientific research emerges as an elite practice which only involves a small segment of society. According to deLeon and Vogenbeck (2007), the concept of policy science was first formalised by Harold Lasswell (1951), who sought to assert the relevance of scientific modes of inquiry to the social quandaries underpinning policy. The author proposed a five-stage model of policymaking infused with empirical methods for research. These stages encompassed deliberating the political agenda, defining governmental problems and corresponding solutions, decision-making, policy implementation, and its subsequent evaluation. Laswell's model has been widely assumed as a taken-for-granted approach to policymaking and often forms the basis for structuring and categorising its formal study (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). According to Jann and Wegrich (2007), the 1960s and 70s saw the inception and growth of research communities committed to addressing categories of questions relating to a specific policymaking stage. The authors contend that initially, the concerns of policy analysis

extended only in so far as gauging the extent to which policy goals and objectives are met in practice. Reflecting an outcomes-focused approach, what happens beyond the immediate impacts of legislative action was not considered to be within the purview of policy or its analysis.

It is important to note that Laswell's conceptualisation of policy science was accompanied by a critique of authoritative and technocratic approaches to government, and was originally intended as a means of counteracting the biases of decision-makers and the value judgments through which they sought to legislate (Wagenaar 2007). Yet, the linearity of his proposed model, coupled with the political attractiveness of positivism, rendered it particularly compatible with authoritative instrumental models of government. The stages model hence contributed significantly to establishing scientific methods of inquiry within policymaking and analysis.

Making sense of governed populations and practices

Colebatch (2006) contends that outcomes-led approaches to policy are centred on authoritative choices; authoritative actors are tasked with making them, and analysts are tasked with informing them. Choice similarly structures the relationship between authoritative leaders and the populations they seek to govern, cultivating a role for those people populating targeted fields of practice in policy through 'implementation'. This role is configured by the rationalist and functionalist assumptions that structure an outcomes-led approach to policy; the choices made by authoritative leaders, as communicated and dispersed through policy, are represented to form taken-for-granted directives according to which people change and modify their day-to-day practices. Within this approach, individual actors are represented to only pursue courses of action insofar as they secure the desired

outcomes specified within policy texts (Griggs 2007). The behaviours and practices of governed populations are therefore represented to hold a responsive relationship with policy.

Insofar as the field of practice has been identified and addressed as problematic, all practitioners are attributed with the responsibility to achieve desired outcomes. Their practices are therefore perceived and judged in terms of the extent to which they successfully bring about desired changes. Since an outcomes-led approach to policy assumes problems to be objective qualities of a given field of practice and draws on empirical evidence to pursue effective and efficient solutions, failure for desired outcomes to be achieved is often attributed to agents of implementation and the inadequacy of their practices. As a result, contexts of practice become an important site for research and analysis. Outcomes-led approaches establish the need for policy science to apply its methods in order to generate knowledge about these contexts (Winter 2017; Jann and Wegrich 2007). Such evidenced knowledge is represented to be an important tool for optimising implementation, and cultivating more secure and effective relationships between the inception and realisation of policy.

Key Points

Drawing on the work of Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010c), as well as other authors, I have discussed how a teleological or outcomes-focused approach draws our attention to a pre-defined outcome or set of outcomes and defines all activities of government and social practices in terms of their contributions to their achievement. I have argued that this approach presupposes that the field of government is, in some way, in need of governmental intervention, and that desired outcomes are formed in response to the problematic qualities that precede, and prompt, this intervention. By drawing specific attention to those practices that evaluate the field of government to identify and understand

emerging problems and form courses of action for addressing these problems, I have argued that this approach casts policy as a 'problem-solving' device.

I have also argued that this approach is particularly compatible with what Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010c) term as 'authoritative instrumentalism': a way of making sense of the activity of government that spotlights an authoritative state leader or group of leaders, and their decision-making practices. All activities of government, including policy, are represented to revolve around decisions taken by these leaders. While such an approach focuses its attention on these decisions, authoritative leaders are not considered to be the sole actors within policy. Alongside these leaders, an outcomes-focused account of policy draws attention to policy workers and their role in offering informed advice about which courses of action may be best suited to achieve desired outcomes. Owing to the strong compatibility of its assumptions with a positivist ontology, an outcomes-focused approach assigns particular value to those analysts capable of employing scientific methods to access the field of government and extract objective evidence from within it. Therefore, within this approach, inquiry may only operate insofar as it is capable of generating sanitised scientific knowledge to bolster decision-making, its effectiveness and efficiency.

I have also argued that, within this approach, all forms of social practice are represented to be responsive, and well-aligned, to governmental decision-making, changing and adapting themselves in ways that may best bring desired outcomes to fruition. An outcomes-led approach therefore leads us to make sense of governed populations and their practices strictly in terms of their contribution (or lack thereof) to the achievement of desired outcomes.

3.2 A Relational/Process-Focused Approach to Policy

A relational approach to policy shifts the term's pointing function from policy outcomes and the various practices that contribute to their achievement, to the relationships and processes through which these outcomes come to be defined as desirable.

Making sense of the activity of government

Coleabtach, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010) argue that this approach emerges not from any sudden or explicit change in the practice of policy, but rather from the situated perspectives of policy workers. Experiential accounts of policy work derived from these perspectives recast policymaking as a web of relationships among multiple participants. While these relationships are represented to form the foundation for policymaking decisions, their complexity unsettles the centrality of authoritative choice within activities of government. Policy is defined as the aggregate outcome of interactions between decision-makers, broader state bureaucracies, and *'officials of organised interest'* outside its formal structures (Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf 2010). A process-focused approach hence highlights how policymaking involves a multiplicity of participants located within and beyond the state, and how their interactions shape policy decisions.

> *There are many players in the game, not all of them are involved in supporting a single political leader, or even a collective called 'the government,' and not all of them are trying to 'make policy.'* (Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf 2010), 15)

The authors argue that, within this approach, policy emerges as the outcome of interactions *'among a large and diverse array of participants, who have overlapping agendas, different interpretations of the problem, and varying levels of concern about its resolution.'* (228). They claim:

In this account, the focus of policy work is less on the prior preferences of the actor ('the government') and more on the generation of an outcome considered acceptable to a sufficiently broad range of stakeholders to win endorsement by the relevant political leaders. (36)

This approach therefore assumes a broader perspective than an outcomes-led approach to account for the various relationships and interactions through which decisions are formed. Within this perspective, activities of government are no longer limited to the state. Its actors and organisations still retain considerable influence in defining which matters of concern are addressed and which policy outcomes are pursued. However, policy practices and decisions are no longer perceived to be the sole remit of an authoritative decision-maker.

The significance of this approach within policy work has been amplified by changing patterns of practices and structures characterising government in western democracies, and corresponding changes in its formal study. These are often described by the use of the term 'governance' (Rhodes 1990, 1997). This refers specifically to a shift from centralised and hierarchical relationships and activities, to decentralised modes of government that distribute decision-making and regulation across various networks of inter-subjective and inter-organisational relationships. Such a momentous change carried a number of implications for policy work. According to Rhodes (1990), governance established more intimate and interdependent working relationships between organisations located within, as well as outside of the state, hence blurring the boundaries between public and private domains of practice that typically structure centralised modes of government. The distribution of decision-making practices across networks resulted in an increasing de-centralisation of authoritative state leaders within policymaking. Each participant contests and negotiates policy goals according to the various political goals and frameworks of value they may seek to operationalise.

Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010c) argue that relationships between policymaking participants are not random, but are formed around aspects of shared concern or interest that shape the form and function of policy decisions within a given area.

> *The players develop relationships based on familiarity and trust, find common ground in the policy area, and recognize their mutual interdependence.* (15)

These relationships are structured through established and routinised patterns of interaction which form what are often termed 'policy communities' (229). Rhodes (1990) defines 'policy communities' as networks which are only accessible to a restricted group of policy actors tasked with collectively realising the functional interests of government, and whose relational practices are largely inaccessible to those outside such communities. The author contends that the communities form only one of numerous other types of networks which contribute to governance. These include intergovernmental networks, professional networks, networks relating to economic interests and aspects of production, as well as networks shaped around the definition and negotiation of a specialised issue. While all networks share an interest in a specific matter of concern, Rhodes argues that different kinds of networks can be discerned by different organisational and relational structures, implications and dimensions of membership, as well as extents of access to resources. Since different networks tend to coexist across various sites and levels of governance, they often operate within tensions that demand careful consideration, negotiation, and management.

Within the last two decades of the 20th century, policymaking has extended beyond the participation of recognised actors and organisations to encompass the active participation of citizens (Roberts 2004). Driven by an increasing dissatisfaction with the outcomes of technocratic decision-making, citizens have sought spaces to voice their own perspectives about the problems they face and how these can be best addressed. Since technocratic policy

practices are not well attuned to subjective plurality, the situated perspectives held by governed populations were often largely absent from outcomes-led approaches to policymaking (Henry et al. 2013). An increase in calls for direct citizen involvement therefore signalled budding epistemological tensions between the normative legitimacy assigned to expert knowledge and the practical knowledge emerging from situated struggles and lived experiences. Henry et al. (2013) claim that social movements and interest groups played a particularly strong role in advancing demands for citizens' involvement within policymaking contexts. In response, the relationships between policymakers, policy communities, policy analysts, and governed populations changed to accommodate these demands and expectations.

A process-focused approach to policy highlights how understandings of, and responses to the problematic qualities of the social domain are not known and addressed from a single point of view but are defined through multiple perspectives that stand in tension with and contest the position of others. Therefore, this approach unsettles the functionalist assumptions that typically prevail within an outcomes-focused approach. As argued by Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010c):

> *an account focused on activity might reveal, that for many participants, participation is not about a policy on X, but on resisting it, or trying to use the interest in X to affect change in governmental practices in relation to p, q or r. The account would be framed in terms of interaction or conflict regarding the nature of the problem and the appropriate response, or resistance and distraction, or the search for a broadly acceptable outcome, or the ambiguity about the decisions made, and the potential for continuing the discussion.* (17)

This approach therefore recasts activities of government to account for the plurality, messiness, and conflict that typically emerge within a field of policymaking populated by multiple actors competing for attention and recognition and holding different value-commitments and levels of decision-making authority. Policy is therefore understood to emerge from within the cacophony of voices, interactions, and relationships which constitute governance.

> *The interest is not so much in how the participants collaborated to achieve a known and desired result, but how the ongoing interaction between the participants – involved in various ways, to various extents, and for various reasons – was marked by points of apparent firmness ('decisions'), which were then taken to come up with a 'policy' on a particular issue.* (17)

A relational approach to policy, and its focus on the processes through which it emerges, carries implications for the ways policy decisions are communicated and dispersed. While policy decisions may still present themselves through coherent proposals and a clear communicative logic, these are attributed not to a single decision-maker, but to the complex relationships, contentions, and compromises through which multiple policy participants interact. The coherent definition and communication of policy decisions emerging from these interactions implies that policy involves purposeful practices capable of reconciling and establishing connections between *'different structures and logics'* and shaping them *'into a presentable form'* (Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf 2010, 229). While it may seem to offer a homogeneous representation of intention, Ball (1993) points out that the textual representation of policy decisions is marked by heterogeneity, not least because they are typically penned by multiple authors. The author argues that it is important to recognise that the organisational structures and institutional contexts within which policy texts are shaped exert a significant influence on their formation. Different political contexts carry different

implications for who is able to speak in and through policy text, whose perspectives should be represented within it, and what can be proposed through it. Nevertheless, the author argues that *'quibbling and dissensus still occur within the babble of 'legitimate' voices'* (45). Given that the process of text formation involves reconciling several political perspectives, intentions, and beliefs, Ball argues that the process of encoding texts with meaning is particularly messy. While policy texts are often attributed to the authority a governmental body holds over its governed population, Ball (1997) points out that contemporary policymaking contexts are marked by political relationships and policymaking interactions that transcend the traditionally national boundaries of policymaking. The author therefore draws attention to the role of national-global relations in the production of policy texts, and their contribution to the entanglement of actors, influences, pressures, and interactions forming the 'babbles' of policymaking. Ball (1993) claims that these complexities often result in policy texts whose significance is muddled by plurality, resulting in *'a blurring of meanings […], and in public confusion and a dissemination of doubt'* (Ball 1993, 43).

Colebatch (2006) argues that while the contemporary presence of situated perspectives within accounts of policy work has functioned to broaden definitions of policy, how it is made, and who gets to participate in its making, it does not entirely displace outcomes-led approaches. Since each approach draws attention to different aspects of policy (outcome and process), both perspectives typically coexist, residing within different contexts of practice. Despite changes in governmental practices, he claims that outcome-focused approaches continue to hold normative power because they typically occupy official accounts of policy work. Nevertheless, the increased presence of process-focused perspectives within policy studies has intensified the dissonance between official and experiential accounts of policy and has contributed to unsettling its near-hegemonic status.

Making sense of governmental problems

A process-focused approach also serves to reframe the relationship between governmental problems and policy. Within an outcomes-led approach, policymaking starts with defining governmental problems and ends with their solution. Problems are therefore assigned with a definite relationship with policy as the objective quality which presupposes and directs its function. Since a process-focused approach recasts policy as the outcome of a continuous process of interaction among a multiplicity of participants, it functions to shift the position of problems. While interactions among participants remain responsive to areas of shared concern, problems are less formally defined, and assume a more marginal and indefinite position within policymaking.

> *In this account, participants do not start by identifying a problem; rather, they find themselves in a continuous flow of action, much of it initiated by others. […] They are not so much solving problems as managing areas of concern, seeking mutually acceptable outcomes, which can be seen as improvement.* (Colebatch 2010, 32)

A relational perspective, therefore, redefines the relationship between policy and the problems it addresses *'in terms of the way that concerns are recognized as worthy of collective attention and ways of dealing with them as appropriate'* (Colebatch 2006, 316).

Colebatch (2010) claims that this perspective recasts policymaking as *'a process of social construction, marked by conflict and ambiguity regarding the problems to be addressed, which voices should be heard, and what activities may be appropriate.'* (33). This implies that identifying areas of concern does not merely entail 'reading off' problems from the objective qualities of the social domain in question, as typically presumed within an outcomes-led approach. Rather, areas of concern emerge as an outcome of multifarious perspectives and situated interpretations. Each perspective is shaped by different *'frameworks*

of understanding of what is problematic and worthy of attention, what bodies of knowledge are relevant, what technologies of governing can be applied, and which actors are allowed to speak.' (Colebatch 2010, 32-33). These frameworks subsequently shape the relationships and interactions between policymaking participants. The qualities of a problem are no longer understood to be intrinsic to the qualities of the social domain being governed, indicating a shift in the epistemological assumptions structuring the conceptualisation of policy problems. Rather, they are conceived to be subjective understandings shaped through interpretation and interaction. This perspective, Bacchi (2015) claims, redefines problem-definition as an act of 'problematisation'. Rather than an objective quality that *presupposes* purposeful action, problematisation recasts problems as the *outcome* of purposeful action, which highlights the active role of policy actors in defining the problematic qualities of a given matter of concern.

A relational approach also draws attention to how the processes through which these areas of concern come to be defined are no longer centralised but emerge as the outcome of pluralised interaction and contestation. Henry et al. (2013) argue that approaches to policy that draw attention to conflict are useful because they highlight that:

> *'[w]hile it is true that policies are responses to particular social changes, it is also the case that these changes may themselves be represented in a variety of different ways, and accorded contrasting significance.'* (Henry et al 2013, Introduction, Paragraph 10).

Conflict and confluence, argues Head (2022) form the various kinds of problems discussed, debated, and addressed within contemporary policy contexts. The author proposes three categories of governmental problems: simple, complex, and wicked. Following its ascendance in global policy terminology, the term 'wicked' is often used to refer to those problems which display extensive characteristics of stubbornness, recurrence, complexity,

and political controversy. The position of a given problem within these categories hence depends on the extent to which it is perceived to be morally controversial, as well as the scope it offers for contestation. He claims that depending on whether they are simple and straightforward, or complex, slippery, and 'wicked', different problems shape policymaking relationships and interactions between decision-makers, policy analysts, and stakeholders in different ways. For example:

> '*simple policy problems tend to be defined precisely by the policy actors and stakeholders. The latter agree on the knowledge base for understanding the problem, relevant technical parameters, cost-effective options and the locus of responsibility and capacity for addressing the problem.*' (12)

Conversely, more complex problems invite contestation and negotiation by a variety of actors holding variable political identities, interests and ideologies.

A policymaking context characterised by plurality, conflict, and contestation has functioned to extend the role of policy workers beyond policy analysis to encompass strategic management (Colebatch 2006). The pluralism which accompanies networked governance and decentralisation establishes a political need for practices which generate the compromises and common understandings necessary for actors to practice in convergent ways. As argued by Bacchi (2015), shared problematisations are an important prerequisite for coordinated responses to a problem. The role of policy workers therefore extends to managing clashing perspectives and reframing matters of concern in ways that circumvent controversy. Policy workers are therefore tasked with constructing and maintaining collaborative and communicative relationships among governance networks and other stakeholders, whilst tending to the institutional structures within which they occur.

Making sense of the role of inquiry

A relational approach to policy highlights the plurality of political actors participating within the policymaking process, drawing attention to the ways each actor seeks to contest and configure policy according to situated perspectives, values, and interests. By highlighting the plurality of perspectives active in the formation of policy, and drawing attention to spaces of contention and contestation, this approach functions to unsettle taken-for-granted assumptions about the social domain in which policy operates and the areas of concern its participants seek to address. This carries significant implications for the role of research and analysis within policy. Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010c) point out that, within a governmental context characterised by a plurality of participants, practices of inquiry that overlook situated perspectives are bound to meet resistance and critique. Therefore, the forms of research and analysis that typically prevail within an outcomes-focused approach to policy are recast as inadequate within a relational approach. According to Fischer (2016), the increasing presence of process-led perspectives within policy literature has established a fertile conceptual landscape for theoretical and methodological debates relating to the role of inquiry within policymaking (Fischer 2016). Drawing on the conceptual opportunities afforded by pluralism, interpretivist methodologies emerged as particularly useful alternatives to positivist theories and methods of inquiry. Fischer (2003a) defines interpretivism as a family of approaches held together by a foundation of ontological and epistemological assumptions. The author claims that interpretivist epistemologies draw attention to how the social domain within which policymaking occurs is markedly different to the physical realm, a distinction which is largely absent within positivist epistemologies. Within such perspectives, the various structures, practices, relationships, and phenomena that form the social domain derive their meaning not from any internal or objective properties that precede inquiry. Rather, they derive their meaning from the situated and subjective ways in which

people experience, interpret, and communicate about the social domain. Therefore, in order to understand the context within which the government seeks to intervene, research and analysis must engage with situated perspectives and questions of meaning. This encompasses an understanding of how reality is perceived, the context within which these perceptions operate, and how they shape the field of practice. As a result, universal and generalisable explanations are defined as inadequate, while all claims to knowledge are recast as situated and hence partial.

A relational approach not only cultivates a need for theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches other than those deemed viable by positivism but also recasts existing relationships between policy researchers and governmental actors. The role of policy researchers is no longer tethered to authoritative decision-makers and the outcomes they perceive to be politically valuable but is rather tasked with navigating a political terrain characterised by multiplicity and conflict. Head (2022) highlights how research emerges as a particularly useful tool in navigating this terrain effectively. Through the use of empirical techniques, policy workers may access the various perspectives proposed by participants and deliberate their utility in addressing matters of shared concern. Hence, interpretivist perspectives recast the plurality that emerges within process-focused approaches as a useful tool for problem-solving. As argued by Head, these perspectives suggest *'that reliable knowledge about human behaviour and institutions can improve our collective understanding of complex social problems, clarify the likely effectiveness of potential interventions and thus reduce stakeholder disagreements and achieve better policy outcomes'* (16). Our understanding of policy analysis therefore changes from a technology of control disposed only to authoritative leaders, to a political and strategic tool for avoiding political distortion and bias, strengthening practices of advocacy, and fostering more productive forms of contestation across policy networks (Henry et al. 2013).

Dale (1994) contends that, at the turn of the 21st century, educational policy saw a strong proliferation of research and analytic practices seeking to grapple with what he terms 'education politics', meaning the processes by which political agendas are translated into areas of concern for education, and how these areas of concern are addressed. Quoting the work of Cox (1980), Dale argues that prevailing approaches to educational policy research hold a markedly problem-solving orientation because they seek to *'make these relationships and institutions work smoothly by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble'* (129). Educational policy research, argues Dale, seldom engages with the broader relationships and interactions through which a political agenda is formed and the consequences its configurations may carry.

> *The essence of my argument is that education politics cannot be understood or explained without a more or less explicit reference to, and appreciation of, the politics of education— and those references and appreciation have been very largely absent from most of the recent work on education policy.* (39)

As a result, argues Dale, policy inquiry functions not only to preserve existing configurations of political and organisational structures but assume these configurations as a taken-for-granted perspective through which education as a field of governmental activity may be known. The author advocates for forms of research that direct their analytic gaze more specifically towards these structures, to shed light on the frameworks of value and authority they operationalise through policy. By scrutinizing these frameworks and how they came to be, such approaches are able to shed light on the political processes through which policy proposals are formed.

The critical orientation defined by Dale alludes to the space cultivated by a relational approach to policy for forms of research and analysis that differ from those defined thus far.

Rather than facilitating the processes of policy-making and problem-solving, these approaches seek to understand and question how proposals, decisions, and matters of concern emerge from the interactions, clashes, and compromises that form policy. Among its analytic interests are *'[h]ow situations become policy concerns, the recognition of authoritative knowledge, and the identification of appropriate responses'* (Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf 2010c, 36), focusing *'attention on how issues are problematized, how they are understood, and who can speak authoritatively about them'* (37). They therefore cast the focus of analysis away from the problem or the area of shared concern, to the interactions and contexts that shape how these problems or areas are understood and addressed. These forms of analytic inquiry are often termed analyses *of* policy, which stand in contrast to analyses *for* policy.

According to Fischer (2003b), the 80s and 90s saw an increasing profusion of theoretical and analytic lenses seeking to explain how and why political systems have engaged with particular problems and not others. Interpretivism emerged as a particularly prevalent theoretical tool in this regard. Driven by the assumption that people's actions are intimately connected to their intentions, analysts have sought to engage with subjective practices and perspectives, as well as inter-subjective and -organisational interactions, in order to cultivate a better understanding of how different policy problems and areas of concern are formed. These include a phenomenological interest in political actors' perspectives and the meanings they assign to problems (Fischer 2003a), how they manipulate signs and symbols to influence how others conceive of problems and the tools they make use of in the process (Danziger 1995), as well as a sociological interest in the relational, structural, and institutional contexts within which such practices occur and the effects they carry (Ozga 2021). Bacchi (2015) contends that the concept of 'problematisation' has come to occupy a dominant position within the theoretical and analytical repertoire of policy analysts

in the west, and has reconfigured the relationship between policy research and governmental problems in particularly productive ways. This is because the concept shifts the focus of analytic scrutiny away from desired policy outcomes and solutions, and directs analysts to consider how people perceive things to be problematic and how these perceptions shape their practices and their interactions with others. By doing so, problematisation has contributed to the formation of critical fields of inquiry that unsettle the totalising position of empiricism within policy.

Given that a relational approach to policy highlights the multiplicity of participants and conflictual interactions through which an area of shared concern is formed and addressed, it also draws attention to how policy decisions reflect the perspectives of some participants over others. This forms an important set of questions for analysts who seek to engage critically with the relationship between policy and acts of problematisation. The influential definition of policy as *'the authoritative allocation of values'*, proposed by the American political scientist David Easton (1953) has been particularly influential in this regard. When approached through a process-focused perspective, Easton's definition directs analysts to consider how conflicting values achieve variable levels of representation and marginalisation within policy (Easton 1953). Furthermore, it leads us to consider how the position of these values may hold particular relationships to governmental authority. In his work, Easton attempts to clarify his use of the term 'authority' by distinguishing between two possible definitions. The first relates to policy as a form of political power through which leaders may impose their values on others. The second, which Easton draws on, refers to a more enigmatic form of authority that shapes the political context of practice, and from which a particular proposition, as opposed to others, may attain its legitimacy. While this distinction may lack conceptual clarity, Easton's proposition still serves as a useful tool for reconsidering how authority may be reconceptualised within a relational approach to policy (Rizvi and Lingard

2010). The authors contend that the position of various values within political contexts of deliberation carries a significant impact on the extent to which particular perspectives are represented within policy. In addition, the authors claim that the relationships among various corresponding values, the position of actors within networks, organisations, and policymaking relationships, as well as their access to material resources, are also significant variables that influence policymaking.

Head (2022) similarly draws attention to the role of value and authority within contexts of debate and contestation, arguing that the success of political proposals depends on the extent to which the narratives through which they are proposed convince others of their legitimacy. In order to do so, participants are tasked with establishing successful connections between their proposals and what is perceived to be of most value within a given political context. For example, the author contends that scientific expertise and evidence continue to hold an authoritative position within contemporary contexts of policymaking. Therefore, within this context, empirical evidence and technical knowledge emerge as important tools in discussion and deliberation. The author also draws attention to the role of framing within agenda-setting and deliberation, and the utility of tools and techniques such as political rhetoric in forming convincing narratives.

When applied within contemporary contexts, a relational approach to policy draws attention to interactions that include, but extend beyond those occurring within national contexts to consider the role of other actors, groups, and organisations situated outside. Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010c) draw attention to how policymaking within the 21st century occurs within post-national spaces. For example, *'[n]ew regional bodies are emerging whose ability to make rules can override national government authority, such as the European Union'* (Book, 155). The increased significance of international networks and organisations such as OECD, UNESCO, the European Union and the World Bank have

provoked policy analysts to move beyond the limits of methodological nationalism to grapple with the complex interactions and broader structural contexts established within and across international, transnational, national and sub-national contexts (Lingard 2021). A growing analytic interest in the 'glocalisation' (Robertson 2021) of policy signals recognition of global-local interactions in the developments of national policies, drawing attention to the complex flow of pressure, constraint, influence and mediation across local, national, inter- and transnational levels (Ball 1997, 2006; Halpin 1994; Dale 2006). Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue that the various relationships of power that have been formed across these levels have, and continue to carry a significant impact on governmental activity, highlighting the role of colonial, neo-colonial, and post-colonial relationships within contemporary policy practices. The authors draw particular attention to the relationship between western paradigms and contemporary configurations of power, arguing that the *'silent valorisation of Western epistemologies'* has contributed to the perpetuation of these power relations (64).

Critical approaches to policy analysis, argues Fisher (2016), ought to grapple with questions of power, value, and authority. Within interpretivist traditions, the author argues that analysts should not only seek empirical data that may shed light on policy structures, actions and relationships but should make use of this data to understand the relationships between meaning-making and power. Such analyses are typically characterised by an interest in who holds power, how configurations of power structure socio-political relationships and assign variable levels of authority to actors and their meaning-making practices, whose interests are served by these configurations, and how certain relationships and interactions may contribute to the preservation or subversion of these relationships (Henry et al. 2013; Birkland 2007).

Easton's (1953) aforementioned analysis of value and authority also draws attention to how practices of research and analysis are implicated within these important questions. In

evaluating the authoritative qualities of policymaking practices active at the time, Easton problematises the perpetual and symbiotic relationship between powerful actors and analysts, arguing that it has historically held a conservative function. He argues that:

> *Entrenched power groups in society, those who have a firm hold on a particular pattern of distribution of social goods, material and spiritual, have a special reason to look askance at this probing into the nature and source of their social positions and activities. They are prone to stimulate research of a kind that does not inquire into the fundamentals of the existing arrangement of things. […] History has yet to show us empowered groups who welcomed investigation into the roots and distribution of their strength.* (Easton 1953, 51)

Easton's contentions prompt analysts to consider how prevailing approaches to policy research have been and continue to be sustained by configurations of power and authority. Furthermore, the author draws attention to the ways by which these approaches may sustain or unsettle existing configurations of power. A critical approach to analysis therefore carries with it an obligation for researchers to subject their situated perspectives, assumptions, and methodological preferences to scrutiny (Troyna 1994). This, argues Troyna, is crucial to acknowledging that research is *'carried out by flesh and blood figures who are engaged in real life activities'* (Jacubowicz 1991, 5 as quoted in Troyna 1994, 5). Through concepts such as 'reflexivity', theoretical perspectives such as critical interpretivism have sought to establish a pronounced space for reflection and self-assessment as a marker of ethicality and legitimacy within contemporary contexts of research (ibid). This represents an important step towards unveiling dominant perspectives whose hegemonic position may marginalise or dismiss existing alternatives, and cultivating analytic practices capable of confronting and subverting their totalising effects.

Subversive modes of critique within policy studies have emerged most prominently in normative analyses which draw on the politico-philosophical legacies of 'radical leftists' such as Marx, proponents of the Frankfurt School, as well as theorists within various 'critical' traditions of thought (Dryzek 2009). Dryzek however argues that critical approaches can also be found within the practices of policy science and their empirical approach to research. The author contends that this is most significantly exemplified within Harold Lasswell's conceptualisation of policy science, which has been discussed in section 3.1 in terms of its dominant position within governmental activities driven by an outcomes-led approach to policy. While Lasswell's stages model has been widely appropriated by authoritative instrumentalist models of governmental practice, Dryzek argues that his work was originally accompanied by a scathing criticism of *'the psychopathology he believed often accompanied individual pursuit of political power'* (ibid, 193). His critique was underpinned by the belief that policymaking should not be driven by the ideological beliefs and political interests held by authoritative decision-makers. Committed to forming more democratic policymaking practices, Lasswell proposed policy science as a tool for identifying and elaborating on the various situated perspectives held by governed citizens as contributions to policy decisions (Wagenaar 2007). The proposed model was structured by the belief that policymaking should absolve, rather than sustain, distinctions of authority between citizens, governmental actors, and policy scientists. Formed through what he terms as a 'contextual orientation', Laswell proposed policy science as a tool for decoupling policy from the authoritative practices prevalent at the time by cultivating collective spaces for problem-solving which draw on citizens' perspectives and situated knowledge. Through the author's proposals, policymaking was recast as a democratic rather than a technocratic enterprise.

While the use of Lasswell's proposed model often lacks such critical associations, his proposals are particularly significant because they highlight the breadth of potential impact

that a relational approach to policy can have on policy research. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue that literature has traditionally organised approaches to policy research and analysis in terms of two distinct categories. The first relates to those approaches to research oriented towards facilitating policy practices, termed research *for* policy. The second relates to those approaches oriented towards scrutinising policy practices, termed research *of* policy. These two categories are typically characterised by a family of theoretical lenses, with the former holding strong normative associations with positivist empiricism, and the latter holding broader associations with post-positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory, among others. Therefore, the two are often defined as distinct fields of inquiry pursuing goals that seldom intersect or interact.

Rizvi and Lingard argue that the prevailing distinction between these two approaches to research is distinctly unhelpful for policy studies. While this binary holds some heuristic utility in defining and elaborating on the complex landscape of practice forming policy inquiry, the authors argue that their segregation deprives the field of important opportunities. Furthermore, the authors claim that this differentiation has contributed significantly to the re-emergence of rationalism and technicism within contemporary contexts of policymaking. Shapiro (2002) echoes these sentiments, arguing that the failure of political science and political philosophy to find points of intersection has contributed to the circumscription of normative and empirical inquiry. In its pursuit of politically desirable outcomes, policy science typically marginalises the theoretical resources afforded by normative analyses. Furthermore, by detaching itself from the philosophical questions addressed within a normative analysis, empiricism remains driven by conservative, tried and tested methods which, argues Shapiro, fail to offer significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge. This mirrors *'the old adage that if the only tool you have is a hammer, everything around you starts to look like a nail.'* (598). The author argues that political philosophy may

offer important conceptual and theoretical perspectives for policy science. Conversely, by rooting itself firmly within the realm of the conceptual and philosophical, and hence detaching itself from the goals driving policy science, normative inquiry eliminates possibilities for its insights to be adopted and applied within policy contexts. Notwithstanding the methodological and conceptual segregation which often persists, these arguments attest to the impact of process-led approaches on policy research and analysis, highlighting its role in cultivating new fields of research, as well as opening spaces for unsettling and revisiting established ones.

Making sense of governed populations and practices

The process-focused approach discussed thus far, as well as the interpretivist lenses that typically emerge as a result of its application within policy inquiry, draw attention to the pluralistic and conflict-laden practices that populate policy. These are not only bound to agenda-setting and decision-making but extend to recast the relationship between governing activities and governed populations. Stephen Ball's theorisation of policy as a 'textual intervention' is particularly influential in this regard (Ball 2006b). According to Ball, the messiness and ad-hocery involved in shaping policy texts similarly emerge in the process of interpreting and decoding their meaning. The author contends that *'some texts are framed by or have embedded in them the weight, and measure, or requirement'* (44), drawing attention to how authors often make use of tools and techniques to control and regulate how policies are interpreted by their readers. This includes linguistic tools such as narrative framing and rhetoric, regulatory apparatuses such as quality assurance mechanisms and similar accountability measures which monitor and control how proposals are implemented, as well as other material and communicative techniques that organise, structure, and micro-manage the processes of reading and interpreting a policy text. Drawing on Nelson's (1965) theorisation of 'hypertextuality', Peters and Jandrić (2018a) highlight how digital

technologies have reconfigured the representational formats and communicative possibilities afforded to writers. Within contemporary contexts of policymaking, information technologies and multimedia tools such as pre-recorded videos, configured texts, and interactive webpages play an important role in these practices.

However, despite such efforts, an interpretivist lens leads us to consider that policy texts will always be read differently by meaning-making actors situated variably within different contexts of practice. This is because, notwithstanding the tools and techniques employed to regulate how people make sense of policies, it is impossible to impose a prescriptive proposal for action that is at once universal and applicable to all contexts of application. Therefore, proposals can never be fully specific about the ways people are expected to act in response to a particular problem.

> *Policies do not normally tell you what to do, they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed or particular goals or outcomes are set* (Ball 1993, 46)*.*

Furthermore, a relational approach to policy leads us to consider how different people, through their situated perspectives, may experience and value their field of practice in different ways. Hence, it is entirely possible that people's perceptions and value judgments may differ from policy proposals and/or the intentions through which they were conceived, shaped, and communicated. Owing to these variables, the ways by which policy proposals are read within various contexts of practice will always be subject to variation.

Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2011) propose the concept of 'enactment' as their attempt at making sense of the messy processes through which policy texts are read, understood, and brought into contexts of practice. The authors claim that the concept offers a useful counter-narrative to prevailing representations of implementation. They define enactment as a

practice elaborated within two interrelated processes that occur within different contexts: *interpretation* and *translation. Interpretation* refers to the initial processes through which people may read policy texts and form an understanding of what they mean in relation to the unique context they may occupy. The peculiarities of context are therefore brought to bear on policy proposals, reshaping their intended meanings relationally to the goals, exigencies, relationships, material possibilities and other variables that form it. The authors define *translation*, as a *'sort of third space between policy and practice'* (45). Within this space, policy proposals materialise in a variety of ways. For example, the authors argue that, within the organisational contexts of formal schooling, materialisations may include changes in behaviour, the production of new objects such as guidance documents and teaching materials, and changes in an institution's structures and professional relationships. The authors draw particular attention to how school leaders and managers often create visual material to translate policy proposals and communicate their applicability to educators. These materials often come to be the sole means through which these practitioners engage with policy.

Ball, Maguire, and Braun's (2011) definition of enactment draws attention to how the processes of implementing policy proposals within different contexts of practice involve a form of mediation that functions to reshape policy. As argued by Berkhout and Wielemans (1999), '*[t]he act of playing the game has a way of changing the rules*' (415). While the concept of enactment assigns practitioners a significant measure of agency in the interpretation and translation of policy texts, Ball (1993) contends that this agency is not absolute. The author argues that the socio-political contexts which texts enter carry a substantial impact on practices of enactment:

> *'[…] the physical text that pops through the school letterbox, or where ever, does not arrive 'out of the blue', it has an interpretational and representational history, neither*

does it enter a social or institutional vacuum. The text and its readers and the context of

response all have histories.' (Ball 1993, 45)

According to Ball, contexts of response are formed and influenced by policy texts other than the one in question. The author draws particular attention to the multiplicity of policy, arguing that, while policy texts may appear to emerge successively, they do not replace each other. Rather they amass and coexist, establishing complex webs of proposals and legacies of practice that hold a strong influence on contexts of enactment. It is also important to consider that a given context of response is not only influenced by policies which are specifically addressed to it but is also influenced by policies targeting other contexts of practice. For example, Raab (1994) argues that, in most economically developed countries, education claims a substantial portion of public expenditure. Hence, education often finds itself implicated in policy proposals and techniques of regulation pertaining to fields of policy other than its own. Enactment therefore emerges as a space within which the governed population simultaneously demonstrate *'invention and compliance'*, operating through practices that shape and are at once shaped by the policies addressed to them (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2011, 48).

Key Points

In this section, I have drawn on the work of Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010c) and other authors to discuss how a relational approach to policy shifts the focus of attention from policy problems, decisions, and outcomes to the complex relational practices from within which they emerge. The authoritative decision-maker is displaced from the centre of attention, redefining the activity of government in terms of a plurality of interactions among multiple participants who hold a shared interest in addressing a particular matter of concern and situated variably within and outside the state. Governmental problems

are therefore redefined as the outcome of these interactions, formed through contestations and contentions informed by the various situated perspectives through which participants understand and attribute meaning to a matter of concern. This approach therefore draws attention to the dissensus and conflict that emerge from within these interactions.

Furthermore, I have argued that, by focusing attention on situated perspectives and relational interactions, a process-focused approach cultivates space for reconsidering the role of inquiry. Interpretivism emerges as a particularly useful theoretical lens in this regard, leading analysts to engage with the various perspectives, experiences, and meaning-making practices as tools for grappling with governmental problems, defining appropriate solutions, and achieving consensus among participants. Critical approaches to interpretivism also cultivate space for policy research to step outside policymaking and its problem-solving agenda. By grappling with questions of knowledge, value, authority, and power, analysts are able to shed light on how policies reflect the perspectives, ideologies, and interests of some participants at the expense of others.

A relational approach carries extensive implications for the position of governed populations within policy, recasting them as active participants rather than passive recipients. This includes their involvement in decision-making practices through activism and political participation, as well as their practices within sites of implementation. Elaborating on the latter, a process-focused approach draws particular attention to how governed populations impact, reshape, and appropriate policy in the act of implementing its proposals. The concept of 'enactment', as proposed by Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2011a), emerges as a particularly useful conceptual tool in this regard, drawing attention to how practices of interpretation and translation hold an inter-constitutive relationship with the policy proposals they engage with.

3.3 A Discursive/Discourse-Focused Approach to Policy

The approaches discussed thus far have been drawn by Colebatch, Hoppe, and Noordegraaf (2010c) from official accounts (outcomes-led approach) and situated perspectives (process-led approach) that represent policy work within different communicative contexts. As a third alternative, I shall draw on the poststructuralist theorisations of Michel Foucault and its application in the study of governmental activities to propose a discourse-led approach to policy. This work presents Foucault's response to a perceived incompatibility of the configuration of governmental activities within 20th-century western contexts and the theoretical lenses which analysts typically adopt to make sense of them. Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) broadly define poststructuralism as a family of theorisations characterised by *'a questioning of Enlightenment assumptions concerning reason, emancipation, science and progress, and disquiet regarding connections between this thinking and social inequality.'* (4). Central to such an approach is an understanding of day-to-day realities as shaped by practice, thus establishing the possibility of reconceptualising these realities as *'contingent, open to challenge and change.'* (4). The authors claim that its *'emphasis on heterogeneity and contingency offers a refreshing skepticism about the full range of "things" usually associated with policy, including policy itself'*.

Foucault's work, namely his theorisation of knowledge, power, and 'discourse', offers particularly useful tools for revisiting policy. 'Discourse' is often used to refer to patterns of language use, dialogue, and conversation, and can often be found as a unit of analysis within interpretivist analyses that seek to grapple with the perspectives, experiences, and intentions of policy actors. Within the context of Foucault's work, discourse refers more specifically to his theorisation of the taken-for-granted systems of thought that shape the activities of government and the routine practices they seek to regulate. While Foucault's conceptualisation of discourse encompasses theoretical and analytic engagement with

meaning-making practices, the term's use marks a departure from an interpretivist focus on how *people* make meaning to consider more thoroughly how *it becomes possible* for people to make meaning in particular ways. While subtle, this shift of emphasis from subjective intention to discursive possibility is what makes Foucault's theoretical work particularly useful in reconsidering policy.

Making sense of the activity of government

Foucault (1980b) contends that the study of governmental practices and relationships is often approached through the taken-for-granted understanding of political power as a concrete object which may be obtained, exchanged, held, and exercised. Depending on their position within governmental structures and organisations, actors are assumed to hold greater or lesser political power, which translates into a degree of authority over the activities of government and the outcomes they should be oriented to achieve. Within policymaking contexts, this may include the definition of governmental problems, politically desirable outcomes, as well as appropriate solutions. Foucault argues that such an approach to the study of government typically grapples with the exercise of political power through the ways it is used to *prohibit* and *constrain* governed populations and their day-to-day practices. He contends that this understanding can be traced back to theories of power which were initially formed to explain and analyse sovereign modes of rule such as the monarchy (ibid). While configurations of government have long since distanced themselves from sovereignty, the author argues that the study of government has yet *'to cut off the King's head'* (121), perpetuating a conceptual and analytic legacy that is largely incompatible with contemporary configurations of government. According to Rose and Miller (1992), this is most evident in forms of analysis which define and analyse government exclusively in terms of the activities of the state, often drawing on analytic vocabulary premised on *'oppositions between state and*

civil society, government and market, coercion and consent, sovereignty and autonomy' (174).

Tracing their provenance to 17th and 18th-century practices, Foucault argues that contemporary configurations of government operate not through prohibition and restriction, but through *'social production and social service'* (Foucault 1980b, 125). These configurations exercise political power by seeking *'access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behaviour'* in order to obtain *'productive service from individuals in their concrete lives'* (125). As opposed to impositional and hierarchical relationships, Foucault argues that such configurations encompass more complex and less unidirectional relationships between government and governed populations.

> *In the broad meaning of the word, governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself.* (Foucault 1993, 203–204)

He claims that governed populations are not merely subjected *to* political power. Rather, their practices are a key part of its successful operation. Therefore, in order for government to operate successfully and effectively, it must ensure that the relationships it holds with governed populations are characterised by freedom rather than imposition. Within these relationships, power no longer appears as an object which may be held, sought, and applied to coerce others. This implies that power is not considered to be exercised by the powerful over the powerless; it has no definable path of exercise. Gordon (1991) draws attention to Foucault's differentiation between the exercise of power and coercive force. While Foucault's definition of power highlights its ubiquity within social relations, its exercise *'presupposes rather than annuls their [subjects'] capacity as agents; it acts upon, and through, an open set*

of practical and ethical possibilities' (5). Therefore, while government entails the exercise of *'actions on others' actions'* (5), contrary to the compliance/resistance binary that characterises coercive force, its effects are not definitive. Foucault therefore defines power as a force residing within all social relations, and whose existence is inextricably tied to the social body within which it exists (Foucault 1980a). The various relations that constitute a social body are therefore understood to be interwoven with relations of power, *'for which they play at once a conditioning and a conditioned role'* (Foucault 1980c, 142). This means that these relations shape and are at once shaped by other relations. As a force that circulates through the social body, power is represented to hold a net-like configuration which connects and organises social actors and their intersubjective relations.

Foucault stipulates that political power can only be sufficiently understood or explained in terms of its symbiotic and co-dependent relationship with knowledge (1980c). Their intersection does not merely emerge in the imposition of knowledge by powerful rulers on others. If power is constitutive of all social relations, then its relationship to knowledge transcends the boundaries of dominatory imposition. Power, argues Foucault, functions through the regulation of what can be known, how it can be known and transmitted, and how it structures social relations. All acts which involve the formation of knowledge, its invocation, and its use are fundamental to the operation and exercise of power. Feder (2011) revisits the concepts of power and knowledge as originally conceptualised in the French language to shed further light on their relationship within Foucault's work. Knowledge, argues the author, is used by translators to refer to two French terms: 'connaissance' and 'savoir'. The former is used by Foucault to refer to the specialised knowledge typically associated with disciplinary and institutional practices, while the latter is used to refer more broadly to the common sense or taken-for-granted knowledge through which all social practices operate. Power, argues Feder, is defined by the term 'pouvoir', which the author

translates to capacity or capability to do. Drawing on the work of Spivak (1993), Feder contends that the aggregation of 'pouvoir' and 'savoir' reframes the relationship between power and knowledge to imply that people's capability to act in relation to others depends on how they are able to know or make sense of these relations.

> *[…] if the lines of making sense of something are laid down in a certain way, then you are able to do only those things with that something that are possible within and by the arrangement of those lines. Pouvoir- savoir – being able to do something – only as you are able to make sense of it.* (Spivak 1993, 34 as quoted in Feder 2011, 56)

This serves to shed further light on Foucault's understanding of power as a productive rather than a repressive force, and the ways it operates to shape how people come to experience their day-to-day lives.

Here, it is important to highlight that Foucault (1980a) did not believe relations of power to be shaped by people but by often extensive histories of routine practice. This implies that someone's ability to make sense of something is not considered to be shaped and upheld because of the authority intentionally conferred on particular forms of knowledge by powerful political actors. Rather, it is understood to be upheld as an effect of power/knowledge, which is shaped and reshaped through practice. It therefore follows that power/knowledge achieves varying configurations across different historical and social contexts. These configurations form the strategic relations through which activities of government operate.

Following Bacchi and Goodwin's (2016) understanding of Foucault's work, 'discourses' refer to the aggregation of 'savoir', 'conaissance', and 'pouvoir' within *'socially produced forms of knowledge that set limits upon what it is possible to think, write or speak.'* (35). Each discourse is characterised by a coherent set of rules which regulate the practice of

knowledge (what can be known, by whom can it be known, how it can be known), its relationship to truth (what can be known as true, how it is defined, the techniques and procedures through which it is accorded value, and the forms of authority required from actors able to define it), and the intersubjective relations through which it may be practised (who can speak, with what authority, when, and where) (Foucault 1981). These rules shape the possibilities available to different people for making sense of and acting within their day-to-day lives.

This leads us to consider how Foucault did not believe people's experience of social realities to be an outcome of objective variables, as assumed within positivist traditions (Bacchi 2015). Nor are they understood to be the outcome of essential qualities held by people, and the ways these qualities shape meaning-making practices, as assumed within interpretivist traditions. Rather, Foucault considered these experiences to be an effect of discourse and its constitutive properties (ibid). These properties are elaborated by the term 'objectification', which refers to the practices through which the objects of reality are formed (Foucault 1982). Objectification practices, argues Foucault, *transform human beings into subjects'* (777), thus recasting personhood as something that is formed and reformed through practice, rather than something that is essential to oneself and immutable. The objectification of the subject is often referred to by the term 'subjectivity'. In 'The Subject and Power' (1982), Foucault makes use of the term 'subject' to refer to two interrelated processes. The first refers to the formation of oneself by others, while the second refers to the formation of oneself through internal and reflexive relationships. This draws attention to how discourse not only regulates how people understand and enact their relationship with others, but shapes how they are able to make sense of themselves.

Foucault's theorisation of discourse draws attention to how systems of thought, as shaped and sustained through histories of practice, carry profound implications for the ways

people experience their day-to-day lives (Burr 2003). It is therefore important to consider what possibilities they are afforded to make sense of their realities, and how these possibilities may be beneficial to some and harmful to others (ibid). Within the context of policy, this points more specifically to how people perceive things as problematic, how they come to know specific courses of action as necessary, and the tools and techniques sought in attempts to achieve solutions (Rose and Miller 1992). Foucault however highlights that, while discourses are constitutive of reality, the relationship they hold with the practices they shape is not entirely unidirectional and determinative. This is because discourses operate in multiples (Foucault 1985). Some discourses may still hold a higher status than others owing to their prevalence within existing political, institutional, and organisational practices and relationships. Nevertheless, the possibilities afforded to people for making sense of, and acting within their social relationships are never entirely determined by one discourse. Foucault argues:

> *'we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one'* (100).

In his earlier work, Foucault (1972) also contends that discourses hold somewhat of a dialogic and inter-constitutive relationship with practice. While they regulate the conditions of possibility within which practices take place, the various ways in which subjects may navigate these possibilities contribute to the modification or perpetuation of discourses and their configuration within a given context of practice.

Within such a perspective, policy emerges as a governmental technology that seeks to guide and compel governmental subjects to navigate these possibilities in specific ways (Rose and Miller 1992). These include possibilities for making sense of objects, practices, and relationships as problematic, as well as possibilities for making sense of various courses of

action and responses as appropriate and admissible within particular contexts. This perspective also draws attention to how discourse may shape policy practices and proposals, as well as the goals and outcomes they may pursue. How a policy is formed, represented, and communicated is subject to the possibilities afforded to its actors by the configurations of discourse active at a particular point in time and space. The policy text can therefore be considered to represent the crystallisation of these configurations and their constitutive effects; an object that reflects the possibilities afforded to its authors, as well as the ways these authors navigated them. Furthermore, since practices are subject to several discourses, and hence, several conditions of possibility, policy objects, proposals, problems, practices, and relationships may change within different contexts of policy in parallel to different discursive configurations and the different ways by which people may navigate the possibilities they are afforded. A specific policy may therefore be known and practised differently across various contexts of practice.

Making sense of governmental problems

So far, I have argued that Foucault's theorisation of discourse draws particular attention to its constitutive effects. Discourse is understood to shape reality by forming a set of possibilities for people to make sense of, and go about their day-to-day realities. Within such an approach, 'problems' can no longer be perceived as objective qualities of the domain of government, as assumed within an outcomes-led approach. Rather, governmental problems are recast as the outcome of people's attempts to make sense of their social realities as problematic. Bacchi (2015) argues that, similarly to interpretivist perspectives, Foucauldian approaches to the study of government recast its problems as acts of 'problematisation'. Despite this commonality, the author contends that there are several contrasting assumptions that distinguish the term's use within each of the two analytic lenses. The first relates to the role of people within acts of problematisation. Interpretivism's engagement with

problematisation calls attention to the role of political actors, their intentions, interpretations, and meaning-making practices. In doing so, it assumes people to be sovereign actors who intentionally construct and attribute meaning to their realities. Contrastingly, Foucault's conceptualisation of discourse recasts people as discursive subjects who are only able to make sense of the world within the boundaries of possibility afforded to them by discourses. Within this perspective, problematisations are not defined and regulated by actors' perspectives and intentions but are rather subject to the discourses active within a given field of practice. Therefore, rather than situating analytic interest in the ways people problematise their fields of practice, a Foucauldian approach draws attention to *how it is possible* for people to make sense of the social domain as problematic in particular ways. Bacchi continues to argue that interpretivism seeks to draw attention to the plurality of participants involved in practices of problematisation, drawing attention to their relationships and interactions. The author contends that this lens often presupposes that, while a given problem may be assigned with different forms of meaning by actors situated differently within the field of practice, meaning-making occurs in response to pre-existing problems. Contrastingly, a Foucauldian approach considers reality to be formed by the very practices through which it is articulated. Since these practices are regulated by the possibilities afforded by discourse, all social realities, including those known to be problematic, are represented to be discursive effects. Bacchi, therefore, claims that a Foucauldian approach shifts the focus of analysis from the relational interactions through which 'real' problems are experienced, understood and contested, to the common-sense forms of meaning through which people are *enabled* to make sense of their realities as such.

Making sense of the role of inquiry

By drawing attention to how it becomes possible for people to know, speak about, and enact policy in particular ways, a discursive approach carries significant implications for

policy inquiry. The application of Foucault's work in the analysis of government typically follows two overarching analytic foci. The first relates specifically to an analytic interest in the ways by which activities of government actively *shape* how people are able to make sense of their realities and act upon them. The second relates to *how it becomes possible* for people to act within these structures in particular ways as opposed to others, drawing broader attention to the historical conditions and practices that may have contributed to the existing configuration of possibilities available.

According to Rose and Miller (1992), Foucault's analysis of government pursued a particular interest in 'governmental rationalities' or 'governmentalities', which refer to *'a certain way of thinking and acting embodied in all those attempts to know and govern the wealth, health and happiness of populations'* (174). An analytic interest in these rationalities therefore pursues an understanding of the taken-for-granted foundations that underpin prevailing configurations of government and their governmental practices. Political rationalities, argues Rose (1999), are characterised by a coherent set of epistemological, moral, and idiomatic assumptions. These assumptions configure the activities of government, the formation of its objects and subjects, as well as the ways by which these activities are justified. By analysing the patterns of thought structuring the governmental practices, it becomes possible to identify how particular configurations of assumptions, as opposed to others, enable its existing configuration (ibid). The utility of such analyses, argues Rose, lies not in specifying these rationalities or the assumptions through which they are formed, but in understanding how they function to justify specific practices and rule out others as irrelevant, unreasonable, or incomprehensible.

When applied to policy, the analysis of political rationalities extends to consider how they form tools and practices which shape the field of government and the objects, subjects, practices, and relationships that constitute it. Luke (2006) contends that policies operate

through 'narrative chains'; story-telling practices which describe social and material conditions, their problematic qualities, as well as the corresponding forms of action which its agents ought to take. By forming a coherent relationship between descriptions of reality and proposals for acting within it, these narratives offer people a coherent way of making sense of the material contexts that frame their existence. These narratives are typically mapped onto the activity of government and therefore achieve a strong sense of ubiquity within a given field of practice. A discursive approach to policy draws our attention to these ubiquitous qualities and how narrative chains operationalise particular assumptions to shape the ways people make sense of their realities as problematic and in need of change. As argued earlier in this section, the concept of problematisation represents a particularly useful tool in this regard. Bacchi (2015) contends that it is important to understand how political rationalities and agendas function to shape acts of problematisation, and the implications this carries for governed populations, as well as policy workers and researchers. The author claims that such analytic orientations have been particularly important in unsettling the hegemonic value assigned to problem-solving within policy work and policy studies. By reframing governmental problems as acts of problematisation, this analytic approach renders these problems and the narratives through which they are shaped as contingent and political rather than obvious and inescapable. In doing so, problematisation cultivates space for questioning the problems addressed through policy and considering possible alternatives.

Foucault's theorisation of discourse expresses a particular concern for the ways it shapes the realities people experience by regulating the possibilities they are afforded for knowing these realities. Carusi, Rawlins, and Ashton (2018) propose the term 'enablement' to delineate an analytic concern with how policy, through a tacit commitment to specific ontological, epistemological, and ideological assumptions, may enable particular realities as opposed to others. For example, in their analysis of educational policy within New Zealand,

the authors contend that policy proposals demonstrate the presence of ontological assumptions that represent education as an objective domain that may only be accessed through empirical evidence. These commitments, argue the authors, shape policy and policymaking in significant ways:

> *By grounding evidence as neutral, and politics as epiphenomenal to evidence, policy is enabled by a ground that is apolitical, natural, empirical, rational, and real which in turn informs subsequent decisions that go into policy-making process.* (345)

They argue that this ontological commitment leads people to make sense of educational policy as a field of practice that may only be occupied by experts capable of 'accessing' realities and delivering 'sound evidence'. As a result, policy is shaped as a field of practice that can only operate successfully or validly in the absence of political humanity and its contaminating influence on scientific inquiry. The authors argue that the constitutive effects of such assumptions ripple beyond policymaking to shape the possibilities afforded to governed populations and the practices through which these populations enact proposals. For example, an ontological commitment to an objective and evidenced reality enables forms of enactment that proceed on the basis of 'good practice' that is observable and that carries context-independent and hence reliable solutions. As a result, other ways of knowing and acting upon education which seek to consider, account for, and adapt to its contextual idiosyncrasies are considered to be less valid, reliable, and hence valuable.

According to Bacchi and Goodwin (2016), Foucault's work leads us to consider that discourse can only operate through people's day-to-day practices. Therefore, in order to grapple analytically with policy through a discursive lens, analysts must engage with the material processes through which policy proposals, problems, and realities are enacted. Since these practices operationalise specific ways of thinking, they exhibit particular forms of

coherence and regularity (Foucault 1991). Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) draw attention to how people practice their day-to-day lives through taken-for-granted routines which shape realities in ways that are seldom considered, contested, or changed. This is because these routines typically exhibit a strong degree of resonance with the social, political, and institutional contexts within which they were shaped, and are therefore taken for granted. There is nothing fundamentally natural or normal about the ways we reason that may justify how we act in universal, absolute, or apolitical ways. Yet, many of the ways by which we make sense of our fields of practice exhibit such assumptions. For example, Popkewitz (2009) draws attention to how educational practices typically operationalise concepts such as 'children' and 'learning' without sufficient consideration for the constitutive qualities and the contingent ways in which these concepts are known.

> *To talk about the child as, for example, a 'problemsolver' or as 'disadvantaged' invokes not merely categories to help children become better and more successful. These categories embody particular principles about what is seen, thought about, and acted on in schooling. The 'political' of schooling lies here: in the shaping and fashioning of what is (im)possible.* (303)

In his evaluation of curricular practices, Luke (2012) similarly draws attention to how curricular debates and deliberations are shaped by taken-for-granted assumptions about what curricula are, what they do, and in what ways they should be practised. The author contends that curriculum studies are replete with conversations about the forms of knowledge, materials, and resources that should populate curricula. Yet, these debates are typically set within a pre-established framework through which fundamental questions relating to the curriculum are already answered. As an example, Luke argues:

> *[…] typically, the basic definitions and taxonomic categories of the curriculum are determined well before the curriculum writing process begins. The categories for curriculum developers, writers and consultants charged with developing state and system syllabus documents are more often than not "given," fixed a priori in both philosophic and political senses and presented as beyond criticism.* (4)

A discursive approach to policy draws our attention to what is perceived as given, fixed, or normal, thus leading us to consider how the *obvious* or *uncontentious* carries substantial implications for the possibilities people are afforded to make sense of their fields of practice.

Morey (1992) highlights how Foucault's work expresses a recurring analytic interest in the *normal* and its role in regulating the social body. Its significance is derived from the ways by which the *normal* and the *real* are often assumed to be synonymous. Morey claims that analysts often invoke normative assumptions to define and describe the present. Foucault's work however leads us to consider that, since reality is formed through the various ways in which we know and practice it, there can never be a singular and universal definition for the real; there is *'no single and certain way for this telling to achieve its truth'* (118). Therefore, analytic practices that assume a descriptive role do not simply invoke a pre-existing truth, but draw on what is normatively assumed to be true, and in doing so, strengthen its normative position. While recognising that normativity holds an important role in the functioning of society, Morey highlights that the disassociation of the normative and the real is an important step towards politicising its function. A Foucauldian approach shifts the purposes of analysis from describing reality to scrutinising the various ways in which reality is produced. By doing so, analysis displaces the hegemonic position of taken-for-granted truths and draws attention to alternative possibilities for thought.

In a word: we have to think that everything we think today will be thought of in a different way tomorrow, in terms of a way of thinking which has not yet come into being. (122)

A discursive approach to analysis is similar to a relational approach in that it defines practices, rather than 'reality', as its unit of analysis. However, the two approaches differ significantly because a discursive approach seeks to displace the actor from the analytic spotlight. This reflects Foucualt's understanding of discourse as constitutive *of* people rather than constituted *by* people. Since discourses shape the ways people make sense of their reality and how they exist within it, the ways by which people practice these realities are considered to be shaped not by intention, but by the discursive possibilities available (Popkewitz and Brennan 1998). These possibilities, argue Popkewitz and Brennan, emerge as the outcome of complex relationships between routines of practice, governmental institutions, and relationships formed through the various happenings that form the past. Hence, governmental activities and the various ways in which they are shaped are formed not through political or ideological intention. Rather, as Rose (1999) points out, they are:

'contingent lash-ups of thought and action, in which various problems of governing were resolved through drawing upon instruments and procedures that happened to be available, in which new ways of governing were invented in a rather ad hoc way, as practical attempts to think about and act upon specific problems in particular locales' (27).

It therefore follows that analyses which adopt a discursive approach to understanding governmental activities must not orient their gaze towards political actors or policy authors, but must rather seek to grapple with historical conditions and practices. Termed by Foucault as 'event-ualisation', such an approach seeks to make *'visible a singularity at places where*

there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness which imposes itself uniformly on all.' (Foucault 1991, 76). By doing so, Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) argue that analysts are better equipped to unsettle what is seemingly natural and cultivate space for considering the possibility of alternatives.

Nielsen (2022) contends that an analytic approach that shifts the focus of inquiry from people to the discursive practices through which their subjectivities are formed, may reshape the relationship between practices of government and people in unproductive ways. The author argues that, by situating focus on how political rationalities shape people, such an approach forms a unidirectional and fatalistic relationship between these rationalities, the practices through which they are affected, and the subjectivities afforded to governed populations. Nielsen therefore argues that analyses should be cautious of producing *'an idealised reproduction of general political rationalities in a one-dimensional or implicit peopling of policy'* (69). In light of this pitfall, other approaches to normative analysis may be perceived as more useful. For example, interpretivist lenses locate alternative ways of thinking within the values, experiences, and intentions held by marginalised or 'powerless' actors, and celebrate these as useful tools for subverting prevailing modes of thought. Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) however argue that such an approach falls short of the potential it claims to carry. The authors argue that, by framing these alternatives as tools for emancipation, interpretivism loses sight of how all perspectives are discursively situated. Foucault's work leads us to consider that all situated perspectives are shaped by discourse. Therefore, displacing prevailing understandings in favour of an alternative perspective can never release people from the constitutive effects of discourse and its objectifying properties. Mayo (2000) argues that a discursive approach to analysis must step away from the elusive promises of absolute emancipation. The goal of a discursive analysis should rather be to cultivate an analytic space in which the various possibilities afforded by discourse, as well as

the ways they shape people's realities, can be subjected to continuing scrutiny. Rose (1999) argues that subjugated and marginalised rationalities remain useful tools within such an approach. However, they are not sought to replace dominant rationalities, as within interpretivist analyses, but rather to displace and unsettle their permanence:

> *'[i]t is a matter of introducing a kind of awkwardness into the fabric of one's experience, of interrupting the fluency of the narratives that encode that experience and making them stutter'* (20).

Since such an approach situates interest in the constitutive effects of practice (how practices make people through processes of subjectification rather than how people employ practices through subjective intention), Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) claim that Foucauldian analyses are often dismissed for the ways they extract personhood from analysis. However, the authors argue that this approach rather repositions personhood in ways that situate and celebrate humanism within social analysis. Foucault's theorisation of 'subjectification', discussed earlier on in this chapter, leads us to consider that the subjectivities we may hold are shaped by the possibilities afforded by discourse. However, since discourses are multiple, people are presented with multiple opportunities for making sense of and enacting their subjectivity. By unsettling the intrinsic essence often attributed to personhood, Popkewitz and Brennan claim that a Foucauldian approach to analysis empowers actors to make sense of themselves outside the boundaries of what is perceived to be normal, essential, or necessary.

This carries particularly important implications for policy analysis. As I have already argued earlier in this section, a discursive approach draws attention to how governmental activities regulate the behaviour of governed populations by configuring the possibilities available to them for understanding reality as problematic and in need of particular forms of

change. This includes the ways people are able to make sense of themselves as particular kinds of governmental subjects. It is important to highlight that, in order for governmental intervention to be successful, subjects must adopt the frameworks of thought established for them by acts of government. The multiplicity through which discourse operates, and the self-determination through which subjects are understood to take on these discourses (Foucault 1982), leads us to consider that the relationship between governmental practice and subjectification is not determinative. Taylor (2014) draws particular attention to the conceptual possibilities afforded Foucault's (1982) theorisation of subjectivity as 'subjection to others' and 'subjection to oneself'. The author highlights that we are not merely determined by the subjectivities established for us by governmental practices. Rather, we hold an active role in our own subjection. Therefore;

> *'in so far as I am the one who takes up the norms and values of my society, I have the capacity to take them up differently, or not to take them up at all.'* (179).

The agency afforded by subjection to oneself implies that, in order to be effective, a critical orientation towards governmental practices must contribute to strengthening one's capacity to navigate the discursive possibilities available. Taylor therefore advocates for analyses that unsettle one's *'self- sacrificing relationship of obedience to the authority of prevailing norms'* by questioning the essential, obvious, and taken-for-granted ways in which people make sense of themselves as particular kinds of governed subjects (181).

Making sense of governed populations and practices

Foucault's work leads us to consider how the many ways by which people understand and act within their day-to-day lives are regulated by discourse. Within the context of policy, it draws our attention to how government operates through the configuration of available possibilities for understanding and acting. This approach therefore directs our analytic gaze to

the practices, processes, tools, and technologies through which policy shapes governed populations. Ball's (1993) conceptualisation of policy-as-discourse is particularly useful in this regard. Drawing on Foucault's theorisation of knowledge, power, and subjectivity, Ball argues:

> *We do not speak a discourse, it speaks us. We are the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows. We do not 'know' what we say, we 'are' what we say and do. […] The essence of this is that there are real struggles over the interpretation and enactment of policies. But these are typically set within a moving discursive frame which articulates and constrains the possibilities and probabilities of interpretation and enactment.* (Ball 1993, 48-49)

Ball argues that, by attending to the taken-for-granted, a discursive approach to policy represents a useful counterbalance to perspectives that situate agency within acts of interpretation and application. This is particularly useful because, while actors may choose how to interpret and translate the policy text, these choices are limited by the interpretative repertoire available. Hence, in so far as discourse regulates the possibilities afforded to actors for understanding policy, Ball contends that the primary effect of policy is necessarily discursive. The practical, material, and organisational responses that may emerge within the enactment of policy are considered to articulate discourse and the possibilities it affords for practice (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2011b).

As I have argued in preceding sections, Foucault's work draws our attention to how discursive effects are constitutive but never determinative. Since discourses operate in complex configurations, the possibilities afforded to governed populations are always multiple. Therefore, while policy compels its subjects to navigate these possibilities in specific ways, it can never be entirely prescriptive of how its proposals would subsequently

be enacted. The concept of 'ontological politics', as defined by Annemarie Mol (1999), offers

a useful theoretical resource to further our understanding of this complex relationship

between discourse and practice, and consider the significance of governmental populations

within policy more thoroughly. Originally coined by John Law (1998), the term implies the

enmeshment of the real and the political. Reflecting a poststructuralist ontology, Mol &

Law's understanding of reality unsettles the objective, predetermined, and stable qualities it is

often assumed to hold. As argued by Mol (1999), *'reality does not precede the mundane*

practices in which we interact with it but is rather shaped within these practices' (75). The

author goes on to argue that these mundane practices, as well as the realities they form, are

multiple. Mol's use of the term multiplicity, as opposed to plurality, serves to distinguish her

understanding of reality from the interpretative assumption that reality is singular and

objective yet disposed to multiple situated interpretations. The reality of things, argues Mol,

is performed through practice. The ways by which people come to know and practice

something constitute its materialisation. People do not merely operate within a reality that

precedes action but actively produce this reality *through* action. It therefore follows that

'things' can be practised in multiple ways, and hence be defined by multiple, simultaneously

occurring realities. The author contends that a particular form of practice, as opposed to

others, is enabled (as well as delimited) by complex interactions between the actor and the

possibilities they are afforded within a particular site of practice. The possibilities afforded

for the performance of things change across different contexts. Nevertheless, since any given

object is, and may be performed in multiple ways, its materialisation represents a political

act. Therefore, the significance of practices, argues Mol, is derived from how they function to

interfere in the world, affecting its form and function and shaping the material realities

through which others come to experience their day-to-day lives.

When utilised to understand policy, 'ontological politics' leads us to consider that the various ways in which governed populations understand and act upon their understanding of policy proposals form their intervention upon the world. This highlights that, notwithstanding policy's attempts at regulating the possibilities available to governed populations, the political work of policy is fundamentally tied to the practitioners and practices it targets. More significantly, it emphasises how a better understanding of policy's constitutive qualities may bolster the capacity of governed populations to navigate the configuration of possibilities available in intentional ways. Such attempts would contribute to securing more active and critical forms of participation within the politics of policy.

Key points at a glance

In this section, I have drawn on the work of Michel Foucault, as well as other authors, to discuss how a discursive approach to policy leads us to consider the taken-for-granted qualities of policy. Following Foucault, I define discourse as the space within which knowledge and power intersect, forming a set of possibilities for people to make sense of, and act upon, their day-to-day realities. When applied to policy, discourse leads us to consider two important things: How policy proposals and practices are underpinned by specific patterns of thinking, and how these proposals and practices seek to shape how governed populations think and act. Within this approach, the activity of government is understood in terms of those relationships and practices that seek to configure possibilities afforded to people for understanding and acting upon their day-to-day lives. This includes how people perceive their fields of practice as problematic and in need of particular forms of change. Similarly to a process-led approach, governmental problems are recast as an act of problematisation, which refers to the processes and practices through which people come to understand and construct something as problematic.

Since it draws attention to the taken-for-granted patterns of thinking through which policy operates, a discursive approach orients the role of inquiry towards grappling with the patterns of thought which policy invokes and the conditions of possibility that enable it to do so. This involves evaluating how its problematisations come about, how they may marginalise alternative possibilities for thinking, and how they shape the realities people practice and experience in their day-to-day lives. Foucault's theorisation of discourse draws particular attention to its constitutive effects, highlighting how discourse operates through people's routine practices to shape the very realities they experience. This approach therefore calls particular attention to the role of governed populations and practices in the materialisation of policy proposals. By claiming that people are at once delimited and enabled by a multiplicity of discursive possibilities, a discursive approach highlights the political qualities of implementation and the importance of cultivating political conscientious and intentionality.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter presents my response to the 'necessities' prevailing within music education research in Malta and their role in shaping and preserving a unidirectional and responsive relationship with policy through taken-for-granted assumptions about what it is and what it does. I have sought to draw on three different approaches to policy in order to unsettle these assumptions and the 'necessities' they function to sustain. As I have argued earlier in this chapter, my exposition of different approaches to policy must not be misconstrued as an attempt to evaluate and pass judgment on the validity of various claims to policy's truth: what policy *really* is. While I intend to displace the normative position held by an outcomes-led approach, I do not seek to dismiss this approach as erroneous or replace it with an alternative perspective which better captures its truth. As argued by Colebatch (2006), multiple approaches to policy co-exist, occupying different contexts of practice and holding different forms and extents of legitimacy. Therefore, attempts to understand and engage with policy through a singular *truth* operate in ignorance of its complex qualities.

Each approach makes sense of policy through a different perspective, offering various insights relating to what it is, what it does, and our position within and relative to it. The table presented at the end of this chapter provides a brief comparative summary of each approach. Process-focused and discourse-focused approaches offer theoretical tools which unsettle the fundamental assumptions operationalised within an outcomes-focused approach. Most significantly these assumptions relate to the objective qualities assigned to problems; the legitimacy assigned to positivist empiricism as a necessary tool in defining adequate proposals for change; and the position of governed populations as objects, recipients, and agents of governmental intervention, situated outside policy, yet responsibilised with its success.

What is particularly vital for this research project is how these two approaches provide markedly different implications for policy inquiry, cultivating different possibilities for research and analysis outside the pre-established boundaries of 'necessary' change. A process-focused approach engages with relational interactions, calling attention to how policy is shaped and reshaped within these interactions. An analysis that draws on this approach would seek to grapple with how proposals for change emerge through interactions among various participants holding different situated perspectives, and how these proposals are formed and reformed within contexts of implementation through interpretative practices. Within this approach, change is only assumed to be 'necessary' insofar as it represents a situated perspective that may be contested through other situated perspectives. A discursive approach draws attention to the taken-for-granted patterns of thinking through which something comes to be known as problematic and in need of change. An analysis that draws on this approach would seek to grapple with these patterns of thought, how they function to represent proposed changes as 'necessary', and how these patterns of thought shape the ways people make sense of and perform their day-to-day realities. Within this approach, the 'necessity' attributed to a particular proposal for change is taken to be the outcome of prevailing patterns of thinking and the ways they seek to eliminate and marginalise other possible understandings.

While these two approaches draw attention to different aspects of policy, they intersect strongly in their commitment to bolstering people's capacity for political engagement. By considering how people shape policy, a process-led approach highlights how existing roles and practices offer scope for practitioners to participate more actively within policy. Contrastingly, a discursive approach draws attention to the constitutive qualities of policy, leading us to consider how an understanding of these qualities may better enable practitioners to navigate its structural impositions. Given that each approach leads analysts to

grapple with different facets of policy, it would be naïve to advocate for a field of policy analysis which engages with one in the absence of the other. As aptly argued by Ball (1993);

> *the complexity and scope of policy analysis […] precludes the possibility of successful single theory explanations. What we need in policy analysis is a toolbox of diverse concepts and theories – an applied sociology rather than a pure one.* (43)

Notwithstanding the various ways in which these approaches overlap and complement one another, they exhibit varying degrees of compatibility with the analytic scope of this research project. As elaborated within the previous chapter, this project is driven by a concern for 'necessities': the common-sense and taken-for-granted frameworks that shape thought and the ways by which they eliminate the perceived need for critical scrutiny and multiplicity. In drawing on various situated perspectives, a relational approach may be useful in unsettling the perceived permanence attached to 'necessities'. Within this approach, the focus of analysis would be *what* is proposed as necessary, with an aim of pluralising 'necessities'. Conversely, by situating analytic interest in conditions of possibility (how it becomes possible to understand something as necessary), a discursive approach offers further insight into the conceptual foundation enabling the attribution of 'necessity' to particular proposals, and not others. Owing to its utility in unsettling the very concept of 'necessity' and the finality within which it thrives, this research project shall assume a discursive approach to policy in order to address the three research questions proposed in Chapter 2.

	Outcomes-focused/ Teleological	**Process-focused/ Relational**	**Discourse-focused/ Discursive**
The Activity of Government	The authoritative imposition of decisions	Interaction among multiple participants	Practices that configure the possibilities available to people for thought and action
Governmental Problems	Objects or qualities that may be addressed and solved	Outcomes of the various ways by which people interpret and interact about a matter of shared concern	Products of the possibilities afforded to people for understanding and acting upon something as problematic
The Role of Inquiry	To inform, and facilitate the realisation of authoritative proposals for change and evaluate their success	To engage with multiple situated practices for defining and solving policy problems, to evaluate and scrutinise policy relationships, and to evaluate how the perspectives of some are favoured at the expense of others	To understand the conditions of possibility for thought and action, as well as their configuration through governmental intervention
Governed Populations and Practices	Responsive agents of implementation	Situated agents of enactment	Governmental subjects who are at once limited and enabled by multiple discourses

Chapter 4: Defining the Tools Chosen to Unsettle 'Necessities'

In this chapter, I shall present the poststructuralist methodological framework I have chosen to adopt and adapt for the purposes of this research project. Drawing on the work of Foucault, this framework is elaborated through two methodological tools which enable analysts to access and scrutinise the taken-for-granted aspects of proposals, problems, and statements. I shall first introduce the 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) methodology as a useful tool for the analysis of policy texts. This framework was first proposed by Carol Bacchi (2009) and was further elaborated by Bacchi and Goodwin (2016). While these two sources offer a comprehensive understanding of this analytic framework, WPR remains in continual development through Bacchi's online *'Research Hub'* blog. My understanding of this framework draws from these three sources. I shall then present 'Poststructural Interview Analysis' (PIA), as proposed by Carol Bacchi and Jessica Bonham (2016), and discuss its utility in the analysis of interview texts. In the second section of this chapter, I shall detail why and how I have chosen to adopt these methodological tools in order to address the three research questions proposed within Chapter 2. I shall conclude this chapter with two reflections about the proposed research design, and suggest two considerations that may contribute positively to its use in other research projects.

4.1 Presenting a Poststructural Framework for Analysis

Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) define poststructuralism as a theoretical perspective that draws particular attention to how things *are "done" or "made", constituted, or brought into being'* by means of practice (4). Since practices function heterogeneously, the quality of things can never be singular but is always open to being made and re-made differently. It therefore follows that the formation of things involves politics, which is broadly defined by the authors as *'the active shaping or making of the taken-for-granted'* (4). Informed by this

definition, an approach to inquiry which assumes a poststructuralist stance encompasses visibilising the contingent qualities of the taken-for-granted by grappling with its formation. The authors propose a 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' (WPR) and a 'Poststructural Interview Analysis' (PIA) framework as useful methodological tools for structuring these analyses within different sites of inquiry.

4.1.1 Understanding the 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' Framework

Bacchi (2009) created the WPR framework in response to her growing dissatisfaction with the policy research methodologies available at the time. Prevailing methodologies, she argues, are premised on a problem-solving approach to policy research, which takes policy proposals as a taken-for-granted starting point from which inquiry may proceed. These methodologies assume *'that policy is a good thing, that it fixes things up. Policy makers are the ones who do the fixing. [...] The notion of 'fixing' carries with it an understanding that something needs to be 'fixed', that there is a problem. This presumed 'problem' can be, but does not need to be, explicitly elaborated'* (ix). The author claims that prevailing perspectives within policy and its formal study assume that problems occupy an objective reality, that their 'real' qualities can be known, and that this knowledge should serve as the apolitical foundation for policy-making. The poststructuralist approach taken by Bacchi highlights that coming to know 'things' as problematic is a constructive rather than diagnostic or descriptive practice. Declaring a *'war on problems'*, Bacchi (2017a) proposes the WPR methodology as a means of disrupting the taken-for-granted status assigned to policy problems within the various contexts in which they are made and researched. The author argues that this approach does not seek to deny the materiality of those conditions which people experience as troublesome:

'policies do not address problems that exist; rather, they produce "problems" as particular sorts of problems. Further, it is argued that the manner in which these "problems" are constituted shapes lives and worlds.' (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016, 16).

Therefore, 'war' is addressed not to these troublesome experiences, but to the conceptualisation of 'problems' and the term's use to represent things as problematic in obvious and uncontentious ways. This distinction is reflected within Bacchi's reference to *problem representations* (rather than *problems*) as the analytic focus of her proposed approach (Bacchi 2009).

WPR therefore represents Bacchi's critical response to the taken-for-granted value attributed to problem-solving and its corrosive impacts which these approaches carry on democratic and critical forms of participation.

'I believe that interrogating the "problems" or "challenges" or "issues" or "matters of concern" set by others […] marks an important step towards critical thinking.' (Bacchi 2017b, Paragraph 7)

Bacchi's analytic interest in problem representations alludes to Foucault's use of the term 'problematisation' to refer both to the practices through which something is constructed as problematic, as well as a critical disposition or method of analysis (Bacchi 2015). A WPR approach occupies both of these definitions, adopting a sceptical approach towards the ways by which material conditions are known and represented as problems, or in short, the problematisation of problem representations. These problem representations form the starting point for analysis and are sought within proposals, which are defined as statements that encourage, invite, or coerce their subjects to conceptualise something in a specific way and act upon this understanding. This is premised on the belief that *'what we propose to do about something indicates what we think needs to change and hence what we think the "problem"*

is.' (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016, 17). While a WPR framework was initially shaped to scrutinise policy proposals as '*part of a larger project: to understand how governing takes place, and with what implications for those so governed'* (2009, ix), Bacchi claims that it may be more broadly applied to any form of proposal. In order to structure the process of analysis, the author proposes a framework of seven questions, each of which is shaped and informed by several analytic techniques and theoretical concepts proposed by Foucault.

1. *'What is the problem represented to be in a specific policy?'*

This first question prompts analysts to identify proposals of interest. These serve as useful starting points for identifying how things are represented to be problematic. Bacchi (2009) claims:

> *The argument here is that, since how you feel about something determines what you suggest doing about it, it is equally true to say that looking at what is proposed as a policy intervention will reveal how the issue is being thought about (2-3).*

Bacchi presents a useful anecdote to exemplify this point;

> *Consider: a gymnasium decides to put water-timers on showers to cut down on water bills. This decision forms the policy under consideration. The water-timers turn off the water source after three minutes of showering. The policy (the water-timers) constitutes the 'problem' as 'excessive' showering, which implies 'indulgent' consumer behaviour. A WPR approach starts with the policy- the water-timers - and works backwards to elucidate the problem representation - 'indulgent' consumer behaviour.*
>
> (3)

While the process of identifying problem representations seems to be straightforward, the author argues that a given text often hosts multiple, and at times interrelated proposals. Furthermore, Bacchi claims that problem representations can often 'nest' within one another,

meaning that one problem representation may be structured by further subsidiary problem representations. As a result, addressing this first question can often be complex and iterative, and hence yield multiple threads for subsequent analysis.

2. *'What presuppositions/assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?'*

Through this second question, Bacchi directs the analyst's attention towards the assumptions and presuppositions active within proposals to consider *how* something comes to be understood as problematic. This encompasses a process of uncovering the *'conceptual logic'* through which a problem representation is formed, which refers more specifically *'to the meanings that must be in place for a particular problem representation to cohere or to make sense.'* (Bacchi 2009, 5). The author attributes a particular interest to statements that hold descriptive qualities (assuming what *is*, *has* to*, or *must* be), as well as statements that act as 'abstract labels' (such as concepts, categories, and binaries). Drawing on what Foucault proposes as an 'archaeological' form of analysis, Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) direct analysts towards excavating two forms of knowledge: *'general background knowledge, apparent in epistemological and ontological assumptions, and forms of relatively bounded social knowledge, such as disciplines.'* (22). They contend that this understanding enables the analyst to identify which meanings underpin problem representations, and how they act as taken-for-granted justifications for the 'necessity' of corresponding proposals for action.

3. *'How has this representation of the problem come about?'*

Reflecting a poststructuralist epistemology, Bacchi argues that all knowledge is *'constructed or "made"'* (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016, 15). In the absence of knowledge which is true or universal, none can be understood to be epistemologically true or superior. It therefore follows that the objective of a poststructuralist analysis is not to define what is true, but to interrogate the practices that give rise to particular forms of knowing at the expense of

others, and how these practices shape people's reality. In order to do so, Question 3 prompts analysts to engage more specifically with two sites of analysis: first, the *'developments and decisions [...] that contribute to the formation of identified problem representations'*, and second, the histories of situated practices through which these problem representations could have been shaped differently (Bacchi 2009, 10). Bacchi proposes this process as an exercise in Foucauldian 'genealogy', defined as a process of tracing the *'confluence of encounters and chances through the course of fragile history'* that precede and enable existing problem representations as opposed to others (Foucault 1990, 37 as quoted in Bacchi and Goodwin 2016, 46). The goal of this process is to draw attention to the heterogeneity of practices active in producing a given problem representation, and to highlight its contingency (demonstrating how any given problem representation could have, and could always be, otherwise). Bacchi and Goodwin therefore contend that this is not merely an analytic process that defines how a problem came to be, but rather should seek out *'records of discontinuity, of twists and turns, of skeletons in the closet (if you will).'* (46). The outcomes of such an analysis play an important role in unsettling the taken-for-granted qualities of problem representations and serve as useful resources for addressing subsequent WPR questions.

4. *'What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?'*

Bacchi argues that by definition, proposals function by establishing clear boundaries between what the problem is and what the problem is not. Therefore, the taken-for-granted presence of a particular problem representation functions to limit the ways in which people are able to make sense of something as problematic and in need of change. Bacchi (2009) directs analysts to draw on the outcomes of analysis driven by Questions 2 and 3 in order to identify the boundaries of possibility within which a problem representation functions, and how these boundaries simplify processes of thought and eliminate or marginalise particular

considerations. By shedding light on these boundaries, analysts may draw attention to alternative bodies of knowledge and corresponding possibilities for considering the problem in different ways.

5. *'What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?'*

The poststructuralist approach assumed within a WPR framework leads us to consider that problem representations do not function to describe or interpret things as problematic. Rather, they function to form the very problems they speak of. Owing to these constitutive properties, problem representations affect people, as well as the ways they navigate and experience their day-to-day lives. More importantly, a *'WPR approach to policy analysis starts from the presumption that some problem representations create difficulties (forms of harm) for members of some social groups more so than for members of other groups'* (Bacchi 2009). Analysts are prompted to investigate these effects in terms of three categories. The first refers to discursive effects, which refer to how problem representations limit the ways in which subjects are able to make sense of their field of practice. The second category of effects is defined as 'subjectification effects', which refers to how problem representations shape the subjectivities which people are encouraged to adopt, and that shape how they are able to make sense of themselves in relation to others. Bacchi draws particular attention to concepts, categories, and binaries identified in the process of addressing WPR Question 2, and how these operate to attribute particular subjectivities to particular categories of people. The aim here is not to understand why people take on specific subject positions, but to define the kinds of subjects people are *able* to become through the possibilities afforded to them by policy proposals (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). The third category of effects, defined as lived effects, refers more specifically to the material impacts that problem representations have on the day-to-day lives of particular people (Bacchi 2009).

6. *'How/where is this representation of the problem produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?'*

Drawing on the outcomes of the genealogical process of analysis prompted by question 3, this question directs the analyst to consider the spaces and practices through which problem representations reach governed populations as legitimate modes of thought (Bacchi 2009). The goal here is to shed light on how people are afforded access to a particular problem representation as opposed to others, drawing particular attention to tensions or contradictions that emerge within this process. The outcomes of this stage of analysis are represented to provide analysts with useful tools to highlight and bolster existing spaces for contention.

7. *Problematise your own proposals and problem representations.*

The seventh question is prompted by Bacchi's concern for the *'politically dangerous'* ways by which research, in its alleged 'neutral', serves to legitimise and veil its contingency and the political qualities of the knowledge it produces (Bacchi 2009).

> *The rationale for this commitment to self-problematization is that, given one's location within historically and culturally entrenched forms of knowledge, we need ways to subject our own thinking to critical scrutiny.* (Bacchi 2009)

The more uncontentious problems appear, the greater the tendency to absolve authors from considering the political qualities of proposed solutions. Bacchi contends that we ought to reject the possibility of inhabiting analytic spaces which escape discourse (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). Hence, while the WPR framework prompts analysts to seek alternative ways of thinking about and representing problems, the proposal of alternative problem representations should not be the objective or end-point of analysis. Rather, the goal *'is to create the space to reflect critically on all proposals for change, including one's own*

recommendations, in order to govern "with a minimum of domination" (Foucault 1987: 129).' (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016, 25).

4.1.2 Understanding the 'Poststructural Interview Analysis' Framework

A WPR analysis is driven by a political commitment to identifying, scrutinising, and addressing how problem representations intervene in the day-to-day lives of their subjects, drawing particular attention to the deleterious effects these interventions carry. While the proposed framework as a whole is oriented towards fulfilling this political commitment, question five specifically directs analysts to consider the effects of problem representations and how they function to shape the lives of people through an aggregation of discursive, subjectification, and material effects. While Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) argue that it is possible to read off these effects from the problem representations under scrutiny, the authors claim that it is also possible to draw on empirical techniques, such as interviews, to investigate these effects further. As a common tool within social scientific research, interviews are typically employed under the assumption that, owing to their subjective experiences, targeted participants hold unique understandings of their own realities. This knowledge is considered to be valuable for research because it is assumed to provide analysts with access to people's 'lived' experiences and subjective perspectives. While this may appear to be a particularly salient resource for addressing question five of the WPR framework, the authors call attention to how it stands in tension with the Foucauldian-poststructuralist theoretical perspective WPR occupies. As Fadyl and Nicholls (2013) point out, Foucault's work leads us to consider that the ways in which people speak about their day-to-day lives are not the outcome of situated perspectives that they hold or that are formed by them. The authors argue that, within this theoretical perspective, *'a person's account of themselves and their experiences cannot be seen as a point of origin for the construction of meaning, because the subject is constituted through discourse, and discourse provides the means of articulation and action* (25). A poststructuralist approach therefore rejects the possibility of adopting interview research to access unique insights into the situated

experiences or perspectives held by people. The potential position and contribution of interview research to such analysis becomes increasingly complex.

Building on the conceptual tools comprising the WPR framework, Bacchi and Bonham (2016) propose Poststructuralist Interview Analysis (PIA) as their attempt to engage with these complexities in productive ways. While embracing the possibility of utilising interviews as a site for analysis, the objective of PIA is not to access subjective knowledge about these effects through statements of experience. Rather, interview statements are recast as a site for grappling with the function of discourse and how it operates to enable certain things to be said as opposed to others. To locus of analysis shifts from the content of interview statements (*what* can be said) to the conditions that make it possible for something to be said (what *can* be said). Bacchi and Bonham (2016) propose a set of seven interconnected 'processes' to structure this process of analysis:

> Process 1: Noting 'What is Said'
>
> Process 2: Producing Genealogies of 'What is Said'
>
> Process 3: Highlighting Key Discursive Practices
>
> Process 4: Analysing 'What is Said' (productive effects)
>
> Process 5: Interrogating the Production of 'Subjects'
>
> Process 6: Exploring Transformative Potential (subject positions)
>
> Process 7: Questioning the Politics of Distribution

Process 1 prompts analysts to identify statements which propose a particular way of making sense of something. The authors draw particular attention to those assertions that may otherwise be taken for granted as obvious and self-justified. Processes 2 prompts analysts to shed light on how it became possible for identified statements to be said:

'to reflect on how "what is said" could be said—how they are considered to be

legitimate or "truthful" things to say' (116)

This parallels the genealogical component of a WPR analysis. Process 3 draws attention to discursive practices, which refer specifically to *'how discourses "practice", how they operate to establish their knowledge credentials.'* (117). These practices, argue Bacchi and Bonham, involve the enactment of relationships among various things, such as *'actions, symbols, materials, words, and gestures'*, as well as sites, subjects, and objects (117). The authors claim that, since interviews operate through numerous discursive practices, the analyst should *'consider how those relevant to the interview topic, generate things that can be said.'* (117). *Process 4* draws our attention to how things said function to enact particular relations between things, and in doing so, form *'certain norms and subject positions'* (117), as well as 'objects' and 'places'. Central to these constitutive practices is the subjectification of oneself; how the interviewee adopts specific subject positions in the act of speaking about themself. *Process 5* directs analysts to define those moments in which interviewees come to know and enact themselves as specific kinds of subjects. Since the interview is shaped through a multiplicity of discourses, constitutive practices are not consistent across the span of the interview. An interviewee may form different subjects, objects, and places at different moments in time, and may choose to attribute different subjectivities to oneself. *Process 6* draws the analyst's attention to these moments of transformation, highlighting more specifically how interviewees may take on different subjectivities across the span of the interview. *Process 7* highlights how the act of conducting interview analysis and disseminating its outcomes, constitutes a similarly political and constructive practice. The authors argue:

Beyond the ethical complications of different types and levels of authority afforded to

the interviewer and interviewee, interviewers exercise power as they distinguish what

will be reported, what will be included/excluded, and how and where it will be

distributed. (120)

This process therefore leads analysts to contemplate how analytic decisions may carry

deleterious impacts on the day-to-day lives of various people.

<u>4. 2 Adopting a Poststructural Framework for Analysis</u>

In chapters one and two, I express my concern for the necessities that pervade the analytic and conceptual landscapes within which policy and music education operate and interact in Malta. In order to address these necessities, I propose three research questions that draw attention to the various sites within which these necessities operate, as well as their constitutive function, reiterated hereunder:

> *Research Question 1: What does curricular policy represent to be 'necessary' and what implications are rationalised for the content, pedagogy, and assessment of music education?* (RQ1)

> *Research Question 2: How are the proposed changes and their rationalised implications implemented within music education?* (RQ2)

> *Research Question 3: How do these policy proposals and their implementation interact to construct possibilities for knowing, understanding, and doing music education?* (RQ3)

In the following section, I shall discuss how a poststructuralist framework for analysis has been adopted and applied to address these research questions.

Both proposed frameworks offer clear step-by-step processes for employing a poststructuralist analysis of various forms of text. However, the three questions which this research project seeks to address direct analysis towards proposals found within multiple texts, and more specifically the relationships these proposals hold with one another. As a result, the application of both frameworks encompassed significant adaptation. In the following subsections, I shall present these adaptations by detailing the process of analysis. First, I shall define why and how the WPR framework has been adopted, the texts selected for analysis, and how the analytic process has been adapted to scrutinise two sets of proposals,

their relationship, as well as their constitutive properties. I shall then define how the PIA framework has been adopted to produce interview texts, and how these texts have been treated as sites for further analysis of those effects identified within the WPR analysis. I shall conclude by sharing two reflections about this research design and considerations that may assist other analysts wishing to adopt a similar research design.

4.2.1 Adopting the 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' Framework

The research questions proposed within this project establish three interrelated analytic foci. The first addresses proposals for 'necessary' change, as well as corresponding implications for music education (RQ1). The second addresses the implementation of these proposals and the taken-for-granted modes of thinking that operate to mediate their implications within music education contexts (RQ2). The third draws attention to how the 'necessities' that shape proposals for change and their implementation form specific possibilities for knowing, understanding, and doing music education (RQ3). The WPR framework presents a set of analytic tools for scrutinising proposals and the taken-for-granted practices through which they operate. Owing to the comprehensive tools available for accessing and analysing problem representations, WPR constitutes a particularly useful framework for grappling with policy proposals and unsettling their 'necessary' qualities (RQ1). Furthermore, a WPR framework was formed in fulfilment of Bacchi's political commitment to visibilising and addressing the limiting and deleterious effects problem representations carry. Questions 4, 5, and 6 are designed specifically to draw attention to *'how the terms of reference established by a particular problem representation set limits on what can be thought and said* (ibid, 23). Therefore, the WPR framework provides useful tools for evaluating the constitutive relationship between proposals for change and their enactment (RQ2). The archaeological and genealogical components of the framework also serve as useful tools for identifying and unsettling the taken-for-granted bodies of knowledge active in

mediating these proposals within practices of implementation. Moreover, since the framework prompts analysts to consider how these proposals carry effects that shape the day-to-day lives of people, it offers useful tools for analysing the formation of possibilities for knowing, understanding, and acting within a given field of practice (RQ3).

In the following subsections, I shall discuss three aspects: 1. Which texts have been chosen for this analysis, 2. The method of analysis through which the WPR framework has been employed in order to address the aforementioned research questions, 3. How the outcomes of this analysis shall be presented.

The Chosen Texts for Analysis

In order to address the first research question (RQ1), I have chosen the *Educator's Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment: Music* as the primary site for analysis (EGPA: Music). During the course of analysis, EGPA: Music represented the most recent curricular policy text for music education in Malta. This document was published in 2015 by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education as part of the 'Learning Outcomes Framework' project. It details proposals for curricular reform across compulsory years of schooling that are represented to fulfil the 'necessary changes' originally put forward within the National Curriculum Framework (2012), which, at the time of this research project, remains in effect. This document is formed of two broad sections: the introduction, which details the broad rationale for the LOF reform, and the 'Learning and Assessment Programme' which details the proposed Learning Outcomes Framework for music, as well as a set of corresponding 'Notes for Pedagogy and Assessment'.

In order to address the second research question (RQ2), I have chosen to analyse the 2025 'Secondary Education Certificate' syllabus for the high-stakes assessment of music at the end of compulsory schooling (SEC: Music), which is published by the Matriculation and

Secondary Education Certificate examinations board established by the University of Malta (MATSEC). This document represents the outcome of syllabus revisions undertaken as part of the LOF reform and in response to its proposed changes. The SEC: Music document can therefore be considered as a site of implementation for the proposals put forward within the EGPA: Music document. Furthermore, the SEC: Music document has been selected for analysis because it sets influential curricular and pedagogical parameters within the field of music education. As a government-appointed body for the assessment and certification of formal, informal, and non-formal learning in Malta, MATSEC forms the main pathway by which learners may access further and higher education and training, as well as employment. Its syllabi therefore hold strong links to dominant institutional frameworks for making sense of music and practicing music education.

The analysis of these two texts shall be used as a basis for addressing the third research question (RQ3), which directs attention to how proposals found within these two documents aggregate and construct possibilities for making sense of music education.

The Method of Analysis

The process of analysis spanned between October 2021 and October 2022. This process was organised into three parts, each addressing one of the three research questions proposed: *1. Analysing Necessary Change*, *2. Analysing the Implementation of Necessary Change*, *3. Analysing Constitutive Effects.*

1. Analysing Necessary Change

The first part of the analysis was dedicated to the evaluation of proposals put forward within the EGPA: Music document and their 'rationalised' implications for music education. I first sought to identify key proposals for change through a thorough reading of this document's introduction (WPR Question 1), which presents the rationale for the LOF reform

as well as the forms of change it seeks to bring about. Throughout this process, particular attention was paid to recurring words, phrases, concepts, and categories. The outcomes of this process formed useful starting points for accessing problem representations and subjecting them to a WPR analysis. In order to identify the assumptions and presuppositions lodged within these problem representations, which form the archaeological process of a WPR analysis (WPR Question 2), I sought to understand how these problem representations were elaborated across the rest of the EGPA: Music document. In addition, I also sought to understand how these problem representations were elaborated in other related policy texts, namely the *National Curriculum Framework* (NCF) ('A National Curriculum Framework for All' 2012), the *Framework for the Educational Strategy of Malta 2014-2024* (FESM) (2014), and the *Respect for All Framework* (2014) (RfAF). These three documents define the values, aims, and principles to which all curricular practices across compulsory education are aligned, as well as the broader strategic objectives, 'necessary' changes, and principles for national policy development. The proposals for curricular reform detailed within the EGPA: Music document are represented to fulfil the objectives which these documents set. Hence, each document is cited and quoted across the EGPA: Music. These three documents were particularly useful tools for shedding light on the assumptions and presuppositions active in shaping the problem representations under analysis.

It is important to note that this process was markedly iterative. This is because, owing to two noteworthy variables, the analysis revealed a multiplicity of problem representations requiring scrutiny. The first variable relates to how any given problem representation is often elaborated through several subsidiary problem representations (Bacchi 2009). In order to shed light on the patterns of thinking that structure a given problem representation, it was necessary to scrutinise those which lay nested within it. The second variable relates to the presence of multiple representations which contest the same object of problematisation. This

reflects the complexity and multiplicity of participants involved in defining the LOF reform, rationalising its implications for music education, and writing corresponding policy texts. The EGPA: Music document can be considered as the outcome of four primary sources of influence, each of which is characterised by participants positioned within various sites of influence and holding varying degrees of institutional legitimacy. As a majority funder of the LOF reform, the European Union (EU) forms the first of these sources, exerting considerable influence through its regulatory mechanisms and guidance documents. The second is a group of technical experts within the Institute of Education in London, from whom the reform's writing was initially outsourced. The reform which was drafted by these technical experts was then passed on to a group of Maltese experts who were tasked with adapting its proposals to the local educational and cultural context. These form the third source of influence. The final source is formed by those policy texts which preceded the LOF reform and shaped the conditions of possibility within which it occurred. As a result of these multiple sources of influence, the proposals put forward within the EGPA: Music document are elaborated through arguments and narrative streams which exhibit tension and contradiction, as well as synthesis and alignment.

An understanding of this multiplicity, as well as the various sources of influence from which they emerge, formed useful starting points for the genealogical process of the WPR analysis (WPR question 3). The goal of this process was to understand how dominant problem representations have come to be and draw attention to how these could have been otherwise. In order to facilitate this process, I drew on several bodies of scholarship that shed light on the historical significance of these problem representations, their structuring concepts, and their role within national, transnational, and supranational spheres of government. Furthermore, bodies of scholarship relating to educational government and to 'governmentality' more broadly served as useful tools for understanding problem

representations and contemplating their effects. The outcomes of these two processes of analysis provided the material necessary to consider the effects of problem representations (WPR questions 5). Since this part of the analytic process was dedicated to scrutinising proposals for change in relation to their 'rationalised' implications for music education, the analysis of effects was primarily oriented towards evaluating discursive effects: the limits and conceptual boundaries established for making sense of things as problematic and corresponding proposals as 'necessary'. As the final step of this part of the analysis, I sought to consider how these discursive effects shape the 'rationalised' implications proposed within this document. In order to do so, I addressed the second section of the EGPA: Music document, which details the proposed 'Learning and Assessment Programme' (LAP) for music. Within this section, I sought proposals which define or describe music, music education, as well as related expectations for learner achievement, drawing particular attention to those statements that appear particularly normative or taken for granted. The goal of this analysis was to shed light on how problem representations, through the assumptions and presuppositions lodged within them, shape the 'rationalised' implications for music education.

2. Analysing the Implementation of Necessary Change

In part 2 of the analysis, which was dedicated to addressing the second research question (RQ2), I sought to analyse the SEC: Music document in order to scrutinise how proposals for 'necessary' change have been implemented within the context of music education. The purpose of this analysis was two-fold. First, I sought to understand how the proposals analysed within part 1, through their underlying assumptions and presuppositions and the discursive effects they induce, shape the proposals put forward within the SEC: Music document. Secondly, I sought to shed light on the domain-specific bodies of knowledge active in mediating the proposals and rationalised implications put forward within

EGPA: Music, and how they shape the possibilities available for knowing music education at the SEC level.

I started this analytic process with a focused reading of the proposals put forward within this document, drawing attention to terms, concepts, and categories that indicate the presence of those problem representations identified within the EGPA: Music document, as well as other statements that function to describe or define music and music education. Drawing on broader musicological and music education scholarship as useful tools for excavation, I sought to identify and scrutinise the assumptions and presuppositions lodged within these proposals (WPR question 2). This was followed by genealogical work (WPR question 3), which sought to shed light on how it became possible to define and describe music education in these ways. In addition to the aforementioned scholarship, literature relating to music education in Malta served as a useful tool within this process. The outcomes of these analyses served as a useful resource for contemplating the relationship between proposals for 'necessary' change put forward within the EGPA: Music document and their implementation within the SEC: Music document.

3. Analysing Constitutive Effects

In the third and final part of the analysis, I drew together the outcomes of parts one and two to consider how the 'necessary' changes proposed, as well as their implementation, shape how it is possible to know, understand, and do music education (WPR questions 4, 5, & 6). In order to do so, I sought to scrutinise those effects *'created by the limits imposed on what can be thought or said'* (Bacchi 2009, 69), how they function to form particular subjectivities for those people seeking to engage with music education, as well as their impacts *'on people's embodied existence'* more broadly (70). Scholarship relating to music education and governing in education aided in contemplating these effects.

The Presentation of Outcomes

The outcome of this process of analysis shall be presented in Chapter 5 and shall be organised into four sections. The first two sections (5.1 & 5.2) shall present the outcomes of the archaeological and genealogical processes of analysis applied to the EGPA: Music and the SEC: Music documents in order to address the first two research questions (RQ1 & RQ2). The third section (5.3) shall present the analysis of effects in order to address research question three (RQ3). The final section (5.4) shall draw on the archaeological and genealogical analyses of those problem representations identified within the EGPA: Music document to identify a conceptual framework which offers an alternative representation of the problems in question. This section shall seek to contemplate how this alternative may offer different possibilities for conceptualising music education, and how it may function to unsettle the taken-for-granted position of prevailing problem representations. The concluding chapter of this thesis shall put forward reflections on how we may proceed more productively.

4.2.2 Adopting the 'Poststructural Interview Analysis' Framework

The third research question proposed within this project expresses particular interest in the constitutive effects of policy proposals and their implementation: how they function to shape the possibilities afforded to people for knowing, understanding, and doing music education. As I have argued in the previous section, the archaeological and genealogical analyses prompted by the WPR framework serve as useful tools for evaluating these effects. However, in addition to these tools, Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) contend that, in order *to 'investigate the "playing out" of problem representations in people's lives, it is possible to adopt a wide gamut of empirical techniques, as part of a commitment to selected political goals.'* (23). In section 4.1.2, I considered how the use of empirical techniques within poststructuralist approaches to analysis forms strong theoretical tensions. Bacchi and Bonham (2016) argue:

> *In a general sense it seems fair to say that interview subjects are considered to have privileged ("first person") access to a kind of "truth" about their "experience/s". This view of a "founding subject"—a person who pre-exists society and who "grasps intuitively" the meanings within "empty things" (Foucault 1972: 227)—poses difficulties for poststructural researchers who wish to use interviews as part of their analysis.* (114)

The authors therefore propose the PIA framework as a means of resolving these tensions. Rather than situating interview research as a tool for accessing knowledge held by interview subjects, the proposed framework reframes interviews as sites within which discourses practice and within which these practices may be scrutinised: how *'socially produced forms of knowledge'* operate to *'set limits upon what it is possible to think, write or speak'* (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016, 35). Of particular interest are the possibilities available for what *can* be

said within an interview, as well as the productive qualities of these statements in forming things, such as objects, subjects, and places. Driven by a commitment to 'politicizing personhood', Bacchi and Bonham claim that statements through which the interviewee attributes particular subjectivities to oneself or others constitute a particularly useful resource in unsettling the common-sense understandings typically perpetuated within interview research.

Drawing on Bacchi and Bonham's proposals, I sought to engage with interview research as a tool for extending my analysis of effects (RQ3). It is important to note that, while Bacchi and Goodwin allude to the use of the interview research to extend the analysis problem representations, PIA was not conceived to specifically derive or access knowledge about their effects. Nevertheless, it remains possible to adopt this framework to shape interviews and treat their transcripts as sites for the analysis of these effects. In order to access and analyse statements that relate to the proposals and problem representations put forward within policy, interviewees must be asked to *examine their being, to differentiate and scrutinize elements of their lives'* (119) relationally to those fields of practice targeted by the policy texts under analysis. The analysis of things said via PIA allows the analyst to understand whether the assumptions and presuppositions structuring problem representations are similarly active in structuring interview statements. In the event that statements indicate the presence of these assumptions and presuppositions, it becomes possible to better understand how *'socially-produced forms of knowledge'* shape things said, as well as the subjects, objects, and places they invoke. In the event that statements indicate the presence of assumptions and presuppositions that stand in tension with those identified within the documents of interest, these statements may be used to draw attention to alternative possibilities for making sense of a field of practice, and the alternative effects these may carry. It is important to note that interactions, such as interviews, are enabled by a multiplicity

of potentially contradictory discursive practices. Things said assume an active role in navigating this multiplicity. It therefore becomes possible to understand how statements function to give varying forms of authority to different bodies of knowledge within a given moment or across the course of an interview. This forms the rationale for my adoption of the PIA framework.

In order to further address the third research question (RQ3), I have designed and conducted a series of interviews to generate a set of texts for analysis. PIA, as presented by Bacchi and Bonham (2016), forms an analytic framework for evaluating pre-formed interview texts. The authors therefore provide no guidance for the design of interview research. In the following subsections, I shall discuss the decisions I have made relative to research design and how I made use of the PIA framework (as well as its theoretical foundation) to inform these decisions. The interview research process commenced in November 2021 with the submission of an application for ethical approval and ended in December 2022 with the termination of the analysis. This process is depicted and detailed in Figure 1 below.
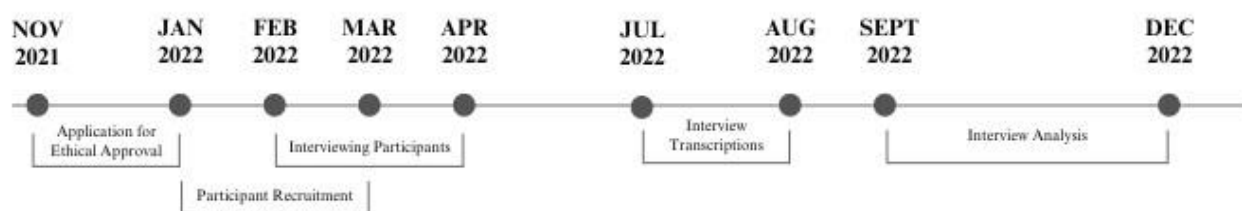
Figure 1: Interview Research Timeline

Research Design

The design of interviews encompassed several considerations and processes. These shall be presented in four subsections: *1. Targeted Participants, 2. Ethical Considerations, 3. Interview Questions, and 4. Participant Recruitment and Data Collection.*

1. Targeted Participants

As I have argued thus far, the purpose of interview analysis within this research project is to evaluate the presence (or lack thereof) of those assumptions and presuppositions identified within the EGPA: Music and SEC: Music texts in the ways their subjects are able to speak about music education. The targeted participants for this interview research were therefore those populations whose conduct is targeted by these two texts. Proposals within the EGPA: Music document seek to regulate how music learners and educators make sense of and practice music education within compulsory education, while proposals within the SEC: Music document seek to regulate how learners and educators within compulsory education make sense of and practice music as an optional subject at secondary level. Therefore, the populations targeted by these texts can be identified as music educators and SEC music learners. Two further considerations impact the choice of participant populations. Firstly, music as an optional subject of study is only offered within state secondary schools, thus the exclusion of educators and students within private and church schools. Secondly, at the time of conducting this study, the LOF reform and the revised SEC syllabus were only planned to take effect for Year 9 music learners. Therefore, the targeted participant population for this interview research were Year 9 music educators and SEC music learners.

As already discussed in Chapter 1, since the subject's inception in 2014, student uptake of music as an optional subject of study has been consistently poor. 2020 recorded an absolute absence of learners electing to study music as an optional subject at Year 9.

Informed by the significant probability of a small and potentially nil pool of targeted participants, the intended participant population was widened for both participant categories. While Year 9 SEC music educators were still given priority in recruitment, the targeted participant population was broadened to include other music educators within the school. Notwithstanding whether educators were teaching SEC music at Year 9, their conduct would likely still be targeted and influenced by the proposals identified within the two documents, for two reasons. Firstly, the LOF reform detailed within the EGPA: Music had already taken effect for teaching and learning at middle school. Therefore, the teaching of most music educators would have already been affected by its proposals. Secondly, owing to its position as the main pathway for accessing music education at post-secondary levels, the influence of the SEC: Music document goes beyond its immediate focus. Therefore, it is likely that educators would still be impacted by its proposals.

Similarly, Year 9 SEC music learners were still given priority as participants in this study. However, the targeted participant population was broadened to include other Year 9 learners with an interest in music education. Since the LOF reform would have already been in effect during their middle school education, their learning within compulsory music lessons would still have been targeted by the proposals analysed within the EGPA: Music. In order to maximise the possibility that consenting participants would hold an understanding of or an interest in music education, I emphasised the centricity of music education, specifically at the SEC level, as the subject of discussion throughout the recruitment process, including the participant information sheet. Two possible outcomes were foreseen in relation to this change in targeted learner participants. 'Things said' may indicate the presence of those assumptions and presuppositions identified within the EGPA: Music and the SEC: Music documents. Alternatively, 'things said' may indicate the presence of assumptions and presuppositions other than those identified within these two documents. In both cases, it

remains valuable to evaluate the discursive practices present, as well as the ways they function to shape music education. In the case of the former, the outcomes of analysis would serve as useful tools for evaluating the effects of dominant discursive practices. In the case of the latter, the outcomes of analysis would serve as useful tools for reconsidering music education through alternative frameworks of knowledge.

2. Ethical considerations

In order to ensure that participants' well-being is protected and that the rights to which they are entitled are sufficiently met, several ethical considerations were taken into account and safeguards put in place. Ethical clearance was sought and acquired after the presentation of the proposed research design and corresponding ethical considerations to the *Royal College of Music Research Ethics Committee* and the *Ministry for Education Research Ethics Committee which forms part of Malta's Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability*. All learner participants and their respective parents/guardians, together with prospective educator participants, were provided with an information sheet detailing the research project and their potential contribution to it. The participation of all consenting participants was subject to informed consent. In the case of learners, given that they are still minors, their participation was also subject to informed consent from their parents or guardians. In order to ensure that all participants were well-informed and that their participation was not affected by linguistic competence, all participants were provided with information sheets in both English and Maltese [2]. Due to the ongoing repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of data collection, and its impact on the administrative capacity of schools, the recruitment process was all undertaken online. Furthermore, due to ongoing social distancing regulations, interviews were conducted using an online video

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[2] A sample participant information sheet can be found in Appendix 1.

conferencing platform. All interviews were audio and video recorded for transcription and safeguarding purposes. Interviewees were also given the choice of using either Maltese or English throughout the course of the interview. For the purposes of this doctoral project, where interviews were conducted in Maltese, transcripts were translated into English. Owing to the smallness of the field of research, assertions which might compromise the anonymity of research participants have been redacted from interview transcripts.

3. Interview Questions

Through these interviews, I sought to elicit statements that may shed light on the presence (or absence) of those assumptions and presuppositions identified within EGPA: Music and SEC:Music proposals, in order to evaluate how they form possibilities for speaking about music education, its subjects, objects, and places, in relation to oneself and to others. The questions employed within each interview was shaped accordingly. Each schedule is made up of three sets of questions that correspond to different aspects of these objectives. Through the first set of questions presented below, I sought to prompt interviewees *'to differentiate and scrutinize elements of their lives'* in relation to music education (Bacchi and Bonham 2016, 119). The purpose of these questions was to elicit descriptions or definitions of SEC level music education.

1. *Outside of your present role in school, in what ways have you engaged with music and music education?*
2. *How would you describe music education at SEC level in school?*

Through the second set of questions, I sought to prompt interviewees to elaborate on the ways they made sense of SEC music education relationally to themselves and to others. These questions were intended to elicit statements that form the objects and subjects of music

education, as well as statements through which interviewees attribute a particular subjectivity to themselves and others.

1. *How would you define and describe your current role in school?*

2. *How would you describe the current role of a SEC music 'learner'? (For educator participants)*

3. *How would you describe the current role of a SEC music 'educator'? (For learner participants)*

Through the third set of questions, I sought to invite interviewees to differentiate between what *is* and what *should* be. The purpose of these questions was to prompt them to make sense of and speak about the field of practice in non-typical ways. By doing so, it was hoped that interviewees might choose to assign authority to alternative discourses active within the interview.

1. *What do you think music education at SEC level in school should be?*

2. *What do you think your role in school should be?*

3. *What do you think a SEC music 'learner' should be? (For educator participants)*

4. *What do you think a music 'educator' should be? (For learner participants)*

An alternative interview schedule was formed for Year 9 learner participants who do not study music at SEC level in order to account for their distanced relationship with SEC music education. This interview schedule was adapted in two ways. Firstly, questions about SEC level music education were supplemented with broader questions about music education in school. Secondly, questions about music education were supplemented with other questions about SEC subject choices, and why they have not chosen to take on music as an optional subject at secondary level. The purpose of these questions was to prompt interviewees to offer comparative statements about music education that may function to

distinguish between possibilities for speaking about music education in general and possibilities for speaking about music education specifically at SEC level.

1. *Outside of your present role in school, in what ways have you engaged with music and music education?*

2. *How would you describe music education in school?*

   a. *Why do you choose subjects to study in Year 9?*

   b. *Why did you choose not to study music at SEC level?*

3. *How would you define and describe your current role in school?*

4. *How would you describe the role of a music 'educator'?*

5. *What do you think music education in school should be?*

   a. *What do you think music education at SEC level in school should be?*

6. *What do you think your role in school should be?*

7. *What do you think a music 'educator' should be?*

4. Participant recruitment & Data Collection

Following the receipt of ethical approval in December 2021, participant recruitment commenced in January 2022. The process of recruitment spanned over three months and followed the procedures set out by the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability for recruiting research participants from Maltese state schools. All 10 state school principals and secondary school head teachers were contacted for permission to conduct research. Once consent was received from college principals and head teachers a recruitment email consisting of an online information sheet and a consent form was shared with all state school music educators and Year 9 parents/guardians. Once parents/guardians expressed their consent for their child's participation, the student was contacted directly with an information sheet and assent form. From the 11 state secondary schools contacted, four

schools agreed to take part. All consenting schools were general secondary schools that offer SEC music as an optional subject of study. None of the consenting schools hosted Year 9 SEC music cohorts. From across these schools, five music educators and four Year 9 learners consented to participate. While the aim of this recruitment process was to recruit one educator and one learner from each school, upon their request, two educators from within the same school were interviewed simultaneously. All interviews were held on an online video conferencing platform between February and April 2022. Each interview recording was transcribed and translated between July and August 2022.

Method of analysis

The process of analysing these interviews was organised in two parts: *1. Noting and mapping 'things said', and 2. Analysing 'things said'.*

1. Noting and mapping 'things said'

Each transcript presented a substantial body of statements relating to the field of practice. Prompted by 'Process 1' of the PIA framework, I first sought to identify statements of interest through a content analysis of each interview text. I sought to specifically identify statements that describe music education in taken-for-granted or self-justifying ways, statements that form its 'objects', 'subjects', and 'places', as well as statements that attribute subjectivities to oneself or to others. In order to make sense of things said, I sought to visually map out statements of note in relation to one another, and in relation to the interview questions that prompted them. An example depicting this process is presented in Figure 2. Different colours were used to highlight the different qualities of these statements of interest: questions were coloured in green, descriptive words in yellow, subjectivities in red, and tensions in purple. These interview maps formed the basis for subsequent processes of analysis and aided in identifying the presence of key discursive practices.
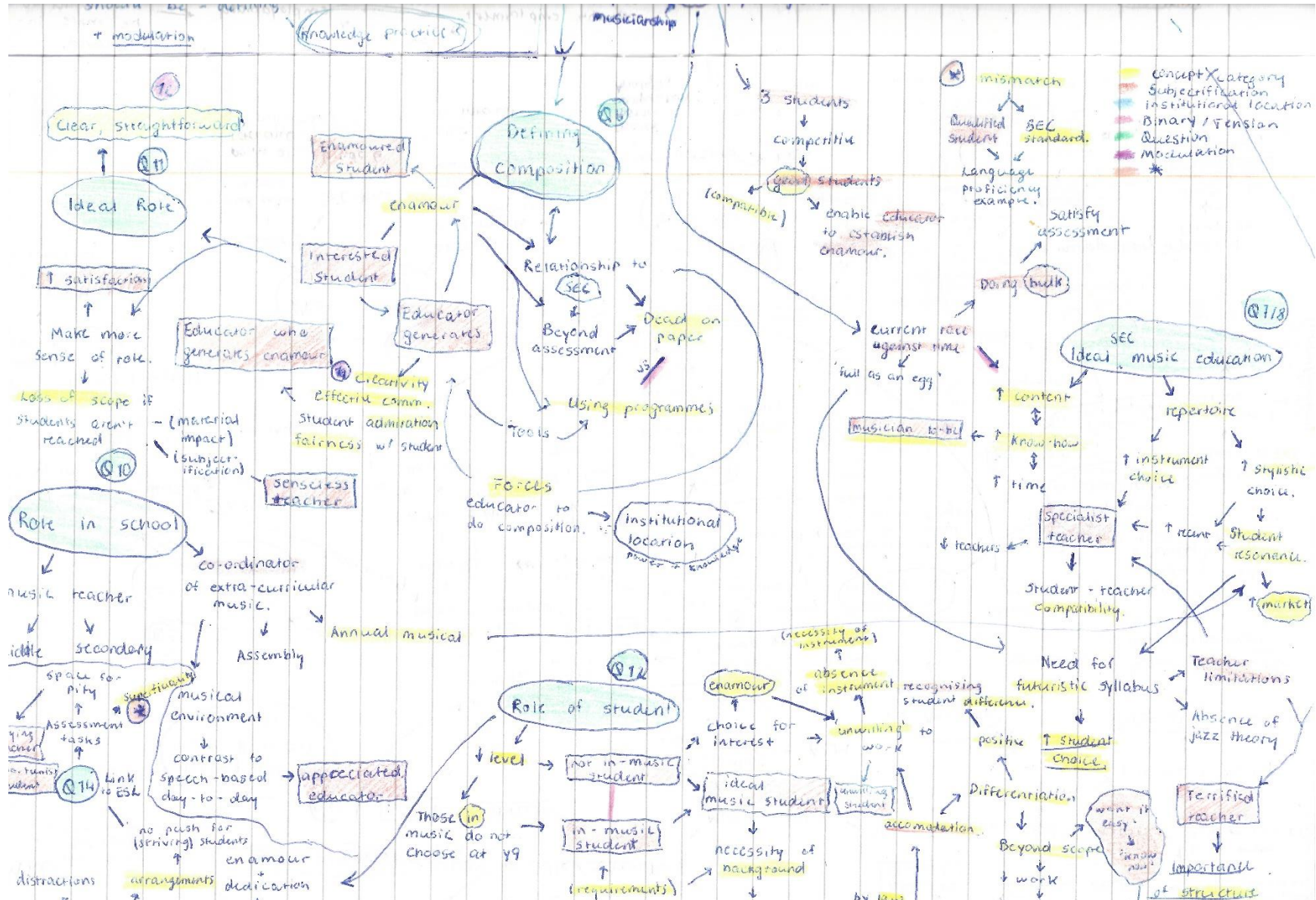
Figure 2: Example of Interview Mapping

2. Analysing 'things said'

The purpose of interview analysis was to identify the presence (or lack thereof) of assumptions and presuppositions identified within EGPA:Music and SEC:Music, and analyse their effects. As a first step I sought to locate statements that indicate the presence of things shaped by these assumptions and presuppositions. In order to do so, I drew on the outcomes of the process of analysis presented in section 4.2.2. Prompted by processes 4 and 5 of the PIA framework, the second step involved analysing how these things said form music education and the objects, subjects, and places through which it is known, understood, and practiced. Within this process I sought to consider what *can* be said, as well as what *cannot* be said, drawing attention to how these practices make it difficult to think about music education differently. The third step of analysis involved identifying and analysing statements that stand in tension with the assumptions and presuppositions identified within the EGPA:Music and the SEC:Music document. The purpose of this process was to identify alternative possibilities for making sense of music education, and show how these possibilities produce its subjects, objects, and places in alternative ways. The final step of this analysis was prompted by process 7 of the PIA framework, which directs analysts to retrospectively consider how the choices I made function to shape the field of research. In order to do so, I revisited the aforementioned maps to consider how various aspects relating to my presence and my institutional location may have shaped the possibilities afforded to interviewees in speaking about music education. Most importantly, in this process, I also sought to consider how the various ways I may choose to present the outcomes of analysis may shape the field of research.

Presentation: Interview Moments

The poststructuralist perspective adopted within a PIA approach to interview research carries important implications for the presentation of its outcomes. Bacchi and Bonham's (2016) proposed framework is characterised by a departure from conventional ways of conceptualising and representing participants within social scientific research. The subjectivity of interview participants within a poststructuralist approach to analysis is understood to be produced by the discursive practices active within the interview, and hence, are considered to be in constant evolution. Therefore, participants are not considered to hold an identity outside of the ways that identity is performed within the interview. In other words, the ways in which people speak about themselves is understood to form their very subjectivities.

In the preceding subsections, I have argued that this carries significant implications for the purpose of interview research. Rather than seeking to understand who the interviewee *is* and how their experience of being may yield useful insight, a poststructuralist interview analysis expresses interest in how it is possible for the interviewee to speak about things, including one's own subjectivity, in particular ways. This carries significant implications for how the outcomes of analysis are presented. While interviews within social science are typically attributed to the subjective qualities and characteristics held by people, the presentation of interview texts within this poststructuralist approach involves what Bacchi and Bonham term as *'"de-personalization", or—to put it more positively—a form of politicization of "personhood"'* (115). Rather than attributing things said to people, analysed statements shall be attributed to the 'interview moment', which pays heed to how statements are understood to be the property of the unique configurations of discursive practice active within a given moment. This serves to highlight that statements about music education do not reflect anything essential to music education or to the interviewee's subjective experience of

music education. Rather, it represents the articulation of discursive practices and the possibilities they afford for speaking about it.

For the purpose of this research project, all interviewees shall be referred to by the subjectivity through which they have been recruited, as well as a number to differentiate between each participant across both sets (e.g. educator/learner 1). Furthermore, the outcomes of analysis shall be presented as 'interview moments'. These moments shall be primarily presented in section three of the following chapter (5.3), which seeks to analyse the formation of music education through the outcomes of the WPR analysis defined in section 4.2.2. The WPR analysis shall be interspersed with analyses of these interview moments in order to consider how proposals and problem representations play out within the context of the interview. I shall present a total of nine interview moments within this section. Each of these moments is positioned to contribute to or extend the analysis of a particular effect or set of effects. One interview moment shall also be presented in section four of the following chapter (5.4), which seeks to consider alternative possibilities for representing the problem. This interview moment presents statements which stand in tension with the dominant assumptions and presuppositions identified within the EGPA: Music and SEC: Music documents, and shall therefore be used as a resource to consider alternative ways of conceptualising music education.

4.3 Looking Back: Reflections on Research Design

In this chapter, I have discussed how I have chosen to adapt the methodological frameworks proposed by Bacchi, Goodwin and Bonham to address the research questions proposed within this project. It is important to consider that PIA is defined as a framework of analysis for pre-formed interview texts separately to a WPR analysis. While my decisions were informed by the authors' methodological proposals, the proposed research design

occupies uncharted territories. In this section, I shall retrospectively discuss two of these choices, and how they have contributed to achieving intended outcomes. I shall also propose corresponding suggestions for other analysts who may want to adopt a similar research design in the future.

Reconsidering Targeted Participants

The first reflection I shall discuss relates to choices pertaining to the targeted participant populations, and the utility of interview texts derived from interviews with people situated variably within the field of practice. As I have argued earlier in this chapter, interview analysis was adopted as an extension of a WPR analysis to analyse the effects of proposals and problem representations on the subjects they target. A PIA framework was therefore adopted as an analytic tool for scrutinising interview texts to identify the presence (or lack thereof) of the bodies of knowledge identified in the WPR analysis, and for analysing how they play-out within interview contexts to shape things said. In order to do this, I sought to hold interviews with people whose conduct is specifically targeted by these two texts. These initially included Year 9 SEC music educators and learners. However, owing to limitations on participant recruitment, the target participant population was broadened to include other music educators and other Year 9 learners. While it was still expected that their conduct would be or have been targeted by one or both of the texts under analysis, their relationship to the field of practice was perceived to be sufficient in yielding statements about the field of practice that may contribute to the analysis. Two potential outcomes were foreseen. Statements may indicate the presence of those assumptions and presuppositions identified within the WPR analysis, thus enabling the use of things said to further the analysis of effects. Alternatively, statements may indicate the presence of other bodies of knowledge, in which case, things said would serve as useful tools for rethinking and reconsidering proposals, problems, and the music education they function to construct.

None of the consenting schools hosted Year 9 SEC music cohorts. Therefore, all educator participants were either middle school teachers holding experience in SEC music, or SEC music teachers within other levels of secondary study. The analysis of things said across these interviews generally signalled the presence of assumptions and presuppositions identified within the WPR analysis, thus rendering educator interviews a useful site for extending the WPR analysis. All learner participants were Year 9 learners who had not chosen to study music at the SEC level. Contrastingly to educator interviews, learner interviews were markedly less useful within this research design. Even though all learners had undergone compulsory music education in middle school, two of the four participants' understanding of, and interest in, SEC music and music education more broadly was less pronounced than anticipated. As a result, answers to proposed questions were mostly tentative or speculative, thus yielding their interviews as a particularly limited resource for analysis. The two other learner participants held a clearer understanding of music education. One of these two learners actively studied music outside school, while the second aspired towards studying music outside of school. While the analysis of their interview texts indicated the presence of discursive practices shaped by the assumptions and presuppositions identified within the EGPA: Music and SEC: Music texts, their utility was also limited. This is because, owing to the relative brevity or the generic qualities of their statements, the outcomes of their analyses did not extend the WPR analysis in significant ways. Ten of the eleven interview moments presented within the following chapter are therefore derived from educator interviews, while only one interview moment is derived from learner interviews.

Since PIA expresses a particular interest in normative statements and 'routine enactments', interviews yield markedly more useful texts when held with interviewees whose day-to-day practices are intertwined with the topic in question. Within this research project, the PIA framework has been adopted to extend the analysis of effects *beyond* the remits of a

WPR analysis. Within the context of such use, interviews yield markedly more useful texts when things said elaborate on the topic in question, and the various 'things' through which this is formed. Therefore, in order to bolster the utility of interviews for PIA analysis, it is recommended that target populations for such modes of research design hold a close and routine relationship with the field of practice addressed within policy texts.

Reconsidering Interview Questions

The second choice I shall discuss relates to the design of interview questions and their relationship to the outcomes of a WPR analysis. Here, it is important to note that interview research commenced prior to the end of the process of WPR analysis. Interview questions were designed to elicit statements about SEC music education, and did not directly address the specific concepts and categories that subsequently emerged as significant within the third part of the WPR analysis. Therefore, while educator interviews were particularly useful in extending the WPR analysis and its evaluation of effects in relation to school music education more broadly, they proved limited in extending the WPR analysis in its evaluation of more specific categories of effects. It is therefore recommended that, within such approaches to analysis, the design of interview questions is informed specifically by the outcomes of document analysis and the various elements that shape the effects in question.

Chapter 5: Analysing 'Necessities'

This chapter details the outcomes of my analysis of the 'necessary' changes proposed within Maltese curricular policy, their rationalised implications for music education, and their subsequent implementation. The analysis shall be presented in four sections. In the first section (5.1), I shall present the outcomes of the 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) analysis as applied to the 'Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' (EGPA: Music) text. This curricular policy text puts forward proposals for 'necessary' change and their rationalised implications for the curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment of music education across all years of compulsory schooling. In order to address the first research question (RQ1), I shall shed light on the assumptions and presuppositions underpinning these proposals for change by scrutinising the 'problems' they purport to address, and evaluating how the identified assumptions and presuppositions function to represent proposals for change as 'necessary'. I shall present the analysis of key concepts to shed light on how they shape the problem representations in question and how these concepts have come to occupy their central position within these problem representations. This section shall conclude by evaluating what possibilities these assumptions and presuppositions afford for making sense of music education, and how they enable particular implications to be 'rationalised' and proposed.

In the second section (5.2), I shall present my analysis of the Secondary Education Certificate syllabus for music (SEC: Music), which puts forward proposals for the implementation of the aforementioned 'necessary' changes for music education as an optional subject at the secondary level. In order to address the second research question, I shall shed light on how possibilities for making sense of music, as established through the problem representations put forward within the EGPA: Music, shape this document's proposals. Furthermore, I shall also seek to grapple with the assumptions and presuppositions

underpinning the proposals put forward within the SEC: Music document in order to shed light on the dominant framework of knowledge active in mediating the aforementioned proposals for change. The analysis shall evaluate the possibilities that this framework offers for making sense of music and music education, and how it has come to assume its dominant position.

Drawing on the outcomes of the analyses presented in sections 5.1 and 5.2, the third section (5.3) presents my analysis of effects evaluating how the proposals put forward within each text aggregate to form possibilities for knowing, understanding, and doing music education. I shall discuss three categories of effects. Mirroring a poststructuralist commitment to moving away from an understanding of policy as made and implemented by people, to an understanding of how policy functions to shape people (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016), each of the three categories shall be labelled by the subjectivities they form: *1. Making the Problem-Solving Subject*, *2. Making the Demonstrable Subject*, and *3. Making the Gifted and Talented Subject*. I shall discuss how each of these subjectivities was shaped and elaborated through the proposals put forward within the EGPA: Music and SEC: Music documents. In this section, I shall also present nine interview moments analysed through a Poststructuralist Interview Analysis (PIA) framework. I shall present each moment as a tool for extending the assessment of effects further. Within these analyses, I shall discuss the presence of assumptions and presuppositions identified within the proposals put forward by the EGPA: Music and SEC: Music documents, and how they function to shape the possibilities afforded to interviewees for speaking about music education in relation to themselves and others.

In the fourth section (5.4), I shall present the outcomes of the genealogical analysis of those problem representations identified within the EGPA: Music text. I shall make use of these outcomes as alternative possibilities for contemplating the 'necessity' of proposed

changes and their rationalised implications. I shall conclude this section by presenting the analysis of an interview moment to discuss how the implications of such an approach shape the possibilities available for speaking about music education and discuss useful conceptual tools for unsettling prevailing necessities within day-to-day practices.

5.1 'Necessary' change: EGPA:Music

The EGPA: Music (2015) introduces its proposals for change as a response to *'the need'* for such a change within *'today's educational structures'* (5), claiming that this need has been professed across a substantial body of educational policy documents published prior to the EGPA: Music document. These include the *'Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014 – 2024* (2014), *A National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo 2014 – 2019* (2014), *A Strategic Plan for Early School Leaving in Malta 2014* (2014), *Education for All: Special Needs and Inclusive Education in Malta* (2014), *Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020* (2015) and *Respect for All Framework* (2015)'. This statement sheds light on the position of these EGPA: Music's proposals within educational policymaking, indicating the prevalence of underpinning problem representations and the perceived 'necessity' of corresponding forms of change.

The EGPA: Music document proposes a *'Learning Outcomes Framework'* as the change *'necessary'* to *'free schools and learners from centrally-imposed knowledge-centric syllabi'* (5). This statement indicates that curricular programmes centred on subject syllabi are considered to be problematic and in 'need' of intervention and reformation. The problems posed by syllabi are elaborated through two problem representations, which I shall term as *1. The Problem of Knowledge-Centricity* and *2. The Problem of Central-Imposition*. As argued by Bacchi (2009), what policy proposes to do about something reflects the ways in which that something is known to be problematic and in *need* of change. In the following subsections (5.1.1 and 5.1.2), I shall evaluate what the EGPA: Music proposes to do about these problems in order to shed light on what these problems are represented to be, and how they function to represent these proposals as 'necessary'. I shall evaluate the assumptions and presuppositions through which these problem representations are elaborated, and where they come from. In the third subsection (5.1.3), I shall seek to engage with the proposed 'implications' of these

changes to shed light on how these proposals shape possibilities for making sense of music education and enable the 'rationalisation' of specific implications.

5.1.1 The Problem of Knowledge-Centricity

In response to the problems posed by the knowledge-centric qualities of syllabi, the EGPA: Music document proposes a learning outcomes framework as the change necessary to enable the development of learning programmes that *'fulfil the framework of knowledge, attitudes and skills-based outcomes that are considered national education entitlement of all learners in Malta'* (5). The problem of knowledge-centricity is therefore represented to be the inadequacy of subject knowledge in meeting learners' 'educational entitlement'. Entitlement emerges as an important concept in the elaboration of this problem representation and hosts an important framework of assumptions and presuppositions which occupy a foundational position within this problem representation.

In the above statement, 'educational entitlement' is defined as a *'framework of knowledge, attitudes, and skill-based outcomes'*, indicating that by the end of their compulsory education, all learners' achievements should go beyond subject knowledge to encompass a broader framework of achievements. Curricular structures that centre learning programmes on the achievement of knowledge are represented to stand at odds with 'educational entitlement', and are therefore considered to be problematic. This concept is further elaborated within the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), which proposes 'educational entitlement' in terms of *'learning that enables them [learners] to accomplish their full potential as individual persons and as citizens of a small State within the European Union'* ('A National Curriculum Framework for All' 2012, xiii). It is important to note that the NCF is particularly significant because it represents an important point of origin for the proposal of a learning outcomes framework *'as the keystone for learning and assessment*

throughout the years of compulsory schooling' ('Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' 2015, 5). The NCF's definition of entitlement establishes a connection between what learners ought to achieve within schooling and how this achievement contributes to their development as *'individual persons'* and *'citizens'*. This connection is elucidated further within the document's foreword by the then minister of education, Dolores Cristina:

> *The legacy that this document aims to achieve is the assurance that by the end of compulsory education learners will have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills, competences, attitudes, and values that stimulate them to view lifelong learning as part and parcel of their development as individuals and as citizens of our country, of the European Union and of the world.* ('A National Curriculum Framework for All' 2012, vii)

Within this statement, educational entitlement is represented to encompass an understanding of and capacity for learning beyond the boundaries of schooling to encompass a lifelong process of development. This is represented to be a fundamental component of individuality and citizenship as they are enacted within, but also beyond, national contexts of practice.

The goal of securing and extending learners' relationship to learning emerges similarly within the *'Framework for the Education Strategy of Malta 2014-2024'* (FESM) (2014), which details a set of *'strategic pillars for policy development'* and *'broad goals'* aimed towards directing all national policymaking and educational practices. Goals 3 and 4 proposed by the FoES propose to: *'Raise levels of learner retainment and attainment in further, vocational and tertiary education and training'* and *'Increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning'* (3). The learning outcomes framework reform, as detailed in the changes proposed within the EGPA: Music document (2015), is represented to align with

these goals and hence form *'part of a coherent strategy for lifelong learning'* (5). Developed and published in 2014 (in accordance with the member state's obligations to the Lisbon Objectives set out by the European Union), this strategy is represented as a response to material conditions marked by *'internationalisation'*, *'rapid change'*, *'technological development'*, '*changing ways of accessing knowledge'*, and *'concerns about social cohesion'*, and expresses the belief that lifelong learning represents an important tool to address the challenges these conditions pose. The document speaks of the importance of cultivating learners who are *'better equipped to cope with socio-economic changes and become true lifelong learners'* (15).

Educational entitlement, as elaborated within the concept of lifelong learning, functions to shed further light on the problem representation in question. The problem of knowledge-centricity is reframed to be the insufficiency of subject knowledge in enabling learners to cultivate a secure and sustained relationship that extends beyond formal education to encompass learning as a lifelong process of development. In order to shed further light on the assumptions and presuppositions that structure the problem of knowledge-centricity, the following subsection shall evaluate 'educational entitlement' as elaborated within 'lifelong learning' more thoroughly, as well as its role in shaping policy problems and corresponding solutions.

How has this problem representation come about?

The 'Framework for the Education Strategy of Malta 2014-2024' document (FESM) contends that its proposed goals, to which all national educational policy practices are aligned, represent a response to a set of changes formed *'in line with European and world benchmarks.'* (2014, 3). The strategy claims that *'[i]n today's globalised world, the pace of educational change is not determined only at a national level'*, illustrating that the proposed

changes, and the problem representations through which they are structured, hold roots that transcend national boundaries.

The concept of lifelong learning has occupied a dominant position within governmental practices across the global west since the latter part of the 20th century (Field 2001). As indicated within the FESM document statement above, the concept's presence within policymaking holds a strong relationship to changing social, political, and technological conditions typically defined by the term 'globalisation'. This relationship is elaborated in two ways. The first relates to how these conditions have reconfigured the political relationship between local and global contexts of policymaking, cultivating what Ozga and Lingard (2006) have defined as '*a new spatiality to politics'* (65). Within this globalised political space, supranational organisations such as the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) emerge as powerful policy actors. Their practices have functioned to disrupt the typical aggregation of policy action with national, sub-national, and local fields of practice, exerting a substantial impact on policy-making practices worldwide. The centrality of lifelong learning within intranational and transnational policymaking agendas has meant that, as a result of this new political spatiality, the concept has achieved international ubiquity (Field 2001).

The second relates to the use of lifelong learning as a silver bullet solution to the challenges posed by globalisation. Descriptions of these challenges within policymaking typically invoke a fatalistic narrative of 'change' as a rapid and relentless force accompanying the turn of the millennium (Lindblad, Ozga, and Zambeta 2002). This rhetoric of change emerges prominently within the NCF document, which presents its proposals as *'a response to the changing demands of individuals and society, rapid changes in our education system driven by globalisation, ICT development, competition, shift of traditional values and new paradigms'* (NCF iii). The significance of these narratives, and of the position of lifelong

learning within them, lies in how they represent change to be all-encompassing, yet

anonymous. The amorphous quality attributed to change renders it a force that is experienced,

understood, and felt by everyone. Such ubiquity implies that, if everyone knows change

exists as a challenging and problematic feature of contemporary political, social, and

economic conditions, then there is no particular need to prove its obvious existence.

Therefore, references to its presence need not be accompanied by attempts to qualify, prove,

or demonstrate its existence. In the event that such attempts are made, Lindblad, Ozga, and

Zambeta claim that these frequently invoke '*topoi*', defined as *'banalities that are universally*

accepted as truth and thus do not need to be questioned or scrutinised, and which are invoked

as a substitute for serious analysis' (618). This ubiquity, argues the authors, is illusive

because it recasts dominant narratives as descriptive rather than constructive, and hence

political. In doing so, these attempts affirm an understanding of change as unauthored and

unrelenting, prompting policy practices which identify appropriate courses of action to adapt

and respond to its inevitable qualities. If change cannot be stopped, policy can only hope to

contend somewhat successfully with its effects.

By representing the problematic effects of change to be universally 'true', these

narratives cultivate a necessity for courses of action that may hold similarly universal

qualities (Ball 2006a). Proposed solutions, argues Ball, are marked by a *'magical form and*

ritual function' (45). They offer *'an inescapable form of reassurance'* which lulls people to

assume them (as well as the problems they are represented to address) as universally and

unequivocally true. In doing so, they *'discursively constrain the possibilities of response'*

(45). Lifelong learning holds a particularly strong position within these universal solutions

and is widely represented as the necessary change in response to *'the threats and*

opportunities of globalization, information technology and the application of science' (Field

2001, 10). As argued by Mantie (2012), the concept's rapid rise to popularity owes

significantly to the normative educational and political value assigned to the concept of learning.

> *It is difficult to argue against learning. And if learning is good, then lifelong learning must be even better. If there is one thing that people of almost any political persuasion can agree upon it is the value of learning* (Mantie 2012, 223).

Within a political context characterised by unrelenting change, extending the potential afforded by these valuable processes beyond the bounded contexts of formal education and its institutions emerges as significant. The possibility of cultivating a capacity to learn and relearn in response to unforeseeable contexts, problems, and opportunities hence forms an attractive proposition.

The concept of lifelong learning emerges from an extensive history of practice that precedes its central position within contemporary educational policymaking. A look back at its emergence sheds further light on the assumptions and presuppositions through which it is structured. According to Field (2001), the term finds its roots in the adult education movement that succeeded during the First World War. As an outcome of several international developments and debates, the movement flourished within political conditions that made it possible and necessary to reconsider the relationship between education and 20th-century citizenship. Mantie (2012) draws attention to its emergence in North America across the 1920s and 30s, arguing that it formed a particularly strong incubator for the belief that access to education should not be limited by age or socio-economic status. Underpinned by changing understandings of human potential and how it ought to be realised, such movements sought forms of education which secured the human growth necessary to secure the continued development and sustenance of well-being across life (Mantie 2012). Adult education therefore represented the start of a significant conceptual disaggregation between education

and the traditional practices and institutional configurations of schooling to which it was previously tethered. As a result, learning came to occupy conversations relating to realms of life which operate outside formal education, while all aspects of life came to be understood as manifestations, opportunities, and resources for learning (Olsson, Petersson, and Krejsler 2018). Moreover, established boundaries that defined who could and could not access learning were unsettled and reshaped to include populations other than the young and the elite.

Subsequent decades, argues Field (2001), were marked by significant economic crisis and instability. As a result, the liberal concepts on which adult education and corresponding understandings of citizenship were rooted became increasingly irrelevant, unattractive and marginalised from political debate. However, the social, economic, and political conditions that followed the Second World War, marked by a spike in demand for mass retraining and industrial development, prompted a political resurgence of adult education (Field 2001). Its popularity grew further within what Field terms the *'intellectual crucible of the late 1960s'* (4). Exponents of adult education occupied a markedly critical standpoint towards taken-for-granted ideas and understandings that shaped political landscapes at the time, and the implication these carried for educational practices. These concerns were heightened by the socio-political conditions of economically developed countries increasingly characterised by a lack of cohesion, consumerism, and economic individualisation (Elfert 2015; Bernhardsson 2013). Echoing the social-democratic thinking that pervaded the earlier manifestations of adult education, thinkers exhibited a particularly strong concern for cultivating holistic forms of human growth. Spearheaded by 'radical' thinkers and social movements, educators and educational thinkers sought to realise these ideas by reconceptualising and reconfiguring educational practices (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). As a result, educational debates saw the proliferation of alternative models of education and learning drawn from communitarian and

informal contexts as proposed alternatives to the rigid and selective practices of their institutionalised counterparts.

According to Popović (2013), these ideas entered policy debates through the formalised concepts of 'recurrent', 'continuing' and 'permanent' education initially proposed by the Council of Europe, and gained currency within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). While UNESCO contributed heavily to the development, formalisation, and application of these ideas through the concepts of 'Lifelong Education' and 'Lifelong Learning', English and Mayo (2021) claim that its proposals lacked resonance with day-to-day realities marked by increasingly precarious labour conditions. Furthermore, Field (2001) contends that UNESCO lacked the power held by other transnational organisations such as the World Bank and OECD to influence national policymaking in significant ways. While similarly assuming a recurring model of education within its policy narratives, OECD reframed the concept of 'Lifelong Education' *as a way of keeping educational expenditure down and yet still expanding educational access to meet the increasing and changing human resource needs of an economy hit by inflationary pressures and decline in productivity'* (84). Owing to the resonance of such narratives with existing economic and labour conditions, economised approaches to lifelong education, and subsequently lifelong learning, were vastly more influential, and held a substantial bearing on the concept's evolving trajectory.

Rose (1999) traces the emerging prevalence of these economic narratives to the intellectual challenges directed towards the European social state that followed the Second World War. Most popularly exemplified within the work of political economist Friedrich Hayek, challengers contended that the centralised political structures through which the 'social state' functions render acts of government particularly susceptible to totalitarian and tyrannical imposition (Rose 1999). The singular qualities of its centralised impositions were

understood to eliminate the possibility of pluralism and pose significant threats to individual liberty and well-being. Premised on the assumption that social and economic well-being is best achieved by enabling all individuals to act towards their personal interests, Hayek contends that, owing to the ways in which it safeguards the individual's freedom and the pluralism on which it relies, economic liberalism represents the only viable system of governmental organisation. Proponents of 'Ordo-liberalism' echoed Hayek's contentions, but argued that, in order to secure individual freedom, governmental intervention is necessary. According to Olssen (2006), this proposed interventionism presupposes that the free market may only exist through the material and symbolic conditions within which it is practised. Therefore, in order to sustain the market, the central government must sustain the conditions within which it thrives. Such conditions include measures to safeguard the economic market from public and private monopolisation and distortion and to secure the individual's enterprising position within it. These ideas formed the conceptual basis for a new form of liberalism, popularly termed 'neo-liberalism', which was premised on the artificial regulation of the individual's entrepreneurial freedom through new governmental techniques of management (Rose 1999).

Rose (1999) argues that these ideas formed the basis for a new way of thinking about government that draws heavily from the concepts proposed within neoliberal ideologies. Termed as an 'advanced liberal' rationality, these modes of thinking functioned to restructure governmental practices (along with its subjects, objects, and mechanisms) according to principles drawn from economic spheres of thought. Most significantly, an 'advanced liberal' rationality functioned to recast the individual as an entrepreneurial citizen whose success within the free market contributes not only to their individual well-being but to the overarching economic well-being of their nation-state. Within this rationality, governmental programmes, and social and individual behaviour are all reformed by the calculating logic of

cost/benefit analysis. The prior animosity located between self-interest and social responsibility, as sustained by the social state, was dissipated, reforming citizenship in ways that render these two values synonymous. Rose (1999) goes on to argue that central to the reconfigurations prompted by an 'advanced liberal' rationality was the formation of narratives that employ economic lenses to define governmental problems and appropriate solutions. Within these narratives, the impending challenges 'inevitably' posed by the forces of 'change' were defined within economic terms. Similarly, the possibilities and opportunities afforded by educational practices to contend with these challenges were reframed within these terms (Regmi 2015). This is most significantly elaborated within Human Capital Theory, which refers primarily to the work of North American economic theorists in the 1950s and 60s, and its application in educational thinking (Milana 2013). Premised on an understanding of humans as economic assets and resources, Human Capital Theory contends that investment in the resources held and enacted by people is a better economic strategy than investment in non-human forms of capital (Regmi 2015). Unlike material resources, knowledge is considered to be a renewable source of capital that cannot be exhausted, but rather, may multiply in its application. Since these attributes may only be cultivated through learning, this theory establishes a strong relationship between economic growth and educational investment.

When applied to the concept of lifelong learning, an 'advanced liberal' rationality cultivates the possibility for *'infinitely knowledgeable subjects'* whose ability to learn, re-learn, and unlearn enables them to reorient and redefine themselves in flexible ways (Olssen 2006, 221). When approached through this perspective, a lifelong approach to learning cultivates the necessity for educational practices capable of nurturing flexible and perpetually contingent relationships with the knowledgeable self. The rhetorical shift from lifelong *education* to lifelong *learning*, argue English and Mayo (2021) marks the increased presence

of such frames of thought. Mirroring an 'advanced liberal' rationality, this shift indicates the responsibilitisation of each individual for their own educational, economic, and social well-being. Furthermore, it functions to configure the problems posed by rapid change as individualised problems whose solution lies in the learner's capacity for adaptability. This marks a transformation that does not merely lie in the relationship between learners and their formal education, but more broadly implicates the very subjectivity of the contemporary citizen (Rose 1999). This new subjectivity is fundamentally premised on a perpetual form of self-management sustained by the capacity and aspiration necessary to pursue individual and national well-being within the precarious conditions that are represented to predicate their existence.

> *'The new citizen is required to engage in a ceaseless work of training and retraining, skilling and reskilling, enhancement of credentials and preparation for a life of incessant job seeking: life is to become a continuous economic capitalization of the self.'* (160-161)

Education is hence recast as an apparatus to produce learners who hold flexible, contingent, and adaptable relationships to knowledge by assuming a set of generic capabilities that include problem-solving, autonomy, responsibility, and calculating modes of thought (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). Within this perspective, equipping citizens with the knowledge and skills to cope and adapt effectively to the challenges posed by change is proposed as the only viable response to its unpredictable qualities.

Lifelong learning, as reshaped by an 'advanced liberal' rationality, pervades the policy-making practices of most nation-states and intergovernmental organisations, including the EU. In response to the presumed challenges posed by change and economic competition, the EU sought to secure its competitiveness within the global economy by aligning the

production of capital across its member states and pooling their outcomes within a common economic space (Field 2001). In order to do so, it formed a host of policy directives, initiatives, and funding mechanisms that sought to cultivate alignment and cooperation across its member states. In March 2000, the European Commission declared its aspiration to become the *'most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world'*, illustrating the pervasiveness of economic goals and modes of thinking (English and Mayo 2021). In order to achieve this goal, the EU instated lifelong learning as a conceptual framework for education and training across its member states, which it subsequently declared as a *'major strategic asset in making the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economic market of the world by 2010'* (Tuschling and Engemann 2006). In 2006, the EU adopted the concept of 'key competencies' to define the fundamental generic attributes that characterise the desired lifelong learning learner. The adoption of these concepts represents the EU's desire to cultivate intranational citizens who possess the flexible qualities necessary to adapt to the changing demands, streams, and contexts of practice characterising contemporary realities (Andersson and Wärvik 2013).

Some authors contend that the EU's conceptualisation of lifelong learning demonstrates a hegemonic emphasis on economic, market-driven, and employability goals that clearly attest to the colonisation of education by neoliberal ideologies (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). Others argue that, by orienting lifelong learning towards employability and active citizenship as 'equally important' and interrelated goals, the EU's rationale juxtaposes economic goals with the more holistic objectives that emerged within the concept's earlier manifestations and discussions (Hall and O'Shea 2013; Popović 2013; Zarifis and Gravani 2013). Speaking particularly of communications published by the European Commission, Zarifis and Gravani (2013) argue of a discursive patterning which *'echoes the neologies of globalisation'* yet *'does not deserve to be called 'neoliberal', at least not in its intention'*

(300). Others contend that, while some of its objectives are not economic, the concept is more broadly shaped by the logic proposed within neoliberal ideologies. Andersson and Wärvik (2013) claim that, while active citizenship might seem to be an important counterbalance to an emphasis on employment and labour market contributions, its definition is similarly shaped by economic frames of thought. Perhaps more significantly, O'Brien (2013) points out that the routinised presence of neoliberal logic within contemporary policy narratives obscures the possibility of adopting alternative rational perspectives for defining active citizenship. As a result, citizenship and its qualities, as conceptualised within an 'advanced liberal' rationality, become taken for granted.

Implications for EGPA: Music and its Proposals

Supranational organisations such as the EU operate through a number of technologies of control which enable its narratives and directives to permeate national boundaries. These include 'hard' instruments such as funding mechanisms and legislative directives (Ioannidou 2013), as well as more enigmatic technologies of power, such as guidance documents and practices of comparative assessment. These instruments facilitate the assumption of dominant narratives and corresponding frames of thought (Lindblad, Ozga, and Zambeta 2002). As an EU member state, Malta's legislative and policy practices necessarily exhibit a substantial degree of alignment with the EU's directives. This is evidenced across national educational policymaking. For example, the Framework for the Education Strategy of Malta' (FESM) document claims:

> *While we seek home-grown solutions to address our challenges we are ready to learn*
>
> *from others in Europe, from European process such as the Bologna and the*
>
> *Copenhagen Processes and beyond, but knowing full well that we cannot simply*

import solutions from abroad without adapting and adopting them to our reality.

('Framework for the Educational Strategy of Malta 2014-2024' 2014, 7)

It is therefore no surprise that those educational entitlement, as conceptualised within the NCF and the EGPA: Music document, indicate the presence of the economic frames of thought which structure the EU's practices. In her foreword to the National Curriculum Framework, Cristina argues:

> *As a small Nation, our survival, freedom, well-being and identity will largely depend on qualified future generations who hold the key to our quality of life. Our advanced social system will largely depend upon our ability today to invest heavily in the education of younger generations who will be well-equipped to work productively and continuously.* (viii)

The conceptualisation of education as an economic investment, as shaped within an 'advanced liberal' rationality, emerges strongly within this statement.

This is not to say that the NCF seeks to establish an absolute form of alignment between educational practices and economic goals. Similarly to the EU's joint emphasis on employability and active citizenship, the NCF orients its practices towards fulfilling both social and economic objectives, as attested within the following statements:

> *The ethos of the NCF reflects the contribution that education makes to Malta's national social and economic development.* (5)

> *Their [learners'] education should enable them to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that make them capable of sustaining their life chances in the changing world of employment, and to become actively engaged citizens.* (33)

However, as Rose (1999) points out that an 'advanced liberal' rationality has not merely functioned to contest the objectives of education and learning. More importantly, it has established a common-sense framework for making sense of education and learning. Through such a framework, it becomes possible to conceptualise learning as a process of investment in the learners' capacity to continually and perpetually learn and re-learn in response to the foreseeable yet unpredictable challenges and possibilities afforded by change.

This framework forms the fundamental basis for the NCF's conceptualisation of lifelong learning. The document claims:

> *The aims of education in conformity with the Principles outlined above, seek to prepare all children to become lifelong learners, who are confident, successful, creative, connected and engaged in the community and the world around them and who are able to secure social justice.* (33)

The document defines a set of generic capacities that are considered to be necessary in order for learners to *become* lifelong learners. These include *'personal and social skills'*, *'literacy, numeracy and digital literacy'*, as well as *'aesthetic appreciation and creative expression'*. These capacities are represented to be an important foundation for all learners' educational entitlement, in addition to which learners may develop more goal-specific capacities that may enable them to sustain their *'chances in the world of work'*, as well as secure *'social justice in constantly changing local, regional and global realities.'* (33). The former includes '*the ability to train, re-train and develop new skills'*, *'economic stability and independence'*, as well as *'innovation and entrepreneurship'*, while the latter includes the capacity to *'respect diversity and value difference'* and the capacity to *'develop intercultural competence and appreciate their heritage within the Mediterranean, European and global contexts.'* When revisiting the NCF's definition of 'educational entitlement' through this conceptualisation of

lifelong learning, the forms of *'learning that enables them to accomplish their full potential as individual persons and as citizens'* come to be defined in terms of these generic capacities for learning and learning throughout life.

This commitment to lifelong learning is reflected within the EGPA: Music document, which represents its proposals as part of a *'coherent strategy for lifelong learning which aims to ensure that all children have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be future active citizens and to succeed at work and in society.'* ('Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' 2015, 5). This forms the conceptual basis for the problem of knowledge-centricity, as well as the changes they function to represent as necessary. As I have argued earlier in this chapter, by proposing a curricular reform that secures freedom from knowledge-centric syllabi and enables the development of learning programmes that *'fulfil the framework of knowledge, attitudes and skills-based outcomes that are considered national education entitlement'*, the document represents the problem to be the inadequacy of subject knowledge in meeting learners' educational 'entitlement'. Through the conceptualisation of entitlement established within the NCF, the problem of knowledge-centricity is further elaborated as the insufficiency of subject knowledge in cultivating lifelong learners who hold the generic capacities necessary to engage in perpetual processes of learning across unforeseeable contexts. This problem representation forms the conceptual basis for putting forward two primary changes as necessary.

The first encompasses the structuring of learning programmes through a set of Subject Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that *'set out what a learner is expected to know, understand or be able to do as a result of a process of learning.'* (7). This framework marks a shift away from subject knowledge to broader expectations related to knowledge, skill, and understanding. Furthermore, since *'they state the end result rather than describe the learning process or the learning activities'*, SLOs are represented to cultivate the space necessary for the formation

of learning and assessment programmes that may cultivate the capacities necessary for lifelong learning. The proposed framework of outcomes is accompanied by a set of *'notes on pedagogy and assessment'* that *'sets down good practice teaching and assessment guidelines'* (7). These include guidelines for educators to configure pedagogy and assessment in ways that are best conducive to the formation of desired capacities. These include problem-solving, autonomous learning, and self-assessment, as well as a *'positive attitude towards learning and a greater appreciation of its usefulness'* (6).

> *LAPs are also intended to create an atmosphere where learners develop their own problem solving skills and their ability to think and reason logically; reflect on outcomes and consequences and explore possible alternatives and apply interesting and realistic contexts that are personally meaningful to them.* ('Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' 2015, 6)

> *Educators should seek to empower learners to develop the skills to evaluate their own and each other's work against the SLOs, encouraging them to develop an appreciation of their own learning needs, how well they are progressing towards achieving the standard exemplified by the SLOs and the types of action they need to take to improve their progress.'* (51)

The second encompasses the use of 'cross-curricular themes' that define the broad competencies necessary for learners to *become* lifelong learners, as well as to meet employability and citizenship goals.

> *The Cross Curricular Themes (CCTs) have been introduced in the LOF to ensure that all learners, as they progress through the levels, come into continual contact with the types of knowledge, skills and understanding needed to participate actively, prosper and contribute to Maltese society.* (33)

> *The role of the CCTs is to yield resilient, adaptable, empowered young people with the robust, transferable skills the country needs to remain caring, inclusive, competitive and productive.* (53)

Seven themes are proposed in total, each of which is elaborated through a set of learning outcomes. These themes include *'Learning to Learn and Cooperative Learning', 'Digital Literacy', 'Education for Diversity', 'Education for Entrepreneurship', 'Creativity and Innovation', 'Education for Sustainable Development',* and *'Literacy'*. While their learning outcomes are proposed separately to the aforementioned SLOs, the document suggests that these are to be embedded in the *'delivery of and the learning associated with the SLOs'*. (72). As an example, the document proposes that educators can integrate the CCT learning outcome '*I can explain how the natural, social, cultural and economic systems work and are interrelated'* within the learning associated with the SLO *'I can identify Maltese folk music and discuss how it relates to culture, politics, and historical context'*. In conjunction, these two changes are represented to enable the formation of Learning and Assessment Programmes that enable learners to cultivate the competencies necessary to learn and relearn in response to rapid, yet unforeseeable changes.

5.1.2 The Problem of Central Imposition

Alongside the problematisation of learning programmes centred on subject knowledge, the EGPA: Music document problematises the central imposition of these learning programmes. In response to this problem, it proposes a learning outcomes framework as the change necessary to *'give them [schools and learners] the freedom to develop programmes that fulfil the framework of knowledge, attitudes and skills-based outcomes that are considered national education entitlement of all learners in Malta.'* (5) Here, the problem of central imposition is represented to be the inadequacy of centrally-imposed learning programmes in enabling learners to achieve. While similar to the problem of central imposition, this problem representation is tethered to the concept of 'educational entitlement', it shifts its focus from *what* all learners are entitled to, to *how* all learners are enabled to achieve this entitlement. This problem representation implies that learning programmes defined outside and prior to the context of learning are insufficient, and only learning programmes formed by their immediate participants (schools and learners) may enable the universal achievement of entitlement.

The centrality of these participants within this problem representation is elaborated in the document's emphasis on the concept of *'learner-centric teaching and learning'* (33). Defined in terms of a shift *'from teaching the subject to teaching the learner'* (5), the concept's use presupposes that learners and their learning processes are marked by qualities of difference that carry an impact on the extent to which each learner is able to achieve. In addition, notwithstanding what these qualities are and how they may impact learning processes, this problem representation is underpinned by an emphasis on fulfilling *all* learners' educational entitlement. It therefore becomes necessary to cultivate curricular tools

that establish sufficient space for these qualities to be considered and accommodated in the formation of learning programmes.

These qualities are expressed primarily in terms of 'learning needs'. Within the EGPA: Music document, these include the needs of *'gifted and talented learners'*, *'learners from diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds including children of refugees and asylum seekers'*, *'learners with special educational needs'*, *'learners with severe disabilities'* and *'learners from disadvantaged social backgrounds',* ('A National Curriculum Framework for All' 2012, 41 as quoted in 'Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' 2015, 38). In addition to these needs, the document makes several references to concepts such as *'ability', 'learning styles and preferences'* (38), *'aptitude and competence' (39),* and *'potential'* (50)*,* highlighting their impact on learning processes and learners' capacity to achieve. While, at times, the document refers to these variables in terms of how they may be used as resources to contribute to and enhance the process of learning, they are most commonly defined in terms of the barriers they pose to learning.

Learning programmes which fail to cultivate the necessary space for educators to identify and address these needs are represented to produce 'casualties', defined as those learners whose need for *'encouragement and guidance'* is not identified or met, as well as those for whom the pre-determined learning pathway does not allow them *'to develop his or her abilities in the manner best suited for him or her.'* ('A National Curriculum Framework for All' 2012, 5, as quoted in 'Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' 2015, 50). In her foreword to the NCF (2012), Education Minister Cristina speaks of *'gaps in our learning processes that over the years have led to absenteeism, to significant rates of early school leavers and to low skills and competences for a proportion of students.'* (vii). Concern

for these gaps similarly emerges within two of the strategic goals proposed by the FESM document, which seek to:

> *'reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls and between students attending different schools, decrease the number of low achievers, raise the bar in literacy, numeracy and science and technology competence and increase student achievement.'* ('Framework for the Educational Strategy of Malta 2014-2024' 2014, 2)

> *'support educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers.'*
> (ibid)

The bureaucratic and centralised structures characterising centrally-imposed syllabi are represented to be too stringent and inadaptable to account for the various needs held by learners. The changes proposed by the NCF (and echoed within the EGPA: Music document) are represented to secure the conditions necessary for all learners to achieve by inducing a curricular and pedagogical reform. As a result of the changes pursued, it claims that *'traditional ways of teaching will now be replaced by a more student centred and inquiry-based approach to learning'* (2012, 25). The document highlights that this encompasses a broader *'cultural change'* that leads teachers to 'regard the classes [as being] made up of individuals.' (25).

These problematic qualities are aggravated further by *'the changing demands'* and *'rapid changes'* to which the proposals put forward within the NCF are represented to respond (iii). Addressing school leadership, the document argues:

'Set in a backdrop of fast-paced changes, educational leaders ought to embrace

approaches that may transform the feelings, attitudes, and beliefs of practitioners and

other stakeholders in the field. (NCF, 44)

The slow and inflexible ways in which centralised educational structures respond to the

problems and possibilities afforded by these changes are represented to amplify its

problematic qualities further. The NCF therefore proposes governing models premised on

'[d]istributed leadership' that involve *'stakeholders in collective or delegated decision-*

making process' (43). Within such models, teachers *'ought to be empowered by their use of*

resources in order to develop meaningful curricular experiences that connect with children's

everyday lives.'

How has this problem representation come about?

As I have already pointed out, the problem of central imposition extends and

elaborates on the problem of knowledge-centricity. While the latter problematises syllabi on

the basis of *what* learners are entitled to, the former problematises syllabi on the basis of *how*

this entitlement is fulfilled. In my analysis of the latter, I have argued that an 'advanced

liberal' rationality (Rose 1999), which is structured by economic theories and corresponding

modes of thought, has played an extensive role in redefining entitlement and the educational

practices responsibilised for meeting its achievement. Ball (2006) contends that, owing to its

globally influential position within educational government, such economic frameworks have

formed a common-sense foundation for the diagnosis of global problems, as well as the

solutions necessary for nation-states to contend with their effects. Defined as a *'new*

orthodoxy', Ball claims that this framework owes its ubiquity to powerful international

organisations, policy networks, and multilateral agencies. In adopting this orthodoxy, such

entities have formed a set of generic reform packages which are represented as global

responses to the universal challenges posed by globalisation. The author claims that these packages put forward two interrelated agendas for structural change. The first seeks to establish more intimate relationships between education and national economic interests, concerns, and objectives, representing education as the necessary solution to the problems posed to the state by rapid change. This forms the conceptual basis for problematisations akin to that analysed in section 5.1.1. The second draws on market principles to reconfigure the ways by which the nation-state regulates educational practices within its jurisdiction. This assumes that, if change threatens both individual and national well-being, and education holds the apparatus necessary to form individuals capable of contending with these threats, then in order to bolster the vitality of the nation-state, educational systems must be optimised. Ball claims that these orthodoxies take the successful application of market principles in the managerial context of private enterprise as a taken-for-granted indication of their potential for optimising education. As a result, these principles are represented to be a common-sense and fail-safe redesign of educational systems which are guaranteed to produce the desired results.

These reforms entered the public sector through economic and business management theories that have come to form what is often termed as 'New Public Management'. These propose two overarching changes that function to reconfigure existing relationships between the state and the periphery of its regulatory structures (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). The first relates to a reconfiguration of the state's regulatory structures (ibid). This process encompasses a shift away from centralised modes of government that operate through unidirectional and hierarchical relationships between the macro-level decision-making practices of the state and the meso- and micro-level practices of educational organisations, institutions, and practitioners. Often labelled as a process of 'decentralisation', these modes of government are replaced with governmental relationships that operate through the distribution of decision-making practices across these levels and sites of practice. Rizvi and

Lingard (2010) argue that the term decentralisation is often used to refer to various configurations of management which are seldom differentiated, namely *'democratic devolution'*, *'functional decentralisation'*, and *'fiscal decentralisation'*. Democratic devolution refers to an absolute form of autonomy, while fiscal decentralisation refers to a form of autonomy relating specifically to the control of public financing and spending. Functional decentralisation refers to a partial form of autonomy which may be exercised in relation to specific functions, objectives, and pre-defined markers of success. The authors contend that decentralisation assumes different configurations within different contexts, yet functional decentralisation is often promoted by transnational policy organisations such as OECD, UNESCO, and the EU as the mode most likely to achieve desired outcomes within policy contexts characterised by contestation and change. Such reforms are represented to remove bureaucratic constraints and assign subjects with the necessary autonomy to make informed decisions within their day-to-day practices.

While devolving decision-making powers, de-centralisation does not entail the diminishing role of the state or the de-regulation of its field of conduct. Rather it encompasses a reconfigured set of relationships within which governmental subjects are not merely the targets of governmental control but are also an important instrument in its function (Lindblad, Ozga, and Zambeta 2002). The role of the state therefore changes from the imposition of specified regulation to broader roles of coordination that determine and apportion regulatory work to different institutions, groups, and subjects within their respective contexts of practice (ibid). These practices presuppose that micro-contexts of practice are formed of unforeseeable and unpredictable qualities which are exacerbated by rapid change. Since these cannot be foreseen, bureaucratic and centrally imposed frameworks are too slow and generic to make the adaptations necessary to contend with these qualities. Practitioners are therefore best situated to understand and address these challenges. Hence,

they must hold a degree of decision-making autonomy to navigate their day-to-day conduct in ways that may fulfil these expectations most effectively and efficiently.

The second change relates to how the state exerts and maintains control of de-centralised organisational structures and relationships (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). Rather than exercising control by prescribing how people should conduct themselves, the state exercises control by defining what subjects are expected to achieve as a result of their practices. Defined by Lindblad (2018) as a mode of 'governing by results', these configurations replace centralised legal frameworks of micro-prescription with broader frameworks of macro-targets. Such targets assume a 'self-explanatory' quality, deriving their legitimacy from the prevailing rationalities that form and justify the problematics of contemporary reality and the appropriate practices through which these may be addressed (Lindblad, Ozga, and Zambeta 2002).

Rose (1999) contends that this change in regulatory practices prompts a need for the production and use of tools and techniques capable of extracting and measuring the outcomes of an individual's practice. Among these are routine practices of assessment, auditing, and evaluation that enable judgment about the professional's activities. This is premised on the assumption that practices form objects that can be measured against generic standards, indicators and benchmarks. Ozga (2016) similarly points out that, as a tool which functions to make governed populations visible, data represents an important means of regulating and retaining control over sites of practice characterised by operational autonomy. By offering objective forms of knowledge about its subjects and their performances, data enables governors to understand, compare, and appropriately reward, penalise or incentivise their subjects. These judgments, argues Rose (1999), operationalise a new set of political and occupational norms, which include effectiveness, standardisation, competitiveness, and transparency.

Outcomes-led modes of government can be seen in operation across transnational, national, and local levels of government. Governmental relationships and practices within the European Union are one such example (Tuschling and Engemann 2006). These practices are driven by the perceived need for cultivating a unified, collaborative, and well-aligned political space in order to secure the Union's competitiveness within an increasingly globalised political and economic arena. In order to achieve this goal, the European Union adopted several managerial tools, including participatory management techniques driven by targets, member state contracts, and the financial sponsorship of systemic re-design and reform towards managerial models. The latter, Bohlinger (2012) argues, forms part of a broader ecosystem of reforms that sought to align all national qualifications frameworks to a European meta-framework premised on learning outcomes. Kennedy, Hyland, and Ryan (2006) claim that learning outcomes have emerged as a common manifestation of outcomes-led models of governance within education. They represent an overarching shift away from the input-led models of programme design that have traditionally occupied educational spaces. Input-led models typically take subject content as the non-negotiable starting point for designing curricular programmes, pedagogical practices, and assessments. Contrastingly, output-led practices set broader targets for achievement that reflect desired outcomes, while securing the internal autonomy and flexibility necessary for practitioners to navigate the idiosyncrasies of their various and ever-changing contexts of practice. Such practices have assumed a central role within the EU's managerial practices.

Implications for EGPA: Music and its proposals

As I have already argued, Malta's membership within the EU has meant that its strategic goals and proposals for change exhibit a strong degree of alignment with the Union's objectives and directives. This is most clearly evidenced within the Framework for Education Strategy (2014), which claims that:

The development of Malta's education strategy would evolve around our collective knowledge of best practices and policies within the European region and beyond. Malta's strategic objectives can be developed, but not limited to, the seven strategic pillars in Table 1, which are derived from European policy and international initiatives in the education sector. (3)

Among these strategic pillars for policy development are: the *'Harmonisation of qualification frameworks to European structures'*, and *'Measurement of achievements and gaps in the context of European targets'* (4). Similarly, writers of the National Curriculum Framework claim that:

We have sought to contextualise the framework within wider contexts including Malta as a full member of the European Union and a player in an increasingly globalised society. (2014, x)

The NCF's proposals for change, as well as the problems they presuppose, exhibit substantial alignment with EU reform packages, as well as the frames of thought which underpin them. Central to this process of alignment is the adoption of a learning outcomes framework (LOF) as the change 'necessary' to address the problems posed by centrally-imposed frameworks.

It is significant to note that the LOF reform, as proposed within EGPA: Music, is mainly funded by the *European Social Fund* (ESF), defined as *'a major funder of lifelong learning across Europe'* ('ESF: A Major Funder for Lifelong Learning' 2012). This testifies to the role of the EU, in shaping the document's problematisations, as well as the forms of change deemed to be 'necessary'. Learning outcomes (LOs) are defined as *'statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning.'* ('Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' 2015, 5). These statements reflect the knowledge, skill, and understanding which is

deemed to form the competencies to which all learners are entitled. These outcomes *'state the end result rather than describe the learning process or the learning* activities' (32). Therefore, insofar as the expected outcomes are achieved, schools and learners are represented to hold the curricular flexibility necessary to define *'[h]ow, where and when the outcomes are taught and learned'* (ibid, 32). The proposed framework is organised across ten levels, each of which specifies expectations for the achievement of a given outcome at different levels of depth, breadth, and application. This is underpinned by the assumption that all learners should be enabled to successfully achieve notwithstanding how variables of difference may impact their learning processes and capacities to achieve:

> *One of the benefits of working within a Learning Outcomes Framework (and at the same time one of the challenges) is the ability to allow learners to progress at their own speed and to be able to adapt the teaching methodology and curriculum to meet their learning needs.*

While statements of expectation are represented to afford the necessary flexibility for schools and learners to design their learning programmes, each expectation is represented to provide objective, universal, and clear criteria for judgment. This clarity is represented to enable learners to more accurately understand the expectations they need to meet in order to achieve success within a programme of study. By specifying the expectations according to which all learning shall be assessed, these statements are represented to offer an important measure of transparency, thus aligning learning processes more securely to the desired objectives for achievement:

> *The SLOs are there to demystify the assessment process by setting out straightforward learning expectations.* ('Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' 2015, 32)

Furthermore, since these statements propose 'clear' standards of judgment, they are represented to hold a strong degree of compatibility with the quality assurance, assessment, and accreditation practices which form the tools 'necessary' to bolster educational provision.

The proposed framework is also accompanied by a set of changes in assessment practices. In order to displace the quasi-exclusive position of summative assessments designed to measure the acquisition of pre-defined subject knowledge, assessment practices are diversified in order to ensure that all processes of learning and all achievements are visible. The introduction of 'Assessment *for*' learning (ongoing assessment) alongside 'Assessment *of*' learning, is represented to provide wider opportunities for *'learners to demonstrate, over time, how much and how well they have learned'* (46). 'Assessment for' learning is also represented to be an important tool through which educators can assess and define *'learning needs'*, as well as *'evidence'* and *'monitor'* their achievement and progress. Such evidence is represented to form an important basis for generating data that can be used by educators and learners to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of learning and assessment programs.

5.1.3 The Rationalised Implications of 'Necessary' Change for Music Education

Thus far, I have argued that the proposals put forward by the Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment: Music (EGPA: Music) document are underpinned by two interrelated problem representations: the problem of knowledge-centricity, and the problem of central-imposition. In section 5.2.1, I have argued that the problem of knowledge-centricity is represented to be the inadequacy of subject knowledge in facilitating learners' achievement of those generic competencies necessary to form secure and sustained relationships with learning across their lives. This problem representation is structured by narratives of change predicated on an understanding of contemporary realities as rapidly changing and unauthored. Within prevailing frameworks of thought, which Rose (1999) terms as an 'advanced liberal' rationality, lifelong learning is represented to be the tool necessary to contend with the unpredictable forces of change. A look back at the concept's history reveals that prevailing diagnoses of contemporary problems are characterised by an understanding of change as ubiquitous yet unauthored. Corresponding solutions are therefore defined as responsive and perpetual dispositions towards learning. Through this point of view, education is recast as a process oriented towards the acquisition of generic capacities which are perceived to be necessary for learners to secure these dispositions. I have argued that learning entitlement, as shaped through this partial and political conceptualisation of lifelong learning, underpins the problems which knowledge-centric syllabi are understood to pose within the EGPA: Music document.

Several implications are proposed for music education in response to this represented problem. Central amongst them is the replacement of syllabi specifying content-knowledge with broader subject learning outcomes (SLOs) elaborated through statements of expectation which define *'what a learner is expected to know, understand or be able to do as a result of a process of learning'* ('Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' 2015, 7). The

following are a few examples derived from Level 9 of the learning outcomes framework for
music, *'which marks the end of compulsory schooling'* (10):

> *I can respond to a wide range of music in different ways and demonstrate my
> understanding of different meters through movement.* (22)

> *I can discuss and respond musically to various interpretations.*

> *I can perform fluently, expressively and confidently and analyse my performance in a
> constructive manner.*

> *I can sing in harmony as a duet and in a chorus, singing confidently with good tone
> and diction.*

> *I can use a variety of different recording tools to improve my work/presentations.*

> *I can perform, both vocally and on a pitched instrument, while fluently reading from a
> wide range of notation.*

> *I can use my knowledge of music production, tools and audience expectations to
> participate in a variety of musical events in my school and community.*

These learning outcomes are categorised within broad subject foci which group learning
outcomes according to a set of common qualities. Some examples of these subject foci are
*'Music in context', 'Responding to music', 'Evaluating music', 'Playing Instruments', and
'Developing, widening and harnessing of knowledge in music'.* The proposed SLOs for music
are accompanied by a set of 'Cross Curricular Themes (CCTs)' which detail broader sets of
knowledge, skill, and understanding that go beyond the subject. These encompass *'additional
learning outcomes that young people need to encounter and develop a knowledge and
understanding of as they progress through the Learning Outcomes Framework'* (33). CCTs
are to be embedded either *'through [the] delivery of and the learning associated with the*

SLOs', 'by choosing particular teaching methods and strategies over others to deliver the SLOs', or by *'undertaking specifically constructed cross curricular or whole school activities.'* (34).

Collectively, SLOs and CCTs are represented to form the frameworks of knowledge, skill, and understanding to which all learners are entitled. CCTs attest most immediately to the perceived necessity attached to generic capacities for lifelong learning (as claimed within the problem of knowledge-centricity). However, the broader genericism of the aforementioned SLOs also testifies to the presence of such assumptions, illustrating their impact on the possibilities available for making sense of music and music education. Rather than specifying content knowledge (which is typically derived from prevailing traditions of music practice), these statements define broader bodies of competence that may enable learners to engage with music across various and potentially unforeseeable contexts.

In section 5.2.1, I have argued that the problem of central imposition is an extension of the problem of knowledge-centricity. However, rather than problematising *what* learners should be enabled to achieve, it problematises *how* learners are enabled to achieve it. The problem is represented to be the inadequacy of centralised curricula in enabling all learners to achieve their educational entitlement. This problem representation presupposes that learners are marked by several markers of difference which carry a significant impact on their learning processes, and hence form learning 'needs'. In order to ensure that all learners are enabled to achieve their entitlement, learning programmes ought to take these differences into account and adapt to the various needs they may form. Centralised frameworks are not only represented to be insufficiently flexible in this regard but they are also represented to be too slow and rigid to contend with the challenges and possibilities afforded by the rapidly changing qualities of contemporary education. I have argued that the 'advanced liberal' rationalities that shape the problematisation of knowledge-centric syllabi similarly operate to

configure the problematisation of those centralised frameworks through which they are imposed. Driven by the assumption that effective models of business management within private enterprises will be similarly effective within public education, this rationality operates to reorganise relationships of government according to de-centralised models premised on operational autonomy and outcomes-led government. Such models reconfigure practices and relationships according to a new set of occupational norms (such as evidenced accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency) and corresponding tools and techniques that are represented to be necessary in order to bolster the ability of educational practices to achieve desired outcomes. Owing to their dominant presence within intranational governmental practices, such models have assumed a ubiquitous and common-sense position in the problematisation of centralised governmental frameworks.

A learning outcomes framework (LOF) emerges as the change necessary to confer schools and learners with curricular 'flexibility' to account for contextual variations while providing clear and standardised expectations for achievement that may serve as a universal basis for practices of assessment. The Subject Learning Outcomes (SLOs) proposed for music are represented to fulfil these qualities. The statements of expectation through which they are elaborated are represented to clearly define what all learners are expected to achieve by the end of their learning processes:

> *'The SLOs clearly show where the learning 'finish line' is at each level for each learner […]'* (ibid, 38)

Nevertheless, these statements of expectations are represented to be broad and generic enough to enable schools and learners to design learning programmes that may best enable learners to achieve. The EGPA: Music document claims:

'Once the learning expectations are set educators can begin to introduce the

flexibility in curriculum design and delivery that has been difficult to do up to this

point.' (ibid, 32)

Due to their broad qualities, SLOs are represented to be conducive to a *'more responsive*

approach to curriculum design and more appropriate selection of teaching strategies and

resource selection within the class' (ibid, 55). In so far as these expectations are met, '[h]*ow,*

where and when the outcomes are taught and learned is at the discretion of the educator'

(ibid, 32). However, such genericism is not represented to eliminate the clarity necessary to

establish standardised markers of judgment for the assessment of learning. As attested within

the following statements, SLOs are represented to offer a universal expectation to which the

performance of all learners, educators, and schools is to be evaluated.

They [SLOs] also act like an anchor for any and all related assessment activity by

defining the learning that is in scope for assessment activity and by omission being

clear about what is not in scope. This makes the assessment process and assessment

expectations more transparent for the learner. (ibid, 51)

'The SLOs are there to demystify the assessment process by setting out

straightforward learning expectations. In doing so, assessment is bound to evidencing

the meeting of these same expectations.' (ibid, 32)

While SLOs are understood to offer clear markers of expectation, the EGPA: Music

document claims that their implications for assessment may change in response to situated

variables. Defining *'what acceptable learner performance in response to the SLO looks like'*

is therefore represented to be a process that may involve interpretation. The document claims:

What the assessment should really be trying to establish is whether the learners have

reached the standard of the SLO. Can they do what the SLO says they can do? Can

they demonstrate the ability to do what the SLO claims for them and can they do it routinely, confidently and comfortably? Here the educator's professional judgement and the professional agreement on what constitutes achievement is important. […] The assessment standard is not necessarily what is stated in the SLO. The standard is the shared and consistently applied interpretation of what acceptable learner performance in response to the SLO looks like. In order to reach this judgement, educators will need to work within the subject teaching community to agree what achievement looks like at each of the levels (e.g. Level 8), at the level of the Subject Foci within a level and at the level of an SLO where this is not immediately apparent and there is scope for ambiguity or interpretation. (ibid, 51)

Nevertheless, while recognising that statements of expectation may have *'scope for ambiguity or interpretation'*, these practices of interpretation are represented to occur in relation to *'acceptable learner performance in response to the SLO'*, and not to the meaning of the SLO itself. This implies that, while learners may choose to achieve and demonstrate their achievement of a given SLO in different ways, the clear and coherent forms of meaning that SLOs communicate establish clear boundaries demarcating what is and is not expected. Educators, as a community, are responsibilised with extracting these meanings and agreeing on their implications for judgment.

When taken together, the rationalised implications of 'necessary' change define music education in terms of a framework of generic knowledge, skill, and understanding, which are expressed through clear and universal statements of expectation that allow learners to pursue achievement in context-specific ways. Within the EGPA: Music document, the implications of this definition extend beyond statements of expectation to encompass the conceptualisation of music and music education more broadly. Within several statements, the document defines

music as context-specific, multiple, and tied to the experiences and perspectives held by its learners.

> *'Music exists distinctively in every culture and is a basic expression of human experience. Learners' active participation fosters understanding of other times, places, cultures and contexts.'* ('Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' 2015, 29)

The text also positions music education as a means through which learners *'share the music of their communities'* and *'investigate musical works as social texts that deepen their understanding about people and environments'*. In doing so, it affords learners an active role in challenging and enriching the knowledge they engage with (30). Through their situated perspectives, learners are represented to not only interpret and define 'music' in different ways but also to actively contribute to the construction of knowledge through music-making. The following statements attest to an understanding of music education which reflects a pluralistic conceptualisation of music.

> *'The social act of music-making generates synergy and provides unique opportunities for learners to be part of collaborative and diverse knowledge building.'* (ibid, 29)

> *By exploring and observing music, learners develop knowledge and understanding of music in past and present contexts; they share the music of their communities, and they investigate musical works as social texts that deepen their understanding about people and environments; and they understand music as a universal language and a legacy of expression in every culture.* (30)

> *'Music education develops unique, powerful and multiple ways of perceiving, interpreting, knowing, representing and communicating understandings about the self and the world.'* (ibid, 29)

These statements are however juxtaposed with others which represent 'music' as a coherent object which holds universal forms of meaning and value. The document claims that learning 'music' primarily involves listening, performing, and composing. In order to engage with these acts, music education must enable learners to understand *'the elements of music'*, defined as *'rhythm, pitch, dynamics and expression, form and structure, timbre and texture'* (29). These elements are represented to *'work together and underpin all musical activity'*, and are assumed to transcend its various manifestations. Such statements imply that all forms of 'music' are underpinned by an essential and coherent set of qualities that can be known independently of the various contexts from which 'music' emerges, and within which 'music' is formed. Therefore, by learning to understand and manipulate these elements, learners are conferred with the competence necessary to access and engage with all 'musics'.

An understanding of music in terms of essentialised qualities is also mirrored within statements that define music learning and its value:

As learners study music, they learn the value, and appreciate the power, of music to transform the heart, soul, mind and spirit of the individual. (29)

Music learning has a significant impact on the cognitive, affective, motor, social and personal competencies of learners. (29)

'Music is a vital part of every learner's education, and contributes to deep and enduring engagement that leads to learning success. (29)

These statements represent 'music' as an object that holds a universal affective capacity which confers its learning with value. This implies that, insofar as music is learned, these impacts shall follow, thus enabling an understanding of music education's value which transcends its presumed multiplicity. While these claims are not qualified, substantiated, or

referenced, an analysis of those documents listed within the 'References' section of the EGPA: Music document revealed that these claims, as well as others, are near quotations from an Australian curriculum document which makes use of these statements to claim the affective properties of 'music'. The following are some examples:

> *As students progress through studying Music, they learn to value and appreciate the power of music to transform the heart, soul, mind and spirit of the individual.* (Australian Curriculum 2014, 24)

> *Music learning has a significant impact on the cognitive, affective, motor, social and personal competencies of students.* (24)

It is interesting to note that these latter statements similarly lack qualification or substantiation. Their unreferenced use within the EGPA: Music document affirms the prevailing conceptualisation of 'music' as a generic and coherent core that transcends all contextual manifestations. Through such perspectives, 'music' is represented to carry these affective properties notwithstanding the social, cultural, and geo-political contexts within which it is perceived and practised.

5.1.3 Key Points

In this section, I have sought to analyse the proposals put forward within the 'Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' (EGPA: Music) document in order to understand the 'problems' they are represented to address, and the assumptions through which these problem representations are shaped. I have argued that these assumptions function as tacit justification and affirmation of proposed changes as 'necessary'. The EGPA: Music document represents the problem of knowledge-centricity to be the insufficiency of subject knowledge in cultivating lifelong learners who hold the generic capacities necessary to engage in perpetual processes of learning across unforeseeable contexts of practice. This

problem representation forms a necessity for curricular frameworks that enable the acquisition of these generic capacities. Furthermore, the document represents the problem of central imposition to be the inadequacy of learning programmes formed through centralised curricular frameworks in enabling the formation of learning programmes that can best enable learners to achieve their learning entitlement. Through this problem representation, it becomes necessary to adopt curricular frameworks that are capable of aligning all educational practices towards desired outcomes, whilst providing the necessary flexibility for these achievements to be met in contextual and responsive ways. Taken together, these problem representations form a set of possibilities for conceptualising music education, and its curricular, pedagogic, and assessment practices. I have argued that these possibilities have enabled the conceptualisation of 'music' that is simultaneously singular and coherent, yet multiple. The EGPA: Music document refers to 'music' as something which is culturally variable and which may be known through different situated perspectives. However, within other statements, the document claims that these various forms of 'music' all hold in common a fundamental and coherent core of meaning, value, and effect. Engaging with this fundamental core hence confers learners with access to music, notwithstanding the various contexts and manifestations through which it may present itself. This is represented to form the basis for music teaching and learning, as proposed within the EGPA: Music document.

In the following section, I shall address the second research question proposed within this research project (RQ2), by presenting my analysis of the SEC: Music syllabus document. This document details assessment expectations for learners choosing to study music as an optional subject at the secondary level. The goal of this analysis shall be to shed light on how the aforementioned possibilities for making sense of music and music education, as formed through the change proposed as 'necessary', shape their implementation within this document. Furthermore, the analysis shall scrutinise the document's proposals in order to

shed light on the subject-specific assumptions and presuppositions through which these proposals are mediated. Drawing on music education literature, I shall evaluate these assumptions and presuppositions, where they come from, and how they have shaped these practices of implementation.

5.2 Implementation: SEC:Music

Central to the proposals put forward within the Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment: Music (EGPA: Music) document are assessment-related reforms. These mirror the overarching shift from centrally imposed and knowledge-centric syllabi to learning and assessment programmes led by a framework of subject learning outcomes (SLOs). As part of these changes, all syllabi for SEC assessment, penned by the Matriculation And Secondary Education Certificate Board (MATSEC), were revised. The SEC syllabus for music (2023) (SEC: Music) presents revised *'assessment plans for Level 9 and 10 assessment[3], detailing the balance between high-stakes external assessment and internal assessment procedures and quality assurance.'* ('Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' 2015, 52). The syllabus claims that its proposals are *'based on the curriculum principles outlined in The National Curriculum Framework for All (NCF) [...] and designed using the Learning Outcomes Framework that identify what students should know and be able to achieve by the end of their compulsory education'* (4). Therefore, this document can be understood as a site of implementation for the proposals put forward within the EGPA: Music document.

The introduction section of this syllabus presents several statements which mirror the objectives and proposals put forward within the EGPA: Music document. Alluding to the two problem representations that structure the latter document (knowledge-centricity and central imposition), the following statement is one such example:

This syllabus provides equitable opportunities for all learners to achieve educational outcomes at the end of their schooling that will enable them to participate in lifelong and

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[3] Level 9 and 10 here refer to the proposed learning outcomes framework. Level 9 *'marks the end of compulsory schooling'*, while Level 10 outcomes extend Level 9 outcomes further with expectations for *'deeper understanding and wider application'*. (10)

adult learning to reduce the high incidence of early school leaving and ensure that all

learners attain key twenty-first century competences. (4)

Among the changes implemented within this syllabus is a shift from the specification of

subject knowledge to *'broad learning outcomes'* which define the *'knowledge, skills, and*

values that candidates [are expected to] achieve and demonstrate throughout the course of

the programme.' (4). These outcomes are claimed to ensure *'that all children can obtain the*

necessary skills and attitudes to be future active citizens and to succeed at work and in

society irrespective of socio-economic, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual

status.' (4). The following analysis shall seek to evaluate the proposals put forward within

this document, drawing primarily on the proposed 'Subject Foci', corresponding 'Learning

Outcomes', a set of specifications pertaining to the assessment criteria for each of these

outcomes, and appendices that detail these criteria further.

In section 5.1.3, I have argued that a central component of the changes and

rationalised implications for music proposed within the EGPA: Music document is a

'Learning and Assessment Programme' structured by *'a set of subject learning outcomes*

(SLOs) that set out what a learner is expected to know, understand or be able to do as a result

of a process of learning.' (7). The proposed framework for music at levels 9 and 10 is

elaborated within fifty-six learning outcomes categorised under eleven subject foci which

include *'music in context', 'responding to music', 'evaluating music', 'performing', 'using*

my voice', and *'playing instruments'.* The SEC syllabus proposes a framework of outcomes

that are represented to fulfil three strands of artistic practice; *'creativity (composition),*

auditory (listening), expressivity and performance' that *'intertwine into a collage of artistic*

skills (4). Similarly to the ways music education is valued for its affective capacity on

academic achievement and wellbeing within the EGPA: Music document, the SEC: Music

syllabus claims that the three proposed strands of practice carry *'a direct positive impact on*

the overall academic achievement of the student' (4). Mirroring the former document, these claims are put forward in the absence of further elaboration, qualification, or reference, presupposing that, notwithstanding how these strands may manifest across various contexts of practice, they unequivocally carry this claimed effect. The proposed framework is formed of fourteen learning outcomes, categorised under the following subject foci: *'Composition and Harmony', 'Performance', 'Theory', 'History and Analysis',* and *'Aural Training'.* Each of these fourteen learning outcomes (LOs) defines a set of expectations pertaining to what learners are expected to know, understand, or be able to do by the end of their secondary education:

> *Learning Outcome 1. I can compose a melody to a given set of words;*
>
> *Learning Outcome 2. I can compose and develop a melody for a specific voice/instrument;*
>
> *Learning Outcome 3. I can analyse harmony and integrate it in my own work;*
>
> *Learning Outcome 4. I can demonstrate competence in musical performance on my principal instrument*
>
> *Learning Outcome 5. I can demonstrate my knowledge in music theory and basic aural skills through practical application*
>
> *Learning Outcome 6. I can notate effectively using conventional notation and appropriate terminology*
>
> *Learning Outcome 7. I can demonstrate my knowledge, skills and understanding of theoretical concepts*
>
> *Learning Outcome 8. I can show an understanding of different scores in order to identify musical characteristics.*

Learning Outcome 9. I can identify music from different periods and styles, and explain their common and contrasting features from a set repertoire

Learning Outcome 10. I can discuss the biographical profiles of different composers from a set repertoire

Learning Outcome 11. I am able to distinguish between different voice ranges, instruments and ensembles

Learning Outcome *12. I can distinguish between different voice ranges, instruments and ensembles;*

Learning Outcome *13. I can listen, respond to and identify features in a piece of music;*

Learning Outcome *14. I can listen to and recognise different styles and time periods of music and am able to draw on my aural knowledge to understand basic musical features.*

Learning Outcome (LO) 6 defines an expectation for learners to be competent in the representation, communication, and objectification of music through *'conventional'* notation, which is elaborated in the identification of *'notes and rest names'*, *'their values'*, '*simple and compound time'*, and the notation of *'rhythmic phrases'*, and *'chords'* (13). These are elaborated further within a set of themes shown in Figure 3 hereunder, which signal that 'conventional' notation is presupposed to refer to western systems of staff notation. LO 7 similarly specifies that learners are expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of corresponding theoretical concepts and terms relating to notational symbols and the meaning assigned to them. These include 'key signatures', 'scales', 'chords', 'arpeggios', 'harmonic and melodic intervals', as well as the analysis and use of 'cadences' (14-15). LOs 5 and 8 extend these expectations to the practical application of the aforementioned knowledge within performance, interpretation of *'contrasting styles and periods of music'*, instrumental

'*transposition*', and notation (12). LO 12, 13, and 14 extend the application of theoretical and conceptual knowledge within aural and cognitive domains, specifying that learners are expected to be able to make sense of, discriminate between, and label various forms of music, and attribute them to particular instruments and established stylistic categories.

LOs 9 and 10 establish that learners are expected to know music history through a set list of examples (as presented in Figure 4 hereunder), their contexts of formation, and corresponding concepts through which they are categorised stylistically and historically. This knowledge is represented to form the basis for cultivating analytic skills, as well as attaining historical knowledge. This expectation assumes music to hold a singular and coherent history that may be known by reference and analysis to notated 'pieces', biographical knowledge of their composers, a broader understanding of the historical context within which they were composed, as well as their performance. By presenting these expectations in terms of a set list of examples, the syllabus presupposes that the proposed examples hold particular analytic and historical significance. This theoretical, analytic, and historical competence is represented to be the basis for composing 'music' through score-based notation, as established in those expectations defined within LO 1, 2, and 3. Learners are expected to 'make' music through notational practices by creating melodies for different instruments and voice types, applying '*different sequences, patterns, inversions of phrases and repetitions in order to develop melodies*' (10), using '*harmony (I, II, IV, V in root, first and second inversions and VI in root position)*' (10), and '*cadences (perfect, imperfect, plagal and interrupted)*'. LO 4 and 5 define a set of expectations for instrumental and vocal performance. The aforementioned capabilities for reading, understanding, and analysing notated music are represented to be a basis for developing the competencies necessary to perform music. Similarly to history and analysis, learners are expected to be able to perform a set of notated repertoire from within a pre-set list. The full list defines which instruments learners may perform on and defines a

limited set of mostly notated and published repertoire choices which learners are to choose from. As shown within Figures 5 and 6, which illustrate the set performance repertoire for 'violin' and 'piano' at MQF level 1-2, this repertoire is written by mostly male European composers whose works are assumed to be appropriate to the knowledge, skill and understanding expected, as well as particularly noteworthy examples as demonstrated by the use of terms such as 'great' or 'best' in the collection titles to which they belong.

Appendix 2: Themes

	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
Clefs	Treble, Bass clef	Treble, Bass and Alto Clef	Treble, Bass, Alto and Tenor Clef
Key signatures	Up to 2 flats and sharps	Up to 3 flats and sharps	Up to 5 flats and sharps
Time signatures	2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 2/2, 3/2, 4/2 or C	2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 2/2, 3/2, 4/2 or C 3/8, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8	2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 2/2, 3/2, 4/2 or C 3/8, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8 5/4, 7/4, 5/8, 7/8
Intervals	Major/minor 2nd, 3rd, perfect 4th and 5th	Major/minor 2nd, 3rd, perfect 4th and 5th Major/minor 6th and 7th	Major/minor 2nd, 3rd, perfect 4th and 5th Major/minor 6th and 7th Diminished/Augmented
Cadences	Perfect, Plagal	Perfect, Plagal, Imperfect	Perfect, Plagal, Imperfect, Interrupted
Chords	I, IV, V.	I, IV, V, II, VI.	I, IV, V, II, VI, III, IIV.

Figure 3: Themes

Appendix 1:

History and Analysis set repertoire list

J.S. Bach – 'Minuet in G No. 2' from *Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach* BWV Anh. 114

W. A. Mozart – 'Allegro', 1st movement from *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* K. 525

L. V. Beethoven –*Allegro con brio*, 1st movement from Symphony No.5 in C minor Op. 67

F. Schubert – 'Allegro Vivace', 1st movement from *Piano Quintet (The 'Trout')* in A flat major D. 667

J. Brahms – *Hungarian Dances* No. 5 in F sharp minor and No. 6 in D flat major (violin and piano)

P. Tchaikovsky – 'Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy' from *The Nutcracker Suite* Op. 71a

C. Saint-Saëns: – 'Le Coucou au fond des bois' and 'Fossiles', No. 9 and No. 12 from *The Carnival of the Animals*

D. Kabalevsky – 'Galop' from *The Comedians* Op. 26

G. Verdi – 'Grand March' from *Aida*

G. Gershwin – *Rhapsody in Blue* (piano and orchestra)

B. Britten – *The Little Sweep* Op. 45 (whole opera)

N. Isouard – Overture from *Cendrillon*

C. Camilleri - Village Festa, 4th movement from *Malta Suite*

Paul Desmond - *Take Five* (jazz quartet)

Figure 4: History and Analysis Set Repertoire List

String:

Violin:

List A

Weber – 'Allegramente' from *Rondo, Op. 3 No. 6*, arr. Nagy, from *Introduction to the Great Composers* (Bärenreiter)

Bach/Gounod – 'Ave Maria' (arr. Barber) from *Solos for Young Violinists Vol. 3*, (Summy-Birchard 0990)

Johow – 'Café Classique, No. 5' from *Joachim Johow: Coffee and Violin* (Schott)

Pergolesi – 'Siciliano', *Small Concert Pieces, Vol. 1* (Editio Musica Budapest)

List B

F. Mendelssohn – 'Andante con moto', 2nd movt. from *Symphony No. 4, 'The Italian', Op. 90* (arr. Wade), *The Young Symphonist, Vol. 2* (Spartan Press)

Hadjiev – 'Rondino' (arr. de Keyser and Waterman), *The Best of Grade 4 Violin* (Faber)

Bridge – 'Cradle Song', from *H. 96 Bridge: Three Pieces for Violin* (Faber) or *The Best of Grade 5 Violin* (Faber)

Kabalevsky – 'The Clowns' (arr. de Keyser and Waterman), *The Young Violinist's Repertoire, Book 3* (Faber)

Figure 5: Set Repertoire List for Violin

Piano:

List A

W. A. Mozart – 'Menuetto and Trio', from *Viennese Sonatina No. 6*, Six Viennese Sonatinas (Universal UE 13354)

Haydn – 'Andante in A, Hob I:53/II, from *Haydn Piano Pieces – Piano Variations* (Henle Verlag)

Diabelli – 'Moderato cantabile, 1st movt', from *Sonatina in F major, op. 168 No. 1*, Eleven Sonatinas, op. 151 & op. 168 (Alfred 2419)

Gurlitt – 'Allegretto scherzando, 3rd movt.', from *Sonatina in C, Op. 188 No. 4*, No. 13 from Sonatinas for Piano, Book 1 (PWM)

List B

R. Schumann – 'Erster Verlust No. 16, **OR** 'Kleiner Morgenwanderer No. 17' Op. 68, from *Album für die Jugend, Op. 68* (Schirmer/Henle Verlag)

Grieg – 'Waltz in A minor', *My First Concert* (Schott ED 20969)

Bartók – 'Winter Solstice Song', *Bartók: For Children, Vol. 1, No. 38* (Boosey & Hawkes)

Shostakovich – 'Gavotte', *Dances of the Dolls* (Boosey & Hawkes M060024078)

Figure 6: Set Repertoire List for Piano

These proposed learning outcomes, and the expectations through which they are elaborated, are underpinned by several assumptions pertaining to what 'music' *is*, and how it can be known, understood, and done. A recurring theme across these outcomes is an understanding of 'music' derived from theoretical and conceptual frameworks prevalent within what shall be termed as 'western classical music'. Concepts, categories, symbols, and practices derived from these traditions form the fundamental basis for 'reading' and 'writing' music. Staff notation emerges as a particularly prevalent medium in this regard. Capacity for reading and writing within this medium forms the basis for analytic and interpretative practices through which already formed 'pieces' of music may be appropriately understood, with the additional use of specific historical and stylistic knowledge. Furthermore, these 'pieces' form the objects of performance through both vocal and instrumental media and corresponding techniques. Central to the expectations proposed within this syllabus is the assumption that 'music' is an object that can be read, written, analysed, and performed. The knowledge, skill, and understanding derived from 'western classical' music theory are represented to form the toolbox necessary to engage with 'music' as a written object, as well as 'music' as aurally received sound. Furthermore, 'music' as a written object is assumed to form the basis for engaging with 'the history of music'. The set list of 'pieces' proposed for 'history and analysis', as shown in Figure 3 above, implies that the history of music can and should be known exclusively through venerated works, penned primarily by European males whose lives preceded the 21st century. Through the expectations it sets for knowing, understanding and being able to do 'music', the SEC: Music syllabus therefore presupposes 'western classical music' to afford the tools necessary for learning 'music'.

These assumptions exhibit a strong degree of resonance with the definitions of 'music' proposed within the EGPA: Music document. In section 5.1.3, I have argued that the problem representations that underpin the changes proposed within this document function to

reconceptualise education in terms of generic capacities for lifelong engagement with learning that can be expressed in clear and universal statements of expectation which can be met in flexible and contextually specific ways. I have argued that this has enabled an understanding of music as a single and coherent core that underpins all possible forms of contextual variation. The expectations for achievement proposed within this syllabus exhibit a strong degree of compatibility with this conceptualisation. Knowledge, skill, and understanding derived from 'western classical music' are assumed and represented to form the capacity necessary to engage with 'music', notwithstanding the stylistic tradition within which it is formed. 'Western classical music' therefore forms the epistemic foundation from which clear and universal statements of expectation are derived, allegedly enabling all learners to engage with music across the various styles and contexts within which it may emerge. In doing so, the syllabus claims to widen *the students' cultural horizons both in Malta and globally'* ('SEC 34 Syllabus Music' 2023, 5).

Understanding 'western classical music'

The assumptions which shape the statements of expectation elaborated within the SEC: Music syllabus can be elucidated further through the conceptual distinction between 'music' and sound as proposed by Small (1998). The author argues that while humans are able to hear sounds, an understanding of sound as music only occurs when humans attribute meaning to this sound and organise the relationship it holds with other sounds. He contends that this meaning is formed within the mental processes that succeed hearing, rather than physical events that precede its reception. This leads us to consider that sounds cannot be understood to hold meaning in and of themselves. It therefore follows that a human's capacity to make sense of sound as music is dependent on the formation or acquisition of conceptual frameworks that predispose them, as a listener, to specific forms of understanding. Small argues that this is exemplified by *'the fact that while some hear in a particular set of sonic*

relationships order, meaning and beauty, others may hear in it only chaos and meaninglessness.' (112). Keller (2007) similarly argues that *'[w]ithout a prepared mind, ready to create relations and give them "sense," a musical work cannot exist.'* (95).

Samson (1999) and Agawu (1999) contend that the formal practice of analysing music (which occupies conventional approaches to music education) is a fictive act, whose operation relies on symbolic and metaphorical concepts and categorisations formed and derived from different traditions of practice. Therefore, Agawu (1999) argues, *'A dominant seventh chord indexes a tonic only by the force of a certain conventional practice. […] And even if conventional practice rests on certain 'natural' associations, such universal determinants can function only to the extent that they are mediated by culturally specific factors.'* (145). If music is perceived only by force of a specific conceptual framework for making sense of its internal relationships, then the adoption of different frameworks may enable people to attribute different forms of meaning to sound (Samson 1999). It therefore follows that there can be nothing essential to 'music' itself if 'music', unlike the physical properties of sound, is dependent on the attribution of socially constructed knowledge through cognition. Its inherent multiplicity eliminates the possibility for people to conceive 'music' in terms of a coherent and universal form of meaning. Furthermore, there can be no universal method for accessing its internal and objective meanings. Methods, and the conceptual framework through which they are employed, function to assign rather than derive meaning.

Various traditions of practice have sought to establish organisational and meaning-making frameworks for musical perception. These traditions of practice, argues Keller (2007), have come to occupy significant space within contemporary musical practices and represent important intellectual achievements that ought to be celebrated. However, the use of methods derived from these traditions without sufficient consideration and recognition for the

ways they assign meaning to sound, rather than derive meaning from it, misrepresents the relationship between music and people. This misrepresentation is particularly rife within 'western classical' music. According to Bohlman (1999), western understandings of music are premised on an ontological commitment to the metaphysical condition of 'music' as an object. Within its traditions of practice, the object is embedded in all musical activity and may assume different material forms. The conceptualisation of music as a fully formed and coherent object, argues Bohlman, is particularly conducive to analytic understandings that presuppose meaning and value to be internal to its form. Such an ontological commitment forms the basis for understanding music as 'works' or 'pieces', whose formation operates on distinct sets of theoretical, symbolic, and conceptual knowledge pertaining to staff notation as the 'conventional' medium for materialising objects (Bull 2019). Bull goes further to argue that western classical traditions organise musical practices according to their relationship to the musical object (Bull 2019). Subjects may make, perform, or receive these objects. Within such categories of organisation, those subjects who operate most immediately to musical objects, defined as 'composers', are attributed with a particularly significant status and value.

According to Small (1998), notation has historically held an important role across several musical traditions because it has functioned to preserve the organisation of sound sequences outside of the physical events within which they were initially formed. These methods of preservation are significant because they allow subjects who might not be physically present within these events to learn and perform these sequences within other events. However, in 'western classical music', notation has also served as *the* medium within which the formation of sound sequences takes place, forming practices of composition that may presuppose and occur in the absence of sound. The notated outcome of such practice is thus predisposed to an objective existence that may transcend and exist autonomously from the social contexts within which musical practices occur. As a result, these traditions are

particularly rife with the exemplification and veneration of pre-formed musical pieces which are considered to have 'stood the test of time' and retained their value across the various contexts within which they are read, analysed, and performed. This forms the taken-for-granted basis for an understanding of music as a coherent object that assumes autonomy from (and hence transcends) the various contexts of practice within which people engage with it.

Considering the roots of 'western classical music' within music education

According to Regelski (2019), assumptions pertaining to the autonomy and transcendence of music find their roots within what the author terms as a speculative-rationalistic aesthetic account of the arts. This was formed as a result of an assemblage of intellectual and social developments in 17th and 18th-century Europe. The author defines this account as speculative because its ideas are hypothetical, and rational because they are derived from reason rather than scientific evidence. Regelski argues that, within Western Europe and up to the Renaissance period, arts held a practical role within society. Their practice was inextricably tied to the contexts within which they occurred. The autonomy of music from its contexts of practice was spurred by conceptual influences from the philosophy of René Descartes and his dualistic conceptualisation of mind and body which gained particular currency within 18th-century societies. Such conceptualisations functioned to situate the mind as the site for understanding and studying 'works' of art, resulting in a specific focus on the internal qualities of music and the cognitive practices through which they may be 'accessed'. In response to enlightenment and the challenges it posed to rationalism by means of scientific empiricism, the arts saw a notable rise in scholarly disciplines that sought to adopt 'scientific' methods to formalise the cognitive study of art. These practices subsequently institutionalised frameworks for making sense of music as universal, autonomous, and transcendent. These frameworks, argues Regelski, contributed to the objectification of the arts as material 'works' that may be made, analysed and performed,

advanced further by subsequent technological developments in printing and musical recording.

According to Samson (1999), an objectified concept of 'music' formed the basis for the formation of formal modes of analysis directed towards its internal properties. Formed through the institutional contributions of analysts across Austro-Germany, North America and Britain, these practices assumed that in order to know a work of art, one needs to hold the intellectual capacity necessary to dissect and extract meaning from within its internal form. This, argues Samson, proceeds from a premiss which underlies analytic aesthetics in general;

> *'namely, that objects of art share certain characteristics which define them as art and make them valuable to us, that they are determinate, and that they represent conceptual unities.'* (43)

Such assumptions functioned to secure the conceptual separation of analysis from broader practices of theorisation and metaphysics, forming a *'modern scientific truth stripped of metaphysical resonance'* (43). Through the formation of such 'truth', 'western classical' frameworks established and imposed rigid and universalised boundaries for making sense of art as meaningful and valuable. As a result, practices that were less conducive to objectification, and/or whose qualities do not correspond positively to the markers of judgment derived from its formal analysis, were marked out as less valuable (Westerlund 1999).

This served as an important incubator for an aesthetic philosophy of music. Within such a philosophy, the value of music is assumed to be held within the internal aesthetic properties of 'works' that transcend the temporal or geographical boundaries within which they are formed, rendering them *'timeless, placeless, and faceless'* (Regelski 2019, 86). Therefore, notwithstanding by whom, or in what context an artefact is studied, music's value

and meaning are considered to remain static. According to Keller (2007), this ideological assumption has contributed to the de-politicisation of its 'truths', implying that, since it is 'possible' to extract the internal and essential qualities of music as universal markers of judgment, social, cultural and political contentions are superfluous to its practices. Such assumptions play a strong role in the ossification of 'western classical' frameworks as universal. Ideological assumptions pertaining to the autonomy of music have also contributed to the formation of an 'aesthetic repository' of works, often defined as the European canon, that hold absolute forms of value (Dolinsek 2012). According to Kerman (1983), a canon is *'an enduring exemplary collection […] authorised in some way for contemplation, admiration, interpretation, and determination of value.'* (as quoted in Everist 1999, 107). Everist (1999) contends that this definition is particularly useful because it sheds light on the role of context in the formation of those value judgments through which a canon is formed. As such, what is defined to be exemplary is not merely representative of the conceptual framework from which 'meaning' and 'value' are defined, but is also reflective of the social, cultural, economic, and political landscapes within which they are formed. Haak-Schulenburg and Laurence (2021) draw particular attention to the normative presence of males within the canon, and the exclusive effects it generates in establishing hierarchies of thought pertaining to what, how, and why music is valued[4].

Small (1998) contends that the canon typically sustains a normative association between valuable works and dead composers, presupposing that works penned by these composers hold an affective power that may not be found within those still living. These figures, argues Small, belong to the mythical rather than the historical, kept alive through

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[4] These effects shall be discussed further in the following section (5.3).

collective consciousness and driven by a proclivity for the conservation of what is known to be valuable, and a desire for reassurance that *'things are as they have been and will not change.'* (90). These myths form what is often referred to as a canon of 'Great Composers'; a group of composers whose musical practices are represented by one or two works that have enjoyed sustained forms of popularity (ibid). Through these works, music history is represented as a synoptic deposition of achievements which learners ought to value and understand through the correct use of analytic technique and contextual knowledge. Kanellopoulos (2016) argues;

> *This is the root of conceptions of music history as records of individual past achievements, as an imaginary "museum tour" around a selection of works of unquestionable value whose semantic and expressive codes we need to decipher.* (29)

Bull (2019) draws on the work of Nooshin (2011) to argue that the form and presence of 'western classical' music has transcended the western traditions of practice within which it has been cultivated. While it has assumed a multitude of forms, its presence is totalising and exclusive, denying the possibility of other conceptual frameworks for making sense of music. Hess (2021) points out that 'western classical' music has played a particularly strong role in the colonial project.

> *'As a music with roots in Western Europe, Western classical music's pervasiveness across many countries reflects the status of Europe as a global, imperial power.'* (26)

Hess defines colonialism as a *'violent mechanism'* of organisation which functions to structure intersubjective relations through centralised frameworks and hierarchies of knowledge (23). By means of historical, disciplinary, and educational practices, music education has historically functioned to sustain the colonial project by denying intelligibility to those whose ways of making sense of music are at odds with 'western classical' music

(ibid). The philosophical foundations of 'western classical' music have formed historically, geographically, and psychologically complex relationships between the coloniser and the colonised (Bradley 2012). Drawing on the work of Smith (1991), Bradley contends that colonial expansion presupposed that Europe held an absolute right to appropriate geographical spaces and resources as European possessions. Central to this process of appropriation is the imposition of European perspectives and conceptual frameworks on practices other than their own. Colonial attitudes, argues Bradley, dismiss the possibility of alternative epistemic perspectives. The author contends that music education continues to reproduce this epistemic tyranny, imposing a western rationality as a universal framework for making sense of all music. McCarthy (2015) argues that such universalisms have historically formed the basis for public music education. Justified by the rhetoric of access and accessibility, a 'western classical' music education is represented as the necessary means of addressing social and cultural inequity. Upheld by salvationist ideologies, such practices have contributed to the normalisation of a 'western classical' rationality within education.

'Western classical music' and music education in Malta

As a nation-state which holds an extensive colonial history, and whose political independence and sovereignty date back less than sixty years ago, much of its current educational practices have been and continue to be shaped by its colonial past. As argued by Buttigieg (2016), music education examination practices remain heavily influenced by British institutions and corresponding practices *are mainly linked to the British system, particularly recognised institutions, such as, ABRSM, Trinity and London College syllabi.'* (325). These syllabi, and the 'western classical' rationality through which they operate, form the basis for identifying an idealised set of principles and standards against which the SEC examination syllabus is evaluated. Borg's (2014) undergraduate dissertation highlights that the influence of a 'western classical' framework extends beyond the SEC examination syllabus to encompass

primary, secondary, post-secondary, and tertiary music education programmes. Discussing the outcomes of interviews held with Maltese 'music artists' and 'students', Borg also claims that *'classical music is believed to be the basis out of which all other music forms emanate and thus without a solid background in classical music, some participants argue, other genres of music cannot be appreciated.'* (2-3).

The centrality of 'western classical music' as the taken-for-granted framework for making sense of music and music education in Malta is attested, and perpetuated, within local historical accounts. The publication of proceedings from the *First Symposium on Music Education in Malta* (2008) is one of the few existing publications dedicated to the history of music education in Malta. The publication presents a collection of papers written by local music educators and academics that present various historical perspectives and narratives relating to local music education. Interestingly, these publications approach music education history either through the history of instrumental and vocal education or through the history of public and private educational institutions and the relationship they held with music. Each revolves around the historical legacy and continued practice of 'western classical' music education and sheds light on the deep-seated colonial practices that sustain contemporary music education practices across instrumental band clubs, public and private education, as well as formal assessment and certification. All of these works testify to the strong relationship between local colonial history, music education, and 'western classical music'. Pirotta (2008) illustrates the historical relationship which MATSEC examination syllabi have held with British music examination boards. The author argues that Intermediate and A-level MATSEC exams, formed around concepts of musicianship, history and analysis, composition and performance, echo the assessment syllabi presented by the *Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music*, *Trinity*, and *Victoria College of Music* examinations. Buhagiar (2008) similarly highlights the strong legacy of influence held by British institutions and their role in

shaping one-to-one instrumental education as the primary mode of formal music education in the late 20th century. Azzopardi (2008) working on the teaching of music in ecclesiastical circles, sheds light on music education practices within the late Medieval to Baroque periods. The author elaborates on the changing role of the Catholic Church as the principal institution for formal music teaching and training since the 15th century. As a dominant colonial entity that retained a strong position in the government of Malta up to the mid-20th century, Azzopardi's (2008) paper attests to the Catholic church's role as one of the principle colonial streams through which 'western classical' rationalities assumed its place within 'music' and 'music education' in Malta. This is echoed by Galea (2008), whose work sheds light on the central role of the church within formal music education (relating primarily to composition and performance), as well as informal music education (through participatory music practices).

These accounts are significant because they indicate the hegemonic presence of 'western classical music' in understanding and historicising music education. By assuming 'western classical music' as the taken-for-granted conceptual foundation for knowing and studying music education, they contribute to further ossify its position.

5.2.1 Key Points

This section has presented my analysis of the SEC: Music syllabus as a site for the implementation of those proposals for necessary change put forward within the Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment: Music document (EGPA: Music). The analysis of statements of expectation for knowing, understanding, and doing music proposed within the SEC: Music syllabus has shown how assumptions and presuppositions derived from what is defined as 'western classical music', occupy a central position within its tacit understanding of music and music education. I have argued that the assumptions through which these proposals operate hold a strong degree of resonance with the conceptualisations of 'music' proposed within the EGPA: Music document, as enabled by the problem representations and the corresponding changes it presents as 'necessary'. While music is understood to be a practice that manifests differently within various contexts of practice, its multiplicity is presupposed by an essential core of meaning and value that may be known, understood, and manipulated through knowledge, skill, and understanding derived from 'western classical music'. Through its analysis, I have shown that the assumptions and presuppositions structuring this understanding, as well as the historical and colonial roots through which it is sustained, have functioned to veil its contingency and sustain its hegemonic position within music education.

<u>5.3 Effects</u>

Reflecting the poststructuralist approach adopted within this research project, the proposals and problem representations I have evaluated in sections 5.2 and 5.3 are considered to be significant not merely because they represent and address things in specific ways, but more specifically because they shape the very things they seek to represent and address. In doing so, they construct (and hence limit) the possibilities afforded to people for making sense of these things. In response to research question 3 (RQ3), this section shall evaluate how the problem representations structuring the proposals put forward within the 'Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment: Music', and the assumptions structuring their implementation within the SEC 34 syllabus for Music (SEC: Music), aggregate to shape the possibilities afforded to subjects for making sense of and practising music education. I shall discuss identified effects in terms of three subjectivities and their formation: *Making the 'competent' subject*, *Making the 'demonstrable' subject*, and *Making the 'gifted/talented' subject*. These subjectivities were initially identified in my analysis of the problem representations and proposals put forward through the EGPA: Music document, and are elaborated further by the proposals put forward within the SEC: Music document. Each category shall therefore be evaluated in terms of the possibilities these two texts afford to people for making sense of different things in relation to themselves, as well as others: namely competence, achievement, ability and potential. While each of these shall be elaborated in terms of discursive and material effects, the act of labelling each category by subjectivity mirrors a poststructuralist interest in the relationship between policy and the people it targets; pursuing a shift in analytic interest from the ways people make policy, to the ways policy shapes people (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). Literature relating to governing in education and music education shall be used to evaluate these effects. As part of this analysis, I shall present nine interview moments derived from qualitative interviews held with 'music

educators' from Maltese state schools. These moments have been specifically chosen because they indicate the presence of those assumptions and presuppositions structuring the EGPA: Music and SEC: Music proposals, and therefore provide further insight into their productive effects. It is significant to note that, within the first category of effects, I shall present a significantly greater number of interview moments than the second and third categories. This does not necessarily indicate the significance of a particular category of effects over others but reflects a set of decisions taken within the design of interview questions. Section 4.3 offers a brief reflection on these decisions and their impacts on the proposed analysis.

5.3.1 Making the 'Competent' Subject

In section 5.1, I have argued that the proposals for change put forward within the 'Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' (2015) (EGPA: Music) are underpinned by two interrelated problem representations: the problem of knowledge-centricity, and the problem of central-imposition. I claim that the problem of knowledge-centricity is represented to be the insufficiency of subject knowledge in cultivating learners who are capable of forming a sustained and perpetual relationship with learning. Structured by an 'advanced liberal' rationality (Rose 1999), education is reframed as an investment in people's capacity to contend with unforeseeable and ever-changing contexts of practice. I also claim that the problem of central imposition elaborates on this further, shifting the focus of problematisation from *what* all learners ought to achieve to *how* all learners are enabled to do so. The problem of central imposition is represented to be the inadequacy of centralised curricula in enabling all learners to achieve the competencies necessary to form a sustained relationship with learning. Justified by business management theories that claim to secure liberation from the constraints of bureaucracy and hierarchical imposition, outcomes-led models are assumed to be the only viable means of securing effective government within contexts of educational practice marked by contextual variability and change.

The EGPA: Music proposes a 'Learning and Assessment Programme' (LAP) structured by a 'Learning Outcomes Framework' as the necessary change in response to these two 'problems'. Within this LAP, curricular practices are no longer tied to subject knowledge, but are structured through a framework of 'Subject Learning Outcomes' (SLOs) that detail what learners are *'expected to know, understand or be able to do as a result of a process of learning.'* (7). These expectations are represented to form clear and universal objectives to which all educators' practices should be aligned. While such statements detail *what* learners are expected to achieve, they do not prescribe the practices or processes leading up to these achievements. The document claims that SLOs *'allow for flexibility in teaching and learning programmes in order to address specific needs and to build upon strengths within the context of the learning communities in different colleges and schools.'* (6). This proposed flexibility indicates that the 'necessary' changes proposed extend beyond curricular goals to encompass programme design and pedagogy. The EGPA: Music document puts forward a set of 'Notes for Pedagogy and Assessment' which put forward *'good practice teaching and assessment guidelines which educators may wish to take on board and adapt to meet the needs of their learners.'* (7). The proposed guidelines highlight that educators' practices are no longer tied to the delivery of subject knowledge but are reoriented towards identifying, addressing, and adapting to the various contextual idiosyncrasies that may impact learners' learning processes and achievement. Typically defined in terms of learning 'needs', this proposed shift in pedagogy and programme design indicates that educators' practices are no longer tied to the tried and tested delivery of subject knowledge, but are reshaped as flexible, adaptable, and responsive approaches led by pre-defined expectations for achievement.

The proposed changes carry significant implications for educators' practices. The EGPA: Music document claims that *'educators need to keep up-to-date with the latest pedagogical strategies and concepts in order to be able to better understand and respond to*

learners' needs. (29). Popkewitz (1996) highlights that, by shaping the possibilities afforded to educators for making sense of their routine practices, pedagogy constitutes a particularly strong site for governmental regulation and control. The author claims that, in seeking to instate decentralised models of educational governance, contemporary educational reforms have reshaped the educator's subjectivity according to a new conceptualisation of professional capacity. Through *'epistemological rules'* typically derived from constructivism and the psychological and social interactionist theories through which it is formed, professional capacity is redefined according to the following formula: '*I understand + I can do it + I care about it = capacity.'* (40). This re-conceptualisation is represented *'to enable teachers to have the 'correct' dispositions and capabilities for affecting school reform'* (39). The contemporary educator hence emerges as the subject capable of understanding the objectives set within policy and employing *'pragmatic capabilities and dispositions'* (40) to meet these objectives, notwithstanding the various barriers to achievement which may characterise their unique context of practice.

The significance of these constructivist practices, argues Popkewitz, is derived from the ways in which they preserve two assumptions. The first are established goals and the common-sense belief that they should be assumed as a taken-for-granted basis for professional practice. Within the EGPA: Music document, these goals are defined by the statements of expectation put forward within the proposed Learning Outcomes Framework. Their taken-for-granted position is established and sustained by the presumed 'necessity' for a generic framework of knowledge, understanding, and skill-based outcomes that enables learners to form a secure and sustained relationship with learning. The genericism and universalism attached to these outcomes play a strong role in securing their position as a taken-for-granted basis from which all educational practices may proceed. The second relates

to the '*expert-mediated knowledge*' (40) through which these expectations come to be known. Popkewitz claims:

> *'Constructivism naturalises expert-mediated knowledge brought into the school, while searching for the multiple ways that such knowledge can be learned. Science and mathematics are treated as universal 'things' of logic, rather than as systems of reason that are historically formed and contested.'* (40)

Within the EGPA: Music document, the clarity and universalism attached to statements of expectation veil the assumptions active in educators' situated interpretation of these statements. Hussey and Smith (2002) claim that expectations can only be understood to be clear because they are interpreted through pre-existing assumptions pertaining to what these expectations mean, and what they demand of learners. The authors argue that it is impossible to write LOs that specify precisely what is expected in the absence of the very forms of specification and prescription that LOs are proposed to displace. Whether explicitly or implicitly, an understanding of these expectations necessitates interpretative practices. Allais (2012) similarly claims that, while statements of expectation are represented to convey clear and coherent forms of meaning, their lack of specificity renders such claims problematic.

> *'Outcomes are situated as the mechanism to capture the 'sameness' of different learning experiences, but in the process of ignoring the specifics of the different experiences, they fail to capture a meaningful 'sameness''* (347)

Allais (2012) points out that the very process of writing statements of expectation encompasses significant interpretative disputes over the meaning of certain terms and concepts. As an example, the author refers to the work of Markowitsch and Luomi-Messerer (2008), who:

'reveal the complexities and difficulties involved in reaching agreement on the 'level descriptors' for the European Qualifications Framework, and the continuing differences in interpretation of the key terms. Their description shows a string of processes which attempted to reach clarity and develop common interpretations, difficulties in pinning down specific definitions and interpretations of different terms, and various reformulations when differences became apparent.' (334).

The presence of interpretative disputes in the process of shaping universalised statements serves as a testament to the impossibility of forming generic expectations that preserve their meaning across various contexts of interpretation and application. As argued by Allais, each educator may be informed by different assumptions about what the outcome means and how best to enable students to achieve it. Yet, by claiming that statements of expectation hold clear and universal forms of meaning, a Learning Outcomes Framework veils the active and continuous role of such interpretative practices. Allais claims that, when a programme of study is oriented towards the achievement of pre-defined outcomes, the process of designing such programmes rests on the specification of processes and practices which may be best suited to their achievement. By representing statements of expectation as universal, SLOs displace accountability for knowing and operationalising desired outcomes to the presumed objective and coherent qualities of its statements of expectation. Therefore, an emphasis on the achievement of pre-defined expectations has led to a broader marginalisation of epistemological questions and contentions that have previously been fundamental to curricular debates and theorisations (Harris and Burn 2011).

Interview Moment 1

The flexibility which statements of expectation are represented to afford for programme design is significantly curtailed by the expert-mediated knowledge active in the definition of their meaning. In my analysis of the rationalised implications of proposed changes for music education (5.1.3), I have argued that the proposals put forward within the EGPA: Music document enable an understanding of 'music education' in terms of a framework of outcomes that may enable learners to access and engage with all forms of music. Within such a conceptualisation, 'music' is assumed to hold a coherent and universal core that underpins all the contextually variable forms it may take. In my analysis of how the aforementioned proposals have been implemented within the SEC: Music syllabus, I have argued that these conceptualisations of 'music' and 'music education' operate through a strong connection with 'western classical music'. I have argued that the generic and universal qualities attributed to desired outcomes and statements of expectation have functioned to secure the position of western classical music as 'the taken-for-granted framework' through which statements of expectation are understood. Furthermore, I claim that these qualities function to veil the political character of such an epistemic framework, representing it as an obvious and uncontentious tool for understanding 'music' and 'music education'.

This framework does not only function to mediate the ways in which educators understand statements of expectation but more broadly shapes the possibilities afforded to educators for achieving or meeting them. The following interview moment illustrates how the assumptions structuring the problem of central-imposition, and the expert-mediated knowledge active in elaborating their meaning, intersect to shape the ways in which the interviewees, as educators, problematise learner disengagement and their role in addressing it.

Educator 1A: *And there is the big problem, that they come from primary school hating it [music]. So, we have to peddle that first, to get them to convince themselves that, listen, music is beautiful after all, not what you're thinking. Because the reality is...now sorry, I'm going to be brutal...that they spend three, four years, on a recorder, learning B, A, and G, learn Mary had a little lamb, or else Bum Bum il-bieb. They try with all the overtones that the recorder can produce, they try...*

Educator 1B: *I tell them the recorder should be in the microwave.*

Educator 1A: *And I tell them to make a barbeque with it, or split it, do what you want, throw it on a shelf...I don't want to see it.*

Educator 1B: *Last year I had a child who did not want to enter the classroom. He was coming from primary school. […] And the assistant head spoke to me. She told me 'He's afraid of the music teacher.' Don't get me wrong, the music teachers, they do their part, but what else can they do? And this year I had a child who does not want to enter the room. The assistant head said to me 'Will you be upset if he doesn't come in?' I told her 'Of course I will be upset. I have yet to meet him.' And in short, I sat him at the front, and from that, the music – not because of me, don't get me wrong - but he enjoyed it. He enjoyed it so much that in other lessons he was distracted, and with me he was really constructive. So, in class, this student, he was really attentive. […] I mean they are coming to us with the prejudice that music is really boring. That is what we are trying to change, me, [redacted], and others like us. It's not just us, of course. I'll tell you again, in primary school, poor them, they've got strict...*

Educator 1A: *Syllabi...*

Educator 1B: *syllabus. We, we are a bit more flexible. Do you understand? Certain things don't make much sense [...] and then the children come to hate music, they*

continue to hate music until they get to Form 2. They will definitely not choose the option then... Children come to me...I'm not speaking against anyone of course, because I know that everyone makes a great effort in primary school...They come and say to me 'Sir', or 'we don't want to go in', or 'we have to...'

Educator 1A: *they hate it, literally.*

Educator 1B: *So, our struggle is to change that idea; as we mention the word orchestra, the children get bored. As we mention the word Mozart, they think they are ancient things. And that is the general society, so to speak. When I told them that I'm a composer and mentioned a piece of music...now I work, [ESBC 1] knows, I have [redacted] and create music with [redacted], because it's interesting and the students are interested in it. At first, when I told them that I'm a composer, they looked at me like 'You're still young. How can it be?' Then, when I showed them my music, they said 'Ok. It's not something sad.' I mean they have that mentality, that classical composers are sad.*

Within this moment, the interviewees speak specifically about the relationship between 'music education' and 'learners' across primary and middle school years, as they lead up to their choice of elective subjects in secondary school. Both educators contend that methods of teaching music in primary school, which are characterised by the use of recorders and traditional rhyming songs, present 'music' in ways that do not successfully engage learners. As a result of these experiences, learners are represented to pre-empt music education by seeking opportunities for securing their physical absence. Central to the interviewees' argument is the problematisation of established methods and prescribed learning programmes imposed by 'strict syllabi' within primary schooling. They argue that forms of music education that make use of methods and examples which fail to resonate with learners carry

exclusive impacts on their subsequent experiences and understandings of music education. This echoes the problem representations and underpinning assumptions identified within the EGPA: Music document. Within this document, as well as this interview moment, learner disengagement is represented to be the outcome of centrally-imposed syllabi and their prescriptive qualities. 'Strict syllabi' are not represented to afford the flexibility and operational autonomy necessary for educators to identify and adapt to the changing ways in which learners relate to, and express interest in music. Middle school learning programmes, characterised by a greater degree of malleability, are represented to better enable educators to ensure that all learners form a secure and sustained relationship with music learning.

It is important to note that here, established learning goals are taken for granted. Both educators speak about music education in terms of composed instrumental music derived primarily from western classical music, namely the 'orchestra', 'composition', and 'Mozart'. This alludes to the objectified and autonomous conceptualisations of music derived from 'western classical music', and corresponding understandings of music history, as identified within the SEC: Music syllabus. These form the taken-for-granted goals for music educational practices. As a result of the assumptions structuring constructivist pedagogies and the taken-for-granted position of 'western classical music' as the dominant epistemic framework for making sense of educational objectives, it becomes inconceivable to consider how assumed learning objectives may contribute to learner disengagement. Attempts to address it are therefore represented to revolve around questions of method; seeking better and more effective ways of enabling learners to meet expectations for achievement. The assumptions through which expectations for achievement are known and understood remain untroubled. What 'music' is, and what should be known about it, are taken as a common-sense starting point from which the problem of learner disengagement may be understood and appropriately addressed.

Interview Moment 2

The following interview moment presents an interviewee's response to a question about the 'ideal role of the music educator'. Similar to the moment above, the interviewee invokes the 'problem' of learner disengagement. Statements illustrate how 'expert-mediated knowledge', tacitly active in the educator's conceptualisation of music education, forms conceptual boundaries which ossify understandings of their subjectivity relationally to this problem, and which perpetuate a cycle of deleterious effects.

> **Educator 2***: Look, I don't see any particular role that I can have differently. What I want is to have interested students, and my role comes to make more sense. Because if I have the students but do not reach them, my role is no longer very important. But if I have students who I not only reached, but today they are teachers, teachers of music...my role I think was a very positive role. I mean what I'm doing, in the school, I see that it makes sense, and I don't want anything to change, except to have students who really want to work and you see a certain satisfaction, and you feel a certain satisfaction. Because if you don't feel satisfaction, the role becomes meaningless.*

Within this moment, the interviewee defines the 'educator', a subjectivity which the interviewee attributes to themselves, as one which derives 'meaning' and 'satisfaction' from successful learner engagement and achievement. This more broadly reflects the centrality of learners and their subjectification within the objectives set for educators' practices. The extent to which a learner is 'reached' therefore regulates the extent to which the educator may make sense of their practices as 'meaningful' and 'satisfactory'. Hence, failure to 'reach' learners is represented to constitute a problem for this subjectivity. Within this interview moment, the problem of disengagement is represented to be learners' interest and willingness 'to work'. The educator and their teaching practices are not considered to be part of the problem:

'what I'm doing, in the school, I see that it makes sense, and I don't want anything to change.'

Earlier, I argued that the ways in which educators are able to make sense of established goals and their role in reaching these goals are significantly shaped by 'expert-mediated knowledge'. Educators can only make sense of their competence within the boundaries of possibility established by the epistemic frameworks they hold. In labelling extant practices as 'making sense', the interviewee indicates the presence of established epistemic frameworks which marginalise alternative possibilities for conceptualising oneself as an educator. Since the 'competence' attributed to the music educator is fulfilled but the problem of learner engagement persists, then it becomes possible to speak of the problem exclusively in terms of the learner and their practices. It becomes increasingly difficult to consider how the existing subjectivity of the educator, and corresponding practices, may shape or contribute to this problem. The obvious solution is therefore to seek music learners who express an interest in achieving the pre-defined learning objectives and *'really want to work'*. This indicates that, through its taken-for-granted position in the ways educators make sense of themselves and their practices, dominant epistemic frameworks may function to preserve the material conditions that disengage learners from music learning. The deleterious effects that follow do not merely impact the learner but extend to the educator. By marginalising opportunities for conceptualising one's subjectivity differently, these frameworks function to preserve educational conditions and relationships that rob the 'educator' of meaning and satisfaction. It is important to note that, within this interview moment, desirable learners emerge as those subjects whose successful engagement leads them to assume the subject position of 'music educator'. This sheds light on how dominant epistemological frameworks operate through cycles of subjectification that preserve their taken-for-granted position in shaping the ways in which educators are able to make sense of themselves and their routine practices.

Popkewitz (1996) contends that prevailing pedagogical discourses do not merely carry a constitutive impact on the educators' subjectivity, but function to reshape the subjectivity afforded to learners. The taken-for-granted position of learning goals, or in the case of EGPA: Music, that of learning outcomes, plays an important role in this process. These goals are derived from what Popkewitz terms an *'imagined community'*, which is formed by a set of qualities that detail what the desired future citizen looks like. Within the proposals put forward by the EGPA: Music document, the 'imagined community' is formed through the abstraction of a lifelong learner. Corresponding qualities and capacities function as a basis for systems of assessment and recognition, through which learners can be known, assessed, and differentiated. Those learners who are known to hold these qualities are incentivised and awarded, while those who do not are deemed to be in *'need'* of *'adaptation'*, *'encouragement'* and *'guidance'*. The aspirations that accompany recognition and inclusion are however paralleled by fears and threats pertaining to the dangerous qualities and characteristics which threaten its actualisation (Popkewitz 2018). Those willing and able to shape and reshape themselves relationally to the desired morphology of the lifelong learner are incentivised by recognition, as well as hopes and aspirations for social and economic prosperity (Bye 2012). However, those at risk of not achieving and not retaining a positive, effective, and perpetual relationship with learning are represented to threaten others' opportunities for achieving prosperity. This threat is represented to be particularly poignant because the prosperity promised to the individual is represented to be a necessary prerequisite for national wellbeing. In her foreword to the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), minister Dolores Cristina claims:

> *As a small Nation, our survival, freedom, well-being and identity will largely depend on qualified future generations who hold the key to our quality of life.* (viii)

Insofar as political subjects refuse or are unable to cultivate the desired capacities, they are understood to pose a problem to themselves, as well as to those around them. The necessity attached to this 'imagined community', and the inevitability of the problems it is represented to contend with, form a powerful tool for subjectification.

Interview Moment 3

I have argued that within the EGPA: Music document, the qualities desired within learners are expressed by the frameworks of knowledge, understanding, and skill-based outcomes forming the proposed learning outcomes framework. The 'competent learner' can therefore be understood to emerge from within this framework. I have also claimed that, while subject learning outcomes are represented to provide clear and universal expectations for achievement, their clarity is derived not from an intrinsic and objective meaning, but from the pre-established epistemological framework through which people understand these expectations as meaningful. The SEC: Music syllabus, as evaluated in section 5.2, indicates the hegemonic (yet tacit) presence of epistemologies derived from 'western classical music' in mediating these expectations. Therefore, within the context of secondary-level music education, 'western classical music' plays an active role in reshaping the 'imagined community' specified within Subject Learning Outcomes proposed for music, and hence, the boundaries of possibility within which the 'competent music learner' can be conceptualised. The following interview moment illustrates the impact of assumptions derived from 'western classical music' on the possibilities afforded to these interviewees for making sense of the music learner.

> **Educator 2:** *But, I would like to say that, I think they come in with a wrong idea of what music is. I think from the information side, it needs to be a bit clearer, in the sense that these students [need to] know that the subject of the music option, I think requires*

more study than other subjects because it involves practice. They are not ready to

practice, and in practice they are very poor. That is to say, the kind that are not able to

do anything else, even after two years. They are not willing to study every day.

The interviewee here claims that the unsatisfactory provision of information about what music *is* and what its study entails carries a negative impact on learners. This is because they are represented to be insufficiently disposed to succeed in the subject. This moment emerges in response to a question pertaining to what music education as a SEC subject is. Therefore, these statements refer more specifically to what kinds of practices are deemed to be necessary for learners to be understood as competent and successful within SEC music. The interviewee claims that the study of music at the SEC level *'requires more study than other subjects'*. These refer to the routine practices related to the formation of instrumental and vocal expertise which is deemed necessary by the SEC: Music syllabus, as structured by an epistemic framework derived from 'western classical music'. Within these traditions of practice, 'proper' technique and execution of repertoire is represented to be a fundamental prerequisite to knowing and doing music. These practices extend beyond the institutional boundaries of formal education to colonise learners' day-to-day practices at home. Hence, within this interview moment, the competent music learner is marked by a willingness to redefine themself and their routine relationship with music according to these terms. As a result, those learners whose music practices do not correspond directly to those deemed necessary within the discipline cannot be considered competent music learners. The interviewee's use of the term 'music' to refer to SEC-level music education also indicates that these marginalising effects become pronounced further when 'western classical music' is assumed as the taken-for-granted framework for making sense of 'music' and 'music education' more broadly. This epistemic framework not only functions to shape how learners are conceptualised within SEC-level music education but also shapes how they are understood outside of school. In so far as the competent music learner

is represented to 'need' specific patterns of routine practice, those learners who are unable or unwilling to meet these 'requirements' are marked out of music learning. Hence, through the tacit position they assume, dominant epistemic frameworks carry the potential for marginalising learners in all aspects of music learning.

Interview Moment 4

The following interview moment similarly sheds light on the constitutive function of such an epistemic framework in conceptualising the music learner. Here, the interviewee speaks about the relationship between 'SEC music' and the forms of competence its prospective candidates ought to hold.

> **Educator 1B:** *Let me tell you, some [learners] came to me this year and said they know how to play music. And I was pleased, I said maybe a new catchment area...and I tried it. Crotchet, they didn't know it. Crotchet. Rest, they didn't know about it. They forgot it. So, they were not prepared enough to choose the option eventually. They are not prepared. It's a gimmick. You have to have a person who already knows, like me, [redacted], and you, we used to have a background in music to choose...and a good background, eh?*

The interviewee claims that, in order for learners to study music as an optional subject at the secondary level, they require a 'good' background, which is defined by knowledge pertaining to rhythmic concepts and terminology derived from 'western classical music'. Corresponding epistemic frameworks therefore function to shape the possibilities afforded to the interviewee for making sense of the 'competent music learner'. However, this knowledge is not merely represented to define the competence that music learners ought to aspire to, but functions to describe the competence music learners ought to already hold in order to elect and engage successfully with music education at the SEC level. This reflects the SEC: Music's

recommendation for prospective candidates, which states that '*it is advisable that candidates who opt for this course have a basic understanding of Music, at least at Grade 2 level.*' (4). It is important to note that, despite the SEC: Music syllabus providing assessment expectations for Levels 9 and 10 of the 'Learning Outcomes Framework' proposed within the EGPA: Music document, this advisory details expectations for competence in terms of 'Grade'. This refers to graded music examinations typically set by British boards for assessment, such as the 'Associated Board for the Royal Schools of Music'. Since these examinations are typically oriented towards the assessment of theoretical and conceptual knowledge and corresponding skills derived from 'western classical music', it testifies to the taken-for-granted presence of 'western classical music' within the syllabus. Therefore, the competent music learner is marked not by knowledge, skill, and understanding of 'music', but more specifically by theoretical, conceptual, and practical competence derived from 'western classical music'. Learners predisposed to knowing, understanding, and doing 'music' in alternative ways are therefore at odds with the competent learner desired. As a result, it becomes difficult to speak of successful 'music learners' who can access and engage with music education in the absence of such competence. This indicates how, within SEC music education, dominant epistemic frameworks do not merely shape the forms of competence cultivated within a course of learning. Competence rather becomes a criterion for differentiating between prospective learners in terms of their capacity for achievement, thus rendering music education a selective tool for spotting learners who are appropriately predisposed.

The interviewee describes this as a 'gimmick', indicating dissatisfaction with the selective qualities of the SEC music syllabus. Nevertheless, this is accompanied by statements which indicate that the epistemic framework through which this selectivity operates holds a strong position in determining how the interviewee can make sense of and

categorise themself, as well as others. The predispositions deemed necessary within the SEC music syllabus are represented to form a *'background in music'*, indicating the normative status of 'western classical music in defining 'music', as well as the competencies necessary to engage with it. The interviewee attributes this background to themself, the second interviewee, as well as myself as the 'interviewer', suggesting that our existing engagement with music is a direct result of the competencies we held and their role in facilitating our subsequent engagement with music. It is important to consider how the interviewee's understanding of my subjectivity may have affirmed the normative position of such epistemic frameworks. My institutional position, as a doctoral candidate within the Royal College of Music, necessarily tethers the subject position I assume as an interviewer to the organisational structures, legacies of practices, and the rationalities within which my institution operates. Owing to the centrality of 'western classical music' to this institution, my subjectivity within the interview carries a substantial impact on the possibilities afforded to the interviewee for speaking about 'musical background' and its value.

Music education research has long expressed a dissatisfaction with the marginalising effects accompanying the long-standing and hegemonic position of 'western classical music' within curricular practices. Authors have shown particular concern for how such curricula establish a strong conceptual dissonance between school music and the ways by which music learners make sense of and do music outside of school. Regelski (2009) argues:

> *The opportunity students have, then, of comparing the irrelevance of their 'school music' with their very active musical lives out of school promotes negative comparisons with 'real life' not usually faced by other subjects (except perhaps in sex and health education).* (72)

This perceived irrelevance, argues Wright (2008), impacts the ability and willingness of learners to engage with music within schooling, and often yields learners who refuse to participate in music within their curriculum. By situating 'western classical music' as a necessary tool for accessing and understanding the intrinsic qualities of 'music' itself, curricula form clear boundaries for including and excluding prospective learners. Haak-Schulenburg and Laurence (2021) draw on the work of Small (1997) to consider how his work had functioned to confront and unsettle the position of 'western classical music' within curricula. They claim that Small drew attention to how its hegemonic presence perpetuates curricular practices that routinely value a small portion of the student population at the expense of others. In doing so, it has shaped music education into *'a project aimed at locating talent, nurturing future classical musicians, and shaping enough of the other children up as future audience, thus inherently exclusive of 'ordinary' children and other musics, and impoverishing of children's innate musicality.'* (331). Despite the role of his work in skewing *'the basic tenets of prevailing music educational thought'* (330), the authors contend that *'[h]is words reverberate still.'* (331).

Bull (2019) contends that prevailing definitions of 'music', as well as the competencies deemed necessary to engage with it, reflect the identities and dispositions of populations holding a particular social, cultural, and economic status. The author draws particular attention to how 'western classical music' has historically held a strong relationship with populations holding a higher socio-economic status. The enduring presence of such associations is reflected within the interview moment presented above, in which Educator 1B expresses hope for finding learners who hold a *'good background in music'* within a different *'catchment* area'. Referring to the geographical area from within which state schools receive learners, this reference to *'catchment area'* indicates an assumed relationship between the

geographical area of residence and the possession of the competence necessary to engage with 'western classical music'.

Matthews (2015) argues that the patterns of exclusion defined by Bull extend to race, as well as gender. The author claims that curricular practices continue to operate oblivious of the lives and practices of non-white populations. Hence, the ways in which such populations conceptualise and engage with music seldom find space within institutional practices. The author goes on to argue that the hegemonic presence of 'western classical music' has also contributed to the marginalisation of populations holding non-male gender identities, notwithstanding whether their practices correspond or stand in tension with 'western classical music'. Drawing on the work of Lamb and Dhokai (2015), the author argues that this marginalisation is historically rooted in the belief that the emotional, physical, and cognitive abilities held by males predispose them to make music in the utmost ways.

> *In the case of women, the stigmas have a long historical grounding in the alleged emotionality and irrationality of women. Women, the stigma supposes, are physically and cognitively weaker than men.* (5)

As a result of extensive histories of routine institutional practices, such forms of marginalisation have retained a strong position within music education, notwithstanding how these gendered assumptions may now be dismissed as *'biological nonsense'* (Matthews 2015, 5). This is evident within the SEC: Music (2023) syllabus analysed in section 5.2, more specifically in its proposed 'repertoire list' depicted in Figure 4, which details a set of fourteen compositions through which learners are expected to demonstrate their knowledge, skill, and understanding of music 'history and analysis'. All fourteen of the listed compositions are written by male composers, indicating the presupposition that history and analysis should be known, understood, and done in the absence of non-male composers. The

marginalising qualities of this list extend beyond gender to include compositions that stand within the immediate stylistic boundaries that are valued within 'western classical music'. Dave Brubeck's 'Take Five' represents the only proposed work which may be considered to stand outside these boundaries, presumably as a broad stylistic exemplification of what is typically referred to as 'jazz'. It is significant to note that the proposed repertoire list refers strictly to 'compositions' (17), indicating that the objectification of music within notation is presumed to be necessary for learners to engage analytically with 'music'. This reflects the assumption that notated music, as an object which exists autonomously of the immediate contexts within which music is made, confers analysts with access to the intrinsic meaning and value of music. 'Compositions' are therefore assumed to be the only viable means through which learners can analyse music. Furthermore, by supplementing such analyses with knowledge pertaining to the composer's biography and the context within which the 'composition' was produced, it is assumed that learners may access knowledge and understanding of the 'history of music'. These assumptions form the boundaries of possibility within which history and analysis are conceptualised. As a result, those forms of 'music' which stand outside of these boundaries are not only deemed inadequate or less valuable objects of musical analysis but are also written out of its 'history'.

As I have already argued, while the epistemic frameworks in operation derive measures of analytic meaning and value from 'western classical music', the SEC: Music syllabus represents such frameworks as universal tools for knowing and understanding 'music'. By applying partial measures to all 'music', the syllabus functions to affirm the normative status of established hierarchies of value that differentiate amongst compositions as more or less *'seminal'* (18), valuable, and worthy of curricular space and attention. Those learners whose subjectivities are at odds with established frameworks of meaning and value

are denied recognition and intelligibility, further affirming that the SEC: Music syllabus perpetuates cycles of selectivity as a result of the assumptions within which it operates.

Interview Moment 5

It is important to note that this selectivity stands in tension with the proposals and problem representations put forward within the EGPA: Music document. This document argues that it is necessary to adopt a curricular framework which enables all learners to achieve the desired knowledge, understanding, and skill-based outcomes *'irrespective of socio-economic, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual status'* (2015, 5). The 'Learning and Assessment Programme' it proposes is represented to secure the operational autonomy necessary for educators to identify and adapt to learner-specific variables that might impact the achievement of these forms of competence. Therefore, within these proposals, the existing subjectivity of learners, as well as the corresponding variables that may impede or contribute to their learning processes, are subsumed as problems, barriers, or assets and competencies in securing the formation of competent music learners. Conversely, by assuming 'western classical music' as the taken-for-granted basis for knowing, understanding, and doing 'music', the SEC: Music syllabus renders music education accessible only to those learners whose existing subjectivity holds compatibility with established frameworks of meaning and value. Therefore, the opportunity to achieve competence in SEC-level music education is entirely *dependent* on the learner's *'socio-economic, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual status'*.

The upcoming interview moment presents the interviewee's response to a question pertaining to what an ideal music education at the SEC level might look like. The interviewee's statements indicate the presence of these assumptions and shed light on the possibilities available to them for navigating the tensions formed.

> **Educator 2***: As for the content, the passages. That is to say, it can be opened more for instruments, because for example percussion, except for drums there is no other percussion instrument, and we know that percussion is not only drums. There are instruments such as the harp, which are not there, if I'm not mistaken, and voice is very limited. Because you have classical, pop music is left out. Many students may choose it just because of the pop repertoire. Because there is a big singing craze in Malta, where everyone goes to learn so much and everyone wants to become a star. I mean if we were to open the SEC as a voice even for the different genres of voice, such as...rock and pop, it would definitely be a hit market...and musicals, for example. There are musicals in the list, but only a couple of pieces that are a bit old. Therefore, it is also important to use slightly more recent songs when it comes to musicals, for example. […] Because again, the syllabus must be futuristic. If all your pieces are from the 1900s, and there is no pop, and there is no electric guitar. For example, the only guitar available is classical guitar. Who will choose this, honestly? Who will choose it?*

The interviewee here refers to the 'set repertoire list' for performance set by the SEC: Music syllabus, which, similarly to the aforementioned list for history and analysis, details the instruments and *'pieces'* through which learners may choose to demonstrate their achievement of performance-related learning outcomes. With the exception of 'drums', 'electric guitar', and 'musical theatre', proposed pieces are technical studies and compositions written primarily within the stylistic boundaries of 'classical music'. Within this interview moment, the interviewee problematises this stylistic selectivity, arguing that the proposed repertoire list should be 'o*pened for more instruments'* and *'different genres'.* The interviewee claims that existing choices do not correspond positively to the interests held by music learners, and argues that this dissonance has contributed to learner disengagement. In order to address this 'problem', the interviewee claims that instrumental and repertoire

choices should reflect the stylistic interests held by learners. This is reflective of the proposals and problem representations put forward within the EGPA: Music document, which presupposes that the interests held by learners are important tools for securing their engagement, and thus enabling their achievement of desired competencies. The interviewee's statements indicate that it remains possible to cultivate closer relationships between learning programmes and students' stylistic interests while preserving the normative position of 'western classical music' as the dominant framework through which music is known, done, and understood. This is enabled by the underpinning assumption that all 'music', notwithstanding its 'stylistic' variation, can be known, understood, and performed through the use of 'universal' tools. Within the context of instrumental and vocal music, this encompasses technical, theoretical, and conceptual knowledge, as well as notational literacy. Therefore, it becomes possible to retain the same expectations for achievement, while broadening legitimated instruments and repertoire choices beyond the immediate stylistic boundaries of 'classical music'.

Such claims reflect broader historical shifts in music education discourse. Bradley (2012) argues that, since the 1980s, western music education has seen an increasing disenchantment with the hegemonic position of 'western classical music' within music education and its alienating effects on student demographics marked by increasing rates of cultural pluralism. In response, theorists, researchers, and programme designers have sought to pursue forms of music education which engage with traditions of practice that sit outside the established boundaries of 'western classical music'. Commonly defined as 'multicultural' music education, such approaches presuppose that in order for music education to be inclusive, its learning programmes must move away from the prevailing ethnocentrism.

However, such approaches were widely satisfied through the diversification of repertoire. Spruce and Matthews (2012) argue:

This is achieved through promoting the idea that musical artefacts of themselves, despite being disconnected from the social practices, structures and relationships which brought them into being and which give them meaning, say something about the culture of their provenance. That through enabling children to engage with these musical artefacts they consequently gain a greater understanding of that culture thus addressing issues of diversity, cultural understanding and inclusion. (121)

Within the conceptual boundaries established by such assumptions, not only is it possible to engage with multiple forms of music through autonomous and notated objects, but reframes 'western classical music' and the frameworks it affords for analysis as invaluable tools for multicultural music education. Through such assumptions, *'[a]n enlightened and inclusive music education is then conceived of as one which enables engagement with as many artefacts from as many musical cultures as possible.'* (122). Spruce and Matthews point out that such practices fail to consider the partial and hence political qualities of such frameworks. As an example, the authors draw attention to how different musical cultures may engage with music through situated and embodied practice rather than notated and preserved artefacts. Attempts to engage with the former in terms of the latter follow what Hess (2021) terms as an 'extractive logic', in which the apparatus of notation is used to uproot musical practices from the cultural contexts within which they occur. By assimilating different musical cultures through dominant conceptual and theoretical frameworks, these musical cultures become amenable to 'inclusion' within established curricula. While appearing to embrace multiplicity, the universality attached to such frameworks rather facilitates subversion and marginalisation. Hence, while attempts to include repertoire other than 'classical music' may function to establish closer relationships between learning programmes and learners' pre-existing relationships with 'music', the preservation of 'western classical music' as the taken-for-granted, hegemonized, conceptual framework for knowing,

understanding, and doing music contributes further to the marginalisation and subversion of those musical cultures which learners may hold dear.

Interview moment 6

It is also important to consider how attempts to pluralise opportunities for learners to engage with the SEC: Music syllabus, such as those presented within the interview moment above, carry important implications for the music educator. As I have already argued, the proposals put forward within the EGPA: Music document seek to cultivate the curricular flexibility and autonomy necessary for educators to identify and adapt to the various idiosyncrasies of each learning context in order to ensure that all learners are enabled to achieve the desired knowledge, understanding, and skill-based outcomes. Through these proposals, the competent educator is characterised by their ability and willingness to adapt their curricular, pedagogical, and assessment practices to the various needs and interests held by each learner. The SEC: Music syllabus accommodates this proposed necessity by providing a list of twenty-four instrumental and vocal options, and a corresponding list of repertoire, through which learners may choose to demonstrate their achievement of 'performance' learning outcomes. As discussed in section 5.2, the SEC: Music syllabus puts forward two overarching statements of expectation for 'performance': *'I can demonstrate competence in musical performance on my principal instrument'* (11), and *'I can demonstrate my knowledge in music theory and basic aural skills through practical application'* (12). The first is elaborated through statements of expectation related to the ability to *'perform general repertoire'*, demonstrate competence in *'performance technique'*, *'listening* skills', *'intonation'*, *'timing'*, *'tempo'*, *'sight-reading'*, *'performance skills'*, and *'interpretative technique'* (11). The second is elaborated through expectations relating to the ability to *'recognise and play in different clefs'*, *'transpose'*, apply *'aural skills'* and *'theoretical concepts'*, and interpret *'contrasting styles and periods of music'*. Proposed learning outcomes therefore define 'performance' as the application of conceptual,

theoretical, aural, and notational knowledge, skill, and understanding. Insofar as these expectations are met, learners are free to learn whichever instrument they are most interested in.

In the upcoming interview moment, two interviewees speak about their subjectivity as SEC music educators in relation to learners who choose to study different instruments. This moment indicates that, by accommodating the need for curricular flexibility through a list of instruments, the SEC: Music syllabus cultivates an irresolvable tension for the educator.

Educator 1B: *If we have a child who wants to learn the trumpet, we cannot push him away.*

Educator 1A: *[…] If someone comes to me saying they want to play the violin, as a [redacted], I have a basis of knowledge about how to play it. But if I'm going to tell him 'you want to put your hands like this, you want to put your fingers like this', I'll ruin him before he even starts. Am I going to take responsibility for dealing with a boy or a girl who the day after tomorrow would want to curse me because I started him wrong? Then he takes the step that you took, he gets there and they say to him 'Well done, mate. Start all over again.' As has happened many times. Am I going to take that responsibility? No, I'm not comfortable doing that.*

The first statement put forward by Educator 1B indicates that, notwithstanding their instrumental choices, SEC music educators are entrusted with ensuring that all learners are enabled to achieve expected outcomes, alluding to the several instrumental and vocal options offered within the SEC: Music syllabus. As argued above, the proposal of these options presupposes performance to encompass the application of conceptual, theoretical, aural, and notational competencies. Since these competencies are not strictly attached to a particular instrument or voice, learners are afforded the opportunity to choose from a list of possibilities.

The subsequent statements put forward by interviewee 1A however highlight that the use of an instrument encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, skill, and understanding that go beyond these generic competencies. Their reference to the positioning of hands and fingers in learning how to play the violin draws attention to the role of technical and domain-specific competence in instrumental and vocal teaching and learning. The interviewee makes use of the terms '*wrong*' and '*ruin*' to describe teaching practices that occur in the absence of such specialised competence, indicating that instrumental technique is presupposed to operate through clear boundaries that differentiate between correct and incorrect. Subsequent statements indicate that the acquisition of incorrect technique carries deleterious effects for those learners who take '*the step that you took*'. This statement refers to myself, as the interviewer, and my institutional location within the Royal College of Music, thus implying that incorrect technique is assumed to carry limiting or restrictive impacts on learners' opportunity to access and achieve success within western conservatoire settings. This draws attention to the presence of 'western classical music' and corresponding assumptions in shaping the possibilities afforded to both interviewees for conceptualising and speaking about instrumental and vocal teaching.

This interview moment draws attention to an important tension that emerges within the SEC: Music syllabus. As I have argued in section 5.2, the proposals put forward within the syllabus presuppose 'western classical music' to hold the knowledge, skill, and understanding necessary for all learners to access the intrinsic qualities of 'music'. The acquisition of such competence is assumed to enable successful engagement with all forms of music, notwithstanding its cultural provenance. Hence, it becomes possible to conceptualise 'performance' within these terms. What is valued is not learners' ability to engage with a specific instrumental or vocal domain, but their ability to demonstrate the acquisition and application of the aforementioned generic competencies within their performances. Hence, learners are afforded the opportunity to meet these expectations through whichever domain

interests them most. As a result, educators are assigned the responsibility to adapt learning programmes to the various instrumental and vocal choices made by each learner. This interview moment however indicates that the statements of expectation put forward within the syllabus assume and overlook the role of technical competence in learning how to engage with a particular instrumental or vocal medium. Statements also indicate that 'western classical music', particularly through routine practices associated with authoritative institutions such as conservatoires, establishes clear boundaries for differentiating between correct and incorrect technique. These boundaries function to shape the possibilities afforded to educators for making sense of themselves as competent or incompetent. In other words, specialised technical and pedagogical knowledge, skill, and understanding becomes a necessary prerequisite to instrumental and vocal teaching. Therefore, the educator can only make sense of oneself as competent insofar as the specialised competence they hold corresponds appropriately to the instrumental or vocal medium which learners choose to engage with. Since the SEC music educator is responsibilised with adapting to the various choices learners may make, in the likely event that the former's specialised competences do not correspond with learners' chosen instrumental or vocal medium, a strong tension ensues within the educator's subjectivity. In a subsequent moment, illustrated below, the interviewee refers to the possibility of strategically negotiating this tension by refusing to take-up SEC music learners, thus leading them to reject the subjectivity of SEC music educator altogether.

> Educator 1A: *But we have reached a stage where you almost say to him 'listen, you can study at the school of music, but I can't teach you at SEC level. Do it privately. Do it, but not at school.'*

5.3.2 Making the 'Demonstrable' Subject

In section 5.1.2, I have argued that changes proposed by the 'Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' (2015) are represented to be necessary responses to the inadequacy of centralised educational government in enabling all learners to achieve the framework of outcomes to which they are supposedly entitled. The proposed Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) claims to enable schools, educators, and learners to adapt to the idiosyncrasies of each learning context by providing them with a measure of autonomy in programme design. Such flexibility is represented to be an important tool for adapting to the differences, nuances, and changing needs that may bolster or pose barriers to learning and achievement. I have argued that such educational reforms form part of globalised packages which are shaped through economic and business management theories, and which have been marshalled by intergovernmental organisations such as the European Union and OECD as silver bullet solutions to the challenges and opportunities brought about by rapid change. These packages seek to reconfigure existing governmental relationships between the state and the various sites of practice it seeks to regulate, as well as how the state exercises and maintains control over these sites. Rather than prescribing the day-to-day conduct of the population it seeks to govern, the state establishes expectations pertaining to what governed populations should achieve in the course of their practices. In order to ensure that these expectations are met 'effectively' and 'efficiently', the state operationalises tools and techniques of measurement to evaluate, incentivise, and optimise routine practices relationally to the results they are expected to realise. The Learning and Assessment Programmes (LAPs) proposed within the EGPA: Music document are shaped according to these governmental models, thus pursuing a shift away from subject syllabi which prescribe the delivery of subject content through a Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) which details expectations pertaining to what learners should *'know, understand or be able to do as a result of a process of learning'* (7). While such a

framework is represented to provide schools and learners with the necessary flexibility to *'address specific needs and to build upon strengths within the context of the learning communities in different colleges and schools'* (6), statements of expectation are represented to set clear and universal expectations for achievement. Therefore, the EGPA: Music claims, LOs *'act like an anchor for any and all related assessment activity by defining the learning that is in scope for assessment activity and by omission being clear about what is not in scope.'* (51).

Tools of measurement and evaluation assume a strong position within the proposals put forward within the EGPA: Music document. The document proposes two sets of tools, each of which is intended to contribute to the *'evaluation'* and *'improvement'* of the quality of teaching and learning. The first encompasses a set of quality assurance procedures that are represented *'to support the introduction of the LOF and to secure its successful implementation in classrooms'* (47). These include external *'quality assurance visits'* and internal school-based and departmental procedures. These form a holistic and ongoing *'process of systematic and critical analysis of a defined subject that includes the collection of relevant data and leads to judgements and/or recommendations for improvement.* (De Coster et al. 2015, 13 as quoted in the 'Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment, Music' 2015, 47). The second are assessment tools, which are represented to form an *integral part of the learning and teaching process* ('A National Curriculum Framework for All' 2012, 41, as quoted in 'Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music' 2015, 45). Three interrelated modes of assessment are proposed: assessment *of* learning, assessment *for* learning, and assessment *as* learning. Assessment *of* learning refers to summative modes of assessment *'carried out at the end of a unit, mid-year or at the end of the year'* (45), while assessment *for* learning encompasses the use of assessment throughout the process of learning. Assessment *as* learning refers to self-subjected modes of assessment through which the learner can *'monitor their own learning'* (ibid).

These three modes of assessment are proposed to pluralise the previously unidimensional relationship formed between learning as the acquisition of knowledge and assessment as the examination of knowledge acquisition. While each of these tools is represented to enable educators and learners to know what they have achieved in relation to established expectations, this knowledge is not only represented to evidence their achievement of a given learning outcome. Rather it is represented to form an important tool for enhancing and optimising the process of learning itself. The document claims that this is done in three ways. Firstly, assessment offers important data sets which enable 'learners' and 'teachers' to locate learning 'needs' and thus bolster the effectiveness of learning programmes and pedagogical practices by adapting to them. Secondly, they constitute a basis for informing learners, parents and guardians of learners' strengths, areas for development, achievements, and attitudes, thus offering information possibly conducive to the modification of familial practices and learning relationships outside of school. Finally, they represent a tool for providing learners with 'appropriate recognition' for their achievement of established LOs, thus directing and incentivising learners to further their engagement with learning practices which correspond positively to established expectations, as opposed to others.

Ozga (2016) points out that measurement within educational governance is significant because it not only represents a means of coming to know governed populations but rather operates as a powerful tool for forming and controlling them. By establishing a direct relationship between pre-established expectations for achievement and the processes through which people come to know, evaluate, and modify themselves in relation to others, assessment shapes people's subjectivities. Foucault's understanding of 'discipline' is a particularly useful conceptual tool for making sense of this. In *'Discipline and Punish'* (1 995), Foucault defines discipline as a unique technology of power which regards people as both its subjects and its instruments of exercise. Discipline, argues Foucault, functions through two interrelated

instruments whose simplicity and ubiquity veil their routine function. The first instrument is termed 'hierarchical observation', defined as a disciplinary tool through which people are rendered visible and knowable through the evaluation of their conduct. Foucault claims that this tool depends on people and their routine practices, operating through hierarchical networks of social relationships and inter-relational practices. Each individual acts to observe and evaluate the conduct of others, while in the process, being continually subject to the active gaze of these others, forming *'supervisors, perpetually supervised.'* (177). In its ubiquity, observation does not merely render people visible but functions to actively coerce and shape their subjectivity. It functions *'to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them.'* (172). Hierarchical observation, argues Foucault, *'is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency.'* (176). The second instrument is termed 'normalising judgment', which refers to the *'penal mechanism'* through which people's conduct is evaluated in relation to the normative expectations for practice. The purpose of such a mechanism is to reduce the distance between people's existing conduct and that desired from them, thus enforcing *'order'*. This corrective function is operationalised through a bi-faceted system of gratification and punishment. Disciplinary punishment, argues Foucault *'is, in the main, isomorphic with obligation itself; it is not so much the vengeance of an outraged law as its repetition, its reduplicated insistence.'* (180). The author goes on to argue that examination represents the point within which these two instruments of power intersect, rendering learners knowable and alterable while shaping and forming their subjectivity through the disciplinary practices which accompany expectation and judgment.

Foucault's theorisation of discipline sheds light on the significance of assessment, and its proposed position within the necessary changes put forward within the EGPA: Music document. By establishing quality assurance and assessment as an integral part of all

professional practices, the day-to-day conduct of school leaders, administrators, educators, and learners is continually subject to the corrective mechanisms of 'normalising judgment'. As I have argued in the previous sub-section, the proposed framework of knowledge, understanding, and skill-based outcomes, as expressed within statements of expectation, form the curricular goals against which all teaching and learning practices are evaluated. These expectations make up the desired subjectivity of a 'competent learner', hence forming clear categories of differentiation through which learners may be known as successful, or in 'need' of adaptation and assistance. These normalising judgments carry corrective impacts on the pedagogical and curricular practices of the educator, as well as the day-to-day practices of the learner. Assessment-as-learning achieves particular significance in this regard, as it represents a process through which the learner becomes capable of assuming these normative goals and subjecting oneself to judgment and correction.

While it is important to consider how assessment functions as a tool for subjectification, it is also important to consider how its use within contemporary governmental practices may carry an influential impact on the normative qualities it seeks to secure within its subjects. In order to shed light on this impact, it is important to consider and evaluate the assumptions that underpin its use. Murtonen, Gruber, and Lehtinen (2017) point out that curriculum frameworks centred on Learning Outcomes operate through a set of epistemological assumptions that find their roots in behaviourist psychological theories. The authors define behaviourism as an approach to educational and psychological research which engages with learning in terms of *'external reactions'* that form visible changes in people's conduct (114). When applied to educational practices, such theories cultivate the possibility of using pre-defined expectations pertaining to the desired *'end behaviour'* as tools for shaping *'sequences of reinforcement'* through which these behaviours may be achieved (116). The authors claim that one of the most influential applications of behaviourism within educational government is the 'Taxonomy of

Educational Objectives' proposed by Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl (1956), which offers an objective and universal standard of desired outcomes for primary and secondary levels. This proposed taxonomy has played a significant role in the formation of outcomes-based educational frameworks, particularly in Europe. The author however points out that these assumptions have received extensive criticism, within which cognitive learning theories (which achieved a particularly strong status in the 1970s) have played a strong role. Cognitive theories claim that *'complex conceptual learning in humans can only be understood if internal cognitive processing is deliberately analysed'* (115). This sheds a significant measure of doubt on the validity of pedagogical and assessment practices shaped explicitly to elicit visible forms of behavioural change. Despite this criticism, owing to the strong alignment of learning outcomes with de-centralised modes of government and their presumed 'need' for new tools and techniques of regulation, behaviourist assumptions retained a strong position within European curricular frameworks. As a result, observable practices and behaviours have been assumed as normative measures for evaluating achievement, and thus form the taken-for-granted conceptual foundation upon which assessment practices typically operate.

Assessment, as proposed within the EGPA: Music (2015) document, attests to the normative position assigned to visible and observable behaviours as measures of achievement. The document contends that *'educators must ensure that their view of what a learner has achieved is supported by sound evidence.'* (47). This evidence can be derived from the assessment:

> *What the assessment should really be trying to establish is whether the learners have reached the standard of the SLO. [...] Can they demonstrate the ability to do what the SLO claims for them and can they do it routinely, confidently and comfortably.* (51)

This statement indicates that it is not merely learners' acquisition of expected outcomes which is valued, but rather their ability to demonstrate this acquisition. The achievement of any given learning outcome, as defined within statements of expectation, is only deemed to be valuable in so far as it is effectively demonstrated. Hence, the extent to which a learner is understood to be 'successful' is necessarily mediated by the extent to which they are competent in displaying and 'evidencing' their achievement. It therefore follows that, as a competence deemed necessary to show the achievement of other forms of competence, demonstrability becomes a fundamental quality of the subjectivity which learners are expected to develop and occupy.

Interview moment 7

The normative position of demonstrability within education carries extensive impacts on the possibilities afforded to curriculum designers, schools, educators, and learners in making sense of desired achievements, as well as the teaching and learning practices through which they can be secured. Since achievements are only recognised insofar as they are visible within learners' externalised conduct, the intelligibility of curricular practices becomes dependent on the extent to which they can be successfully translated into visible and measurable outcomes. The next interview moment sheds light on the discursive effects of demonstrability on the possibilities afforded to the interviewee, as a SEC music educator, to make sense of their practices.

> **Educator 2:** *I think that in composition, the love of the composition...the student must be interested, but the teacher must do a great job. If the teacher manages to create this love for composition vis-a-vis the student, it will obviously go beyond the SEC exam. What is the SEC examination? The SEC exam will still be 8 bar, composing an 8-bar or a 12-bar, that is 3/4-bar phrases. The student will still be writing a piece of composition on a piece of paper that is dead. That is, the method for composition, that you know*

certain programs and know how to use them, the teacher must give you the tools, to understand. The exam is good because the teacher must cover the composition. The student must cover composition because otherwise he has 10 marks...10 marks, 8 marks, 12 marks. He will not be able to do the exercise properly. The attitude towards the composition must be created by the teacher, how creative he is, how able he is to deliver the message, how much he admires the student, how fair he is with the student. I mean the teacher is everything, isn't it, I see it myself.

The interviewee here refers to the assessment plans proposed within the SEC: Music syllabus and the sustained presence of 'composition' within these plans. The obligation it sets for educators to teach the writing of *'8-bar or 12-bar'* compositions is represented to render the examination valuable. This statement presupposes that theoretical, conceptual, and notational knowledge, skill, and understanding derived from 'western classical music' constitutes 'composition', and that such practices form necessary components of music education. It is important to note that assessment, in its emphasis on meeting clear and universal expectations for achievement, holds a high degree of compatibility with the assumptions that structure the SEC: Music syllabus. In section 5.2, I have argued that theoretical and conceptual knowledge derived from 'western classical music' is represented to form a generic framework of knowledge, understanding, and skill that enables learners to engage with all forms of 'music', notwithstanding the cultural contexts within which they emerge. As a result, learners' achievements may be evaluated through universal criteria of judgment derived from the very theoretical and conceptual knowledge they are designed to evaluate. The compatibility of these qualities with the discursive practices forming assessment affirms the normative position of 'western classical music' within curricula.

However, as illustrated by the interview moment above, the dominant position of 'demonstrability' within these discursive practices functions to establish a more stringent set of

boundaries within which curricular practices and corresponding achievements can be evaluated. The interviewee defines two curricular practices related to composition. The first relates to the acquisition of 'method', through which learners are enabled to do *'the exercise'* properly. This refers to the appropriate application of theoretical, conceptual, and notational skills to write an *'8-bar or 12-bar'* composition. Since these curricular practices enable the formation of material and visible outcomes that may be collected as evidence and evaluated according to pre-established and generic criteria, they are assumed as valuable. The second refers to the cultivation of *'interest'* and *'love'* for composition. These qualities are valued within 'western classical music' for the ways in which they cultivate secure and sustained modes of engagement. However, owing to their intangible qualities, curricular practices which seek to cultivate these qualities are known to be secondary to those facilitating the acquisition of methods within the context of SEC-level music education. Owing to its demonstrable qualities, 'method' is considered to be an absolutely necessary outcome. While it might be desirable to cultivate 'interest' and 'love', by design, these are put at the service of demonstrability.

Within the examination, learner achievement is only valuable insofar as it is visible and ultimately measurable. Such an emphasis on demonstrable achievement cultivates what Ball (2003) terms as a 'culture of performativity', in which the value of individuals and their practices are determined by the externalisation of their achievements and the extent to which they correspond to established objectives and norms:

> *'the performances (of individual subjects or organisations) […] stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgement'* (Ball 2003, 144).

Such conditions become conducive to curricular practices that prioritise effective and efficient methods for satisfying the established criteria of judgment. Kopp (1999) terms such practices

as transactional behaviour, which is driven by the question *'how much can I get for it?'* (5). This, Kopp argues, is conducive to 'insincere' practices which operate according to external value judgments derived from the examination, rather than value judgments immediate to the act of 'composition' itself. As a result, it becomes increasingly difficult to make sense of teaching and learning 'composition' outside the boundaries of value established by examination. It is therefore important to consider how this may impact the opportunities afforded to learners for engaging with such creative practices. While the SEC: Music syllabus seeks to cultivate learners who hold the necessary knowledge, skill, and understanding to 'compose', an emphasis on meeting assessment expectations may predicate opportunities for cultivating practices which are personally and creatively meaningful. Furthermore, the normative value attributed to 'method' eliminates possibilities for considering how its centricity within curricular practices may actively jeopardize possibilities for cultivating 'love' and 'interest'.

Interview moment 8

In this particular interview moment, the interviewee elaborates on the intersection between 'western classical music' and 'demonstrability' within the SEC: Music syllabus and sheds light on the opportunities it affords to educators for making sense of their subjectivity.

> **Educator 2:** *I will tell you that 95% of music teachers are limited on composition, there is no doubt. They get stuck, don't they, and these are teachers I'm telling you! Let's say 80% of the teachers. They are terrified to teach composition. So, they teach them the tricks. Certain tricks so that they can fill in the time... Because you can't be...Here, whoever is an all-rounder, mind you, takes an interest in many things. But there are those who stop there. They stop at University [...] and teach their theory and instrument and stop there. And they would not be so proficient in other aspects of music.*

Within this interview moment, the interviewee defines the SEC music educator in terms of two subjectivities. The first is characterised by their 'interest' and 'proficiency' in doing and teaching 'composition', which enables them to teach it in ways that satisfy, but go beyond, assessment expectations. The second subjectivity is characterised by lesser forms of proficiency that renders the educator 'terrified' by the prospect of teaching 'composition'. While this lack of proficiency 'limits' their teaching practices, they are considered to be sufficiently competent in enabling learners to satisfy assessment expectations. Therefore, in so far as learning and assessment programmes place significant value in the acquisition and strategic externalisation of those competencies which satisfy assessment expectations, within the context of the SEC examination, teaching practices that make use of 'tricks' achieve equal value to those that operationalise more extensive forms of proficiency. Educators are therefore constrained and incentivised to cultivate and enact domain-specific competencies that may merely enable learners to satisfy expectations for achievement. In doing so, the taken-for-granted position of established 'tricks', and the assumptions through which they are structured, are affirmed. As a result, practices and forms of achievement which stand outside these normative boundaries are marginalised. Furthermore, opportunities for learners to cultivate more personally meaningful compositional practices are further minimised.

5.3.3 Making the 'Gifted and Talented' Subject

In section 5.1, I have argued that the proposals put forward within the 'Educators'
Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment, Music' (EGPA: Music) are underpinned by two
interrelated problematisations of curricular structures centred on subject syllabi. The first
problematises subject knowledge as insufficient in enabling learners to establish sustained
and flexible relationships with learning in order to navigate unforeseeable contexts of practice
marked by 'rapid change'. A generic framework of knowledge, understanding, and skill-based
outcomes are represented to form the competencies necessary for learners to secure their
individual success and contribute to national well-being. The second proposal problematises
the rigidity of centrally imposed syllabi and their inadequacy in enabling *all* learners to
achieve the aforementioned competencies within educational contexts marked by rapid
change and diversity. Different learners are assumed to hold and present with several
differences. These may either serve as useful tools for facilitating achievement or pose
barriers to learning that require adaptation. By centring teaching and learning on the
acquisition of subject content, syllabi are represented to inhibit the ability of schools and
learners to adapt their learning programmes in response to these differences, thus jeopardising
learners and the opportunities they are afforded to achieve. It therefore becomes necessary to
pursue curricular frameworks which provide the flexibility necessary for schools and learners
to identify, understand, and tailor learning programmes to these differences.

The problematisation of centrally-imposed syllabi, and the corresponding changes
proposed as necessary, are underpinned by a set of assumptions pertaining to learners' 'ability'
and their 'potential' for achievement. These are elaborated within *'the principle of the
continuum of achievement'*, which was initially proposed by the National Curriculum
Framework (2012), and quoted within EGPA: Music as part of the broader rationale for its
proposed changes:

The principle of the continuum of achievement should be such that it allows a learner to follow the best pathway that will allow him or her to reach the maximum of his or her potential - irrespective of whether the student is a high flyer, has average abilities, basic abilities and/or has a disability. In this regard the NCF sought to establish a framework that ensures that, as far as possible, no student becomes a casualty of an education system that is unable to identify those learners who require encouragement and guidance. Equally importantly, the NCF allows for the introduction of different pathways that will truly allow a learner to develop his or her abilities in the manner best suited for him or her. ('A National Curriculum Framework for All' 2012, 5 as quoted in 'Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music', 50).

Within this statement, 'ability' is represented to be something that is held by, or is intrinsic to, the learner, and is considered to be an element that carries a significant impact on their learning. Since different learners are represented to hold varying forms or extents of 'ability', a lack of curricular space and flexibility for educators to adapt and tailor learning pathways to these learners' abilities is represented to limit and constrain their capacity for achievement. However, 'ability' is not represented to be static but offers scope for development. Hence, in order to facilitate learners' achievements, learning programmes should not only be tailored to adapt and accommodate the abilities held by learners but should seek to cultivate opportunities for their development. EGPA: Music puts forward several 'guidelines' for *'good practice teaching and assessment'* that prompt educators to adapt to qualities of difference that may enhance, or pose barriers to, learning processes. These include *'learning styles and preferences', 'interest levels and home backgrounds'* (38), as well as *'family circumstances, disability or health needs and social or emotional factors'.* (49). Such adaptable practices are represented to be necessary in order for all learners to achieve the *'maximum of his or her potential'*. Contrastingly, within the statement above, 'potential' is represented to be

something which is finite, pre-established, and internal to learners. This quality is represented to define the extent to which learners are capable of developing and achieving. Therefore, while the appropriate learning conditions may enable learners to develop their abilities, this development may only extend insofar as the learners' potential permits.

Sellar (2015) points out that the rhetoric of realising or reaching potential emerges recurrently within contemporary educational policy discourse. The author contends that potential is often invoked as part of a new social contract formed through the economic theories and frames of thought that structure global reform packages. Within these contracts, the state assumes responsibility for providing learners with the necessary opportunities to achieve their potential by investing in, reforming, and hence optimising their formal education. Furthermore, assuming that the achievement of potential necessitates learners who are motivated to make use of the opportunities afforded to them, the state also takes on responsibility for learners' aspirations and motivation, thus seeking to form curricular practices that may be best suited to cultivating these qualities. Sellar points out that aspiration and motivation are represented to be qualities which are internal to the child, but which present opportunities for development and change. Within the optimal learning conditions, aspiration and motivation may be developed in ways that harness the learners' ability to make use of 'opportunity'. In doing so, learners are enabled to achieve, realise, or reach their potential. The author however points out that this narrative presupposes 'potential', as opposed to 'motivation' and 'aspiration', to encompass a set of internal qualities that are fixed and hence do not offer learners the same opportunities for development. Hence, while the forms of education afforded to learners may cultivate and bolster their opportunities for achievement, these are necessarily bounded by their potential. In the right circumstances, people may be able to realise their potential, but not go beyond it.

The aforementioned conceptualisations of 'ability' and 'potential' put forward within the EGPA: Music reflect Sellar's contentions. While 'ability' is represented to encompass aspects of the self that may be developed through flexible and responsive learning programmes, they can only be developed insofar as learners' 'maximum potential' permits. These assumptions shape the 'necessary' changes proposed within this document. Learning and Assessment Programmes (LAPs), as structured by an outcomes-led framework, claim to provide schools and learners with clear expectations for achievement, while cultivating the curricular space and flexibility necessary for educators to adapt their *'teaching methodology and curriculum to meet their [learners'] learning needs.'* (38). Subject Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are defined and categorised according to a set of attainment levels, spanning from levels 1 to 10. These claim to provide learners with the opportunity to achieve and attain recognition for achievement notwithstanding how personal needs and conditions may impact the pace of learning, or how their maximum potential may impact the extent to how much they can achieve. Through these proposed changes, LAPs claim to enable each *'learner to follow the best pathway that will allow him or her to reach the maximum of his or her potential'* ('A National Curriculum Framework for All' 2012, 5 as quoted in 'Educators' Guide to Pedagogy and Assessment: Music', 50).

While expectations for achievement defined at level 9 are represented to mark *'the end of compulsory schooling'* (10), LAPs extend subject learning outcomes to level 10, which present expectations for the achievement of level 9 outcomes with *'increased sophistication'*, *'greater learner autonomy'*, and *'increased application and problem solving'*. It is important to note that level 10 outcomes are labelled as '*gifted and talented'*, and are represented to *'sit at the upper end of the ability spectrum and extend learners further'* (10). The significance of this categorisation and labelling derives from normative assumptions underpinning the use of these terms and the implications they carry for making sense of learners. 'Giftedness' is often

evoked within education as a means of describing learners according to an *'almost universally accepted reality that some learners demonstrate outstanding performance or potential for superior performance in academic, creative, leadership, or artistic domains when compared with their peers.'* (Renzulli 2012, 150). Historically, such assumptions have played a significant role in shaping the various ways in which learners are known and categorised as gifted and talented or ungifted and untalented, as well as the corresponding educational opportunities they are afforded (see Dai 2016; Jaap and Patrick 2015; Scripp, Ulibarri, and Flax 2013). Within the EGPA: Music document, the aforementioned conceptualisations of 'potential' and 'ability' shape the possibilities available for categorising and labelling learners as 'gifted and talented'. The proposed conceptualisation of ability leads us to consider that the achievement of level 10 outcomes necessitates learning programmes that optimise the development of learners' abilities by tailoring curricular, pedagogical, and assessment practices to the unique abilities and needs of each learner. However, only those learners whose 'maximum potential' corresponds to the desired levels of depth, breadth and applicability are considered sufficiently 'able' to achieve at this level. The 'gifted and talented' subject is therefore marked by a set of exceptional internal qualities that are harnessed through appropriately tailored learning programmes and realised through the achievement of subject learning outcomes.

As I have argued in section 5.1, the learning outcomes proposed within LAPs, including those labelled as 'gifted and talented', are represented to form a generic framework of knowledge, understanding, and skill-based outcomes that enable learners to establish a secure and sustained relationship with learning. These learning outcomes are expressed through propositional statements which are represented to form clear and universal expectations for achievement. However, I have argued that learning outcomes only seem to be clear and universal because they are interpreted through pre-established conceptual

frameworks that function to attribute partial forms of meaning to proposed outcomes. Within the SEC: Music syllabus, I have argued that assumptions derived from 'western classical music' form the dominant conceptual framework through which music knowledge, skill, and understanding are conceptualised. Owing to the compatibility of these assumptions with the genericism and universalism attributed to learning outcomes, the partial and political qualities of such interpretative frameworks are concealed. As a result, the markers of meaning and value derived from 'western classical music' are represented to be universally applicable. Similarly, the forms of 'ability' and 'potential' necessary for learners to achieve these outcomes are also misleadingly represented as universally meaningful and valuable. In other words, those learners capable of achieving learning outcomes at the highest level of attainment do not hold universally exceptional qualities, but rather hold qualities that find their value within 'western classical music'. Hence, the label 'gifted and talented' therefore operates according to partial, rather than universal, frameworks of meaning and value. Within the context of SEC-level music education, only those learners whose 'ability' and 'potential' correspond positively with the knowledge, skill, and understanding deemed valuable within 'western classical music' are recognised as successful.

By representing level 10 outcomes to be *'at the upper end of the ability spectrum'*, the EGPA: Music document conceals the normative frameworks active in assigning meaning and value to ability and potential. As a result, the ways in which 'gifted and talented' operate as a political tool for categorising learners and shaping their subjectivity are veiled. Two outcomes follow. Those learners who achieve established learning outcomes at the highest level of attainment are labelled as 'gifted and talented'. These learners are represented to hold exceptional intrinsic qualities that, in conjunction with appropriately tailored learning programmes, have enabled learners to develop their abilities to significantly high levels. In coming to know themselves as such, learners assume normative conceptual frameworks as

taken-for-granted tools for differentiating themselves from others, thus perpetuating cycles of practice that affirm the normative position of dominant conceptual frameworks such as 'western classical music'. Conversely, those learners who do not achieve outcomes *'at the upper end of the ability spectrum'* are represented to hold abilities which are insufficiently developed or a 'maximum potential' that does not extend to such levels of achievement. It is important to consider that, within the context of SEC: Music, all attempts to develop the learners' abilities are derived from 'western classical music' and the possibilities it affords for knowing, understanding, and doing music. As a result, those learners whose interests, understandings, and existing abilities stand in tension with 'western classical music' remain at odds with the learning programmes they are afforded, hence impacting their development. Since the normative position of 'western classical music' is concealed, learners' lack of ability to achieve the learning outcomes deemed valuable within 'western classical music' is represented as a lack of ability to engage with music education universally. Labelling these learners as less gifted and less talented hence carries deleterious consequences, not only for the opportunities they are afforded for engaging with music within subsequent levels of formal education but also for the opportunities they may afford themselves for engaging with music and music education throughout their day-to-day lives.

Interview Moment 9

Within the EGPA: Music document, gifted and talented is used to label knowledge, understanding, and skill-based outcomes that *'sit at the upper end of the ability spectrum'* (10). I have argued that within the SEC: Music syllabus, these expectations reflect the markers of meaning and value derived from 'western classical music'. However, such knowledge, skill, and understanding not only emerge as the desired outcome of teaching and learning music at the secondary level but also form what the SEC: Music syllabus deems as a desirable prerequisite to engagement. The syllabus claims: '*It is advisable that candidates*

who opt for this course have a basic understanding of Music, at least at Grade 2 level.' (2023, 4). The significance of this advisory derives from the use of *'Grade 2'* to define the minimum *'basic understanding of Music'* desired from learners. This broadly refers to syllabi written by British examination boards, which typically define music, yet again, in terms of assumptions derived from 'western classical music'. The predispositions desired from learners therefore reflect these assumptions. As a result, only those learners whose understanding of 'music' corresponds directly with 'western classical music' are understood to be appropriately predisposed to engage successfully with SEC-level music education. The following interview moment demonstrates how the perceived necessity of specific predispositions enables and encourages educators to differentiate between prospective learners as appropriately or inappropriately predisposed, and in doing so, recasts 'talent' as a marker of desired disposition rather than a desired outcome.

> **Educator 1A:** *When a student comes and tells you "I've got a title of studies", but when it comes to doing the work he's not capable, no, sorry, I don't accept it, because we have too much of this. Now, maybe you will call me disagreeable, but at the same time, I believe that if there is talent, it must be supported and pushed. But, if you're not up to it, then change your job, don't waste your time. If you want to take it as a hobby, take it as a hobby, by all means. But here we're talking about professionalism. And professionalism needs to be inculcated at a very young age if you're going for the music path.*

Within this interview moment, the interviewee speaks specifically about SEC music learners and the predispositions they may or may not hold when electing to study music at the SEC level. The interviewee's statements indicate that the capabilities learners hold prior to the take-up of music as an optional subject of study carries a significant impact on their subsequent ability to successfully engage with it. Capability is defined in terms of *'professionalism'* and corresponding qualities that enable learners to pursue *'the music path'*,

which indicates that the SEC syllabus, and the expectations for achievement it sets, are assumed to correspond directly with professional practices and music-based careers. This draws attention to the normative position of 'western classical music' in enabling the interviewee to speak about learners' 'capability', qualities of 'professionalism', and their role as an educator in establishing successful connections between the two.

As I have argued in section 5.3.1, as affirmed within contemporary educational reforms and the constructivist discourses through which they operate, the educator's subjectivity is inextricably tied to learners and their achievement of desired outcomes. Educators are prompted and incentivised to shape their routine practices in ways that may best enable learners to achieve success. Within the context of SEC music, learners' success is assumed to be partially dependent on the forms of competence they already hold, as specified within the aforementioned SEC: Music statement pertaining to the desired *'Grade 2 level'*. In the case of learners that are not appropriately pre-disposed to *'doing the work'*, their prospective achievement of those expectations specified within the SEC: Music syllabus is compromised. Therefore, in order to optimise the opportunities afforded to learners for achieving success, it becomes crucial for the educator to differentiate between prospective learners by their existing capabilities, offering appropriate support to those learners who hold the capabilities necessary to engage in SEC-level music education and guide others to different pathways. Within such practices, 'talent' is recast as a tool for differentiating between learners according to the capabilities deemed necessary to successfully pursue the 'music path'. Those learners whose knowledge, skill, and understanding do not correspond appropriately with 'western classical music' are labelled as untalented and are guided away from engaging with music education at the SEC level. This is particularly significant because SEC-level music education represents the only form of music education offered within state secondary schools. Therefore, guiding learners away from SEC-level music education means

guiding learners away from school music education altogether. Furthermore, since the act of defining learners as untalented occurs in the absence of recognition for the political assumptions underpinning the term's use, it presupposes not only a lack of capability for engaging with career pathways structured by 'western classical music', but implies an inability to pursue music professionally more broadly. Such practices contribute to the perpetuation of normative relationships between 'western classical music', music education, and professional music practices. In doing so, they marginalise and diminish possibilities for adopting alternative conceptual frameworks for making sense of teaching and learning practices, pathways for engaging professionally with music, and the various possible relationships they may hold.

5.3.4 Key Points

In this section, I have analysed how the proposals put forward within the 'Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment' (2015) and their implementation within the 'SEC Syllabus for Music' (2023) aggregate to shape the possibilities learners and educators are afforded for knowing, understanding, and doing music. These possibilities are discussed in terms of three categories of subjectivity, each of which is formed by the proposals put forward within the EGPA: Music document, and elaborated through their implementation in the SEC: Music syllabus.

In section 5.3.1, I have argued that contemporary educational reforms pursuing de-centralised modes of government, such as those proposed within the EGPA: Music syllabus, have functioned to reform the subjectivity of educators and learners according to new criteria of competence. The competent subject is marked by their capacity for understanding and meeting externally set outcome objectives effectively. Typically presented as obvious and uncontentious, these objectives are established as the taken-for-granted purpose for all teaching and learning practices. As a result, it becomes increasingly difficult to question these objectives and the role they may play within prevailing issues, such as learner disengagement. Furthermore, I have argued that the normative position of learning objectives within teaching and learning practices has contributed to the ossification of dominant bodies of 'expert-mediated knowledge' as the taken-for-granted perspective through which these objectives come to be known. Since 'western classical music' forms the dominant epistemic framework through which established learning outcomes are understood within the SEC: Music syllabus, it plays a strong role in shaping the competent subject. As a result, only those learners who are willing and able to define themselves and their routine relationship with music within the terms established by 'western classical music' are enabled to become competent music learners. A number of deleterious effects follow, which include: the inaccessibility of music

education to learners whose existing subjectivity stands in tension with that valued within 'western classical music', the devaluation and marginalisation of cultural traditions which stand outside the immediate boundaries of value established by 'western classical music', the limited possibilities afforded to curriculum makers and educators for securing learner engagement and the corresponding tensions established within the educators' subjectivity as a result of such practices.

In section 5.3.2, I have argued that within the changes put forward within the EGPA: Music document, tools of measurement and evaluation are represented to be a 'necessary' apparatus for ensuring that the objectives set for teaching and learning are met in effective ways. By establishing quality assurance and assessment as integral components of all professional practices, the day-to-day practices of educators and learners are continually subjected to corrective judgments which derive their criteria from the aforementioned objectives. However, I have argued that these practices do not only function as powerful instruments for the subjectification of educators and learners, but they actively shape the subjectivity they are compelled to take on. Since achievement is only deemed to be valuable in so far as it is effectively demonstrated, demonstrability becomes a fundamental quality of the subjectivity made available to learners and educators. Furthermore, I have argued that, while 'western classical music' holds a high degree of compatibility with assessment and the assumptions through which it operates, an emphasis on demonstrability functions to recast the boundaries of possibility within which its practices may be known as valuable. The value attributed to curricular practices therefore becomes dependent on the extent to which their outcomes are tangible, demonstrable, and evidence-based. As a result, those practices that may give rise to unpredictable, fleeting, divergent, and intangible outcomes are marginalised in favour of tried and tested methods that guarantee demonstrable outcomes which correspond directly and effectively to established criteria for judgment.

The EGPA: Music document proposes a Learning Outcomes Framework formed of multiple 'levels of attainment' as the change necessary to enable *all* learners to achieve. In section 5.3.3, I have argued that this proposition is underpinned by a set of assumptions pertaining to learners' 'ability' and 'potential' to achieve. While 'ability' is represented to encompass aspects of the self that may be developed through appropriately tailored learning programmes, this process of development can only extend insofar as the learners' 'maximum potential' permits. A levelled framework of outcomes is therefore represented to provide learners with the opportunity necessary to achieve and attain recognition for achievement regardless of the speed at which their abilities develop and how this development is limited by their maximum potential. This includes the extension of learning outcomes to level 10, which provides additional opportunities for achievement to those learners who are capable of achieving learning outcomes that *'sit at the upper end of the ability spectrum'* and are labelled as *'gifted and talented'*. The *'gifted and talented'* learner is defined by a set of exceptional internal qualities that are harnessed through appropriately tailored learning programmes and realised within the achievement of learning outcomes. However, I have argued that, since outcomes are not universally meaningful, but come to be known as such through a pre-established conceptual framework, the ability and potential deemed necessary to become '*gifted and talented'* are dependent on the meaning and value attributed to these outcomes. Within the context of SEC-level music education, the *'gifted and talented'* subject is therefore characterised by those forms of ability and potential valued within 'western classical music'. Owing to their taken-for-granted position within SEC music, the partial and political qualities of such definitions are concealed. As a result, the possibilities afforded to learners for making sense of themselves as 'gifted and talented' or 'ungifted and untalented' carry considerable implications on the opportunities afforded to learners for engaging with music within formal

education, as well as their day-to-day lives more broadly.

5.4 Alternatives: Unsettling 'Necessities'

In the analysis presented in sections 5.1 and 5.2, I have scrutinised the proposals for change put forward within the 'Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment, Music' (EGPA: Music) (2015) and their implementation within the 'SEC 34 Syllabus for Music' (SEC: Music) (2023) in order to shed light on underpinning assumptions and presuppositions and how they function to represent these proposals as obvious, uncontentious, and necessary. Furthermore, through the analysis presented in section 5.3, I have sought to unseat these proposals by evaluating how they function to shape the possibilities afforded to music educators and learners for making sense of their field of practice in relation to themselves and others. In order to unsettle the 'necessary' qualities of the proposals they shape, this section shall present an analysis of alternative possibilities for making sense of the problem representations put forward within the EGPA: Music document, and the implications these carry for music education. In question 4 of the 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' framework, Bacchi prompts analysts to engage with alternatives through minoritized or marginalised perspectives that may emerge within the various assumptions and presuppositions shaping problem representations, or within the twists and turns of historical practices that have shaped its existing qualities. In this section, I shall present my analysis of the latter in order to identify a 'marginalised' approach to understanding the 'problems' addressed within the EGPA: Music document and consider its implications. I shall evaluate how this approach functions to reshape what kind of change is deemed to be 'necessary', and how it reforms the possibilities available for making sense of music education. I shall conclude by presenting an interview moment to elaborate on how the implications of this approach shape the possibilities available to people for making sense of music education, and how the statements put forward within this moment afford useful conceptual tools for unsettling prevailing necessities within day-to-day practices.

Reconsidering Policy Problems

In section 5.1, I have argued that the proposals put forward within the EGPA: Music document are represented to be 'necessary' forms of change in response to the 'problems' posed by *'centrally-imposed knowledge-centric syllabi'* (2015, 5). Knowledge-centricity is represented to pose problems that pertain to *what* learners are enabled to achieve, while central imposition is represented to pose problems relating to *how* learners are enabled to achieve these. Both problem representations are structured by taken-for-granted assumptions pertaining to learner achievement and how it forms the *'national education entitlement of all learners in Malta'* (5). I have argued that educational entitlement, as proposed within the EGPA: Music and corresponding policy documents, is elaborated through Lifelong Learning (LLL); a concept which has occupied a strong position within educational policymaking across the global west since the latter part of the 20ᵗʰ century (Field 2001). Through policy proposals akin to those put forward within EGPA: Music, LLL is often invoked as a silver bullet to the relentless, ubiquitous, and unauthored forces of change that are claimed to characterise contemporary realities. Within such proposals, education is oriented towards cultivating learners who hold the generic set of knowledge, understanding, and skill-based outcomes necessary to establish a sustained, flexible, and regenerative relationship with learning, and hence adapt and contend with the unforeseeable challenges posed by 'change'.

The generic and universal qualities attributed to LLL give the impression that such an approach transcends ideological and political dimensions. However, I have argued that this approach is shaped through economic theories and frames of thought that form what Rose (1999) terms as 'an advanced liberal rationality'. This rationality operates on an understanding of the individual as an entrepreneurial citizen, whose individual success within the free market contributes not only to their individual well-being but to the broader prosperity of the nation-state. Within such conceptual frameworks, the problems posed by

rapid change are framed as threats to the day-to-day enterprise of the individual, thus jeopardising their future success. Since national well-being is represented to be dependent on the individual, in order to safeguard and develop national well-being, the state must secure the conditions necessary for people to contend successfully with their routine problems and achieve success in spite of the challenges they may pose. In parallel to an overarching shift in the roles and responsibilities attributed to the state, an 'advanced liberal rationality' therefore recasts education as a tool for enabling individuals to cater for their own well-being. As a result, it becomes possible and necessary to conceptualise 'educational entitlement' in terms of a generic framework of knowledge, understanding, and skill-based outcomes that enable all learners to contend individually with change.

Despite the obviousness attached to such an understanding of 'entitlement' and its ubiquity within contemporary policymaking, a look back at its conceptual roots draws attention to alternative perspectives that, while currently subsumed within the prevailing rationality, may offer useful tools for reconceptualising 'entitlement'. Field (2001) claims that the conceptual roots of Lifelong Learning can be traced back to the adult education movement that succeeded the First World War. Driven by changing beliefs about human potential, this movement sought to redefine prevailing relationships between citizenship and education in ways that reframe the latter as an integral part of the former. According to Popović (2013), these ideas entered policy debates through the formalised concepts of 'recurrent', 'continuing' and 'permanent' education initially proposed by the Council of Europe, which gained currency within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Tuijnman and Boström (2002) contend that UNESCO has held a longstanding relationship with these ideas, pointing to the seminal role of its 'Institution of Education' and 'International Review of Education' as well-established platforms for thinkers to share and develop their ideas. The organisation subsequently adopted Lifelong Education (LLE) as a

foundational concept for intergovernmental leadership in education (English and Mayo 2021).

LLE was firmly rooted in the belief that educational practices outside formal institutions, as

exemplified by the nonformal models mostly prevalent within non-European contexts, were

valuable models for reconsidering what is known to be education and its relationship to the

social and cultural contexts in which it exists (ibid). The concept hence represented an

important tool for extending educational provision beyond the various infrastructural,

economic, and socio-cultural limitations that emerged within different national contexts.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO)

intimate relationship with the concept of LLE culminated in two commissions mandated to

evaluate the future of education within the social, political, and economic conditions that

characterise the 20th and 21st centuries. The first commission report, titled *'Learning to be: the*

world of education today and tomorrow' (1972), embraced a social-democratic impulse akin

to that found within the earlier adult education movement (Field 2001). According to Elfert

(2015), the report presented a strong politico-philosophical response to the economic

rationalities achieving increasing prevalence across global educational reforms and expressed

concern for their impact on people's day-to-day lives (ibid). It situates value in educational

practices that pursue holistic forms of personal development which may enable people to

develop in more '*complete'* ways. The proposed holism is elaborated in an understanding of

personhood which establishes intimate ties between individuals and the social, cultural, and

political contexts within which they exist. The report proposes forms of education which

cultivate a capacity and commitment to understand, critically evaluate, and act within these

contexts (ibid). In order to secure such practices, it sought to re-configure the rigid

institutional boundaries separating its existing practices from the contexts within which they

occur, thus recasting education as a lifelong process facilitated through increasingly flexible

modes of organisation and administration that embrace informal, nonformal, as well as formal

configurations (Field 2001). The second commission report, titled *'Learning: The Treasure Within'* (1996), presented a direct response to the economic utilitarian vision proposed within policy reports issued by OECD and the World Bank and expressed a renewed concern for the threats posed by globalised political conditions to individual and collective well-being (Elfert 2015). English and Mayo (2021) claim that the document's reference to Lifelong Learning rather than Lifelong Education indicates the increased ubiquity and influence of the individualised conceptualisations fostered within an 'advanced liberal rationality'. Nevertheless, Elfert (2015) argued that the report reiterated UNESCO's commitment to educational values and visions which cultivate situated, participatory, and critical forms of citizenship.

These reports function to recast 'educational entitlement' in two significant ways. Firstly, an emphasis on Lifelong Education, which emerges more prominently within the first report, functions to present education as an integral part of the situated practices through which people engage with their day-to-day lives (rather than an apparatus for preparation and formation). The various idiosyncrasies pertaining to the social, cultural, and political contexts within which learners are situated therefore become central components of the educational processes, practices, and outcomes to which learners are entitled. Secondly, both reports claim that the challenges posed by globalisation and rapid change are not merely economic and individual, but pose fundamental threats to social cohesion and democracy. People are therefore entitled to forms of education which enable them to participate actively and critically within the social, cultural, and political contexts within which they are situated. Notwithstanding the significance of these proposals, both reports lacked the practical and reassuring qualities that enabled the widespread influence and success of economised proposals put forward by agencies and organisations such as OECD and UNESCO (English and Mayo 2021). Compounded by UNESCO's lack of decision-making power and influence

within national spheres of policymaking, the position of such conceptualisations of 'educational entitlement' became increasingly marginal.

Within scholarship, economised approaches to Lifelong Learning are often placed in tandem with approaches akin to those put forward within the aforementioned UNESCO report. For example, Regmi (2015) posits a clear dualism between a model of LLL premised on human capital and the value of competition, privatisation, and economic growth, and a model of LLL premised on humanism, democracy, and social welfare. Field (2001) claims that such dualism is often used to represent LLL in terms of a linear and straightforward trajectory between these two models, yielding a nostalgic idealisation of a humanistic past which starkly contrasts an individualised and economised present. The author however contends that this dualism is largely synthetic and overlooks the ideological and theoretical plurality which shapes the concept's use.

> *Lifelong learning was never intrinsically a particularly radical concept, nor is it a particularly conservative project in the contemporary context. Its fate displays at least as many continuities as discontinuities.* (Field 2001, 3).

Such reductionism is unhelpful, not merely because it constitutes an unrepresentative and fatalistic history, but more significantly because it misrepresents its existing manifestations. As I have already argued in section 5.1, the 'necessary' changes proposed within the EGPA: Music are represented to form part of a *'coherent strategy for lifelong learning which aims to ensure that all children have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be future active citizens and to succeed at work and in society'* (2015, 5). This testifies to the presence of an approach to LLL which pursues social and democratic goals in addition to goals relating to economic well-being and employability. These are elaborated within the 'Cross-Curricular Themes' that form part of the proposed Learning and Assessment

Programme. These *'have been introduced to ensure that all learners, as they progress through the levels, come into continual contact with the types of knowledge, skills and understanding needed to participate actively, prosper and contribute to Maltese society.'* (2015, 33). Social and democratic goals are most evident within two of the seven proposed CCTs, namely *'Education for Sustainable Development'* and *'Education for Diversity'*. The former defines a set of learning outcomes which seek to empower *'individuals to actively participate in decision making processes which are compatible with living within the environmental limits of our planet in a just, diverse, equitable and peaceful society'*. The latter proposes outcomes which seek to cultivate *'an understanding of global issues and the need for living together with different cultures and values'* (62).

Proposals for the use of *'Education for Diversity'* are accompanied by a reference to the 'Respect for All Framework*'* (2014) (RfAF)*,* an educational policy document that had been published alongside the 'National Curriculum Framework' and the 'Framework for Education Strategy 2014-2024' to propose a framework of values as the foundation for all educational practices in Malta. The RfAF policy document serves as a testament to the influence of the UNESCO commission reports, and the socio-democratic goals they pursue, within local policymaking. The proposed framework draws specifically on 'Learning: The Treasure Within' (UNESCO, 1996), which proposes four pillars of learning as the *'foundations of education'*: *'Learning to Know', 'to Do', 'to Be',* and *'to Live Together'* (UNSECO 1996 as quoted in 'Respect for All Framework' 2014, 9)*.* In the RfAF document's foreword, the then education minister Evarist Bartolo claims that, while the National Curriculum Framework has addressed 'Learning to Know' and 'Learning to Do', this framework is represented to address 'Learning to be' and 'Learning to Live Together'. Definitions pertaining to 'Learning to Know' and 'Learning to Do' allude to the generic framework of knowledge, attitudes, and skill-based outcomes deemed to be necessary for

learners to learn and relearn within changing contexts of practice. Conversely, 'Learning to Be' is defined as a form of development that occurs outside the pre-established objectives to which curricular practices are oriented. Elaborated in the 'discovery', 'exposition', and 'enrichment' of creative potential, 'Learning to Be' functions to recast 'educational entitlement' in terms of self-explorative practices that may lead to unpredictable outcomes. 'Learning To Live Together' draws attention to the various contextualised lenses through which people come to 'know' and 'understand' in their day-to-day lives. In doing so, it recasts 'educational entitlement' in terms of learning which moves beyond self-understanding and development to enable learners to engage with others' perspectives and the similarities, differences, and interdependencies these may form. This is represented to be an important basis for cultivating 'awareness', 'acceptance', and 'respect', the latter of which is defined as *'a person knowing that they are unique, that they are valued, they like who they are and are able to listen to and value others'* (12). Building on the proposed definition of respect, the document proposes a framework of values intended to '*inspire individuals to choose their own positive personal, social and spiritual well-being', 'be aware of ways for developing them as citizens'*, and prompt school communities to think about, reflect, and implement *'them in relation to themselves, others and society.'* (11)

LEARNING TO KNOW

refers to the mastery of learning tools (numerecy, literacy and life skills). Mastery of these learning tools is both a means and an end. These are means for the students to understand the world around them. Learning to know implies learning how to learn (concentration, memory skills, thinking skills).

LEARNING TO DO

refers to personal competences, that is the mix of skills and talents combined with certified skills acquired through technical and vocational training, social behavior, personal initiative and willingness to take risks.

LEARNING TO BE

refers to the enabling of each student to discover, expose and enrich his creative potential. This means going beyond an instrumental view of education, as a process one submits to in order to achieve specific aims (in terms of skills, capacities or economic potential), to one that emphasizes the development of the complete person.

LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER

refers to students being educated about human diversity whilst making them aware of the similarities and interdependence of people. Students learn to understand other people's reactions by looking at things from the other person's perspective and they learn to empathise. This type of learning promotes social awareness, acceptance and respect towards others.

Figure 7: The Four Pillars of Learning as presented within the RfAF

The RfAF document claims that *'The Framework for the Education Strategy 2014 – 2024 (2014), […] addresses learning to know and learning to do through the Curriculum, whilst placing emphasis on students learning to live together and students learning to be.'* (11). It is therefore clear that, while 'Learning to Be' and 'Learning to Live Together' are attributed with value within local educational policy, these value-commitments are framed by a broader curricular emphasis on the achievement of generic outcomes which exclusively promote specific traditions to the exclusion of all others. This militates heavily against the 'Learning to Be' and 'to Live Together' pillars specifically. As a result, 'educational entitlement' as conceptualised within 'Learning to Be' and 'to Live Together' is marginalised within the Learning and Assessment Programme proposed by the EGPA: Music document.

These two pillars provide a useful tool for revisiting and reconsidering the proposals for change put forward within the EGPA: Music, and the problem representations through which these are justified as 'necessary'. Its proposals are represented to be responses to the

insufficiency of *'centrally-imposed knowledge-centric syllabi'* (2015, 5) in enabling learners to acquire the generic framework of knowledge, skill, and understanding necessary to engage in perpetual processes of learning across unforeseeable contexts of practice. This constitutes the dominant problem representation. An alternative understanding of 'educational entitlement', as defined by 'Learning to Be' and 'to Live Together', recasts the problem as the insufficiency of *'centrally-imposed knowledge-centric syllabi'* in enabling learners to value, identify, and enrich the capabilities and perspectives they hold, and to understand and value those held by others. This alternative approach presents two interrelated conceptual shifts. The first relates to a shift in the position of learners and the differences they may hold, within curricular practices. Within the dominant problem representation learner diversity is represented to either pose barriers or provide useful pathways, for learning and achievement. The proposed alternative problem representation positions learner diversity as a fundamental component of curricular practices, processes, and goals. The second shift relates to the conceptual relationship between learners and learning outcomes. Within the dominant problem representation, proposed learning outcomes are presupposed to be universal, and therefore imply a taken-for-granted conceptual foundation for coming to know learners as 'in need', 'in/competent', and 'un/gifted and un/talented'. By situating value in learners' various positionalities and perspectives, the proposed alternative highlights the need for curriculum developers and educators to adopt multiple epistemic frameworks when defining and interpreting desired learning outcomes. This alternative approach therefore cultivates a 'necessity' for conceptual, curricular, pedagogical, and assessment tools for unsettling the normative position of dominant perspectives. Engaging with such tools represents an important step towards cultivating learning programmes that recognise, value, and develop the various constellations of competencies and perspectives that form each learning encounter.

<u>*Interview moment 10*</u>

'Educational entitlement', as conceptualised through 'Learning to Be' and 'To Live Together', establishes a new set of possibilities for making sense of music education. Through its commitment to valuing and developing the existing musical identities, capacities, and perspectives held by learners, this approach unsettles the possibility of adopting singular and universal conceptual frameworks for understanding music as meaningful and valuable. It therefore prompts us to consider how the normative ways in which we know, understand, and do music may close off possibilities for valuing and engaging with perspectives and cultural traditions other than our own. Unsettling what we perceive to be necessary is therefore an important starting point for cultivating curricular practices in which multiplicity is valued and embraced. The upcoming interview moment indicates the presence of tenets akin to those structuring 'Learning to Be' and 'to Live Together' in shaping the possibilities afforded to the interviewee for making sense of an ideal music education. Within these possibilities, the interviewee puts forward definitions of 'music' and 'noise' that may serve as useful tools for unsettling necessities and pursuing alternative curricular practices.

> **Interviewer:** *In an ideal world, if you had the opportunity to engage with music as a subject and you had the opportunity to create this subject…so it can be whatever you like. What would happen in that class, in your ideal world?*

> **Learner 1:** *I don't know. A lot of fun, a lot of listening to music. A lot of chaos, actually.*

> **Interviewer:** *A lot of chaos. Why would you say that?*

> **Learner 1:** *Well, I mean, if you had people with different kinds of music they like to listen to…I mean I can't play a single song and have them listen to it and have them drop the pitches, the notes, the everything…they're gonna have to listen to what they*

want. And sometimes, the person next to you might be playing music on full volume and you're like 'Bro, lower it, it's too loud.'

Interviewer: *And this sense of chaos that comes out of different preferences of music, what do you think is the benefit of having this chaos? Or what do you think is the effect of having this chaos?*

Learner 1: *I don't know…maybe for the fun of it.*

[…]

Learner 1: *Just to know that they're enjoying my class. They really like me as a teacher. Because most teachers won't allow them to do that.*

Interviewer: *And why do you think that's so? Why do you think most teachers wouldn't allow different students to engage with the music that they like?*

Learner 1: *Because most of them are really strict on noise.*

Interviewer: *That's really interesting. There's something to be said there about the role of noise in a music class. Do you have any thoughts about this? About the relationship between noise and a music class?*

Learner 1: *Noise is just different things that are unpleasant to the ear. And music, just harmony, melody…it all makes sense.*

In this interview moment, the interviewee imagines an ideal music education setting which embraces 'noise' and 'chaos' as an opportunity for learners to satisfy their subjective preferences for listening to 'music'. It is important to note that, while the interviewee was recruited as a Year 9 learner, within this interview moment the interviewee assumes the subjectivity of 'music educator'. Presupposing that learners hold different musical preferences, the interviewee claims that it is unreasonable to shape musical engagement

around a predetermined and teacher-imposed song. Insofar as participants are marked by a variety of preferences, it is assumed that collective musical engagement necessarily encompasses the recognition of such multiplicity, as well as curricular space for this to be expressed. The interviewee describes the outcomes of simultaneous engagement with subjective preferences as 'noise', which is later defined as *'different things that are unpleasant to the ear'*. Christopher Small's (1998) work provides useful conceptual tools for reflecting on 'noise' and the implications it carries within the context of this interview moment:

> *'Noise is a difficult concept to define, since what is noise to me may well be music to you, and vice versa, but we could make a rough definition of noise as unwanted sounds— sounds, that is, whose meaning we either cannot discern or do not like when we do discern it.'* (121)

Here, Small's definition is useful because it proposes 'noise' as a conceptual label that emerges not from the internal qualities of sound itself, but from the lack of capacity for its listeners to make sense of it within the conceptual frameworks they hold. For example, Small claims that within European classical music, 'sound' is categorised as 'noise' when it demonstrates incompatibility with structural concepts such as 'tonal harmony' and the 'diatonic scale'. As I have argued in section 5.2, the conceptual aggregation of dominant frameworks for attributing meaning to sound and the physical properties of sound functions to universalise such acts of categorisation. As a result, the assumptions underpinning these categories are applied as normative criteria for differentiating between 'musics' as more or less valuable, thus limiting the possibilities afforded to learners for valuing their own perspectives and practices, as well as those of others. However, within this interview moment, 'noise' is said to emerge not from the biased 'ear' of a singular situated perspective, but from the 'chaotic' act of listening to multiple songs at once. Therefore, in parallel to 'noise',

'music' emerges not in the absence of multiplicity, but in the absence of simultaneity. This interview moment highlights how, in order to pursue curricular practices which value the multiple positionalities of learners, curriculum makers, educators, and learners must pursue a shift in what they understand to be 'noise'. An understanding of noise-as-simultaneity rather than noise-as-multiplicity cultivates the possibility of a 'music' education within which learners are invited to express, engage with, and value different 'musics'. These spaces serve as an important resource for exploring and enriching learners' existing identities, as well as pursuing creative and collaborative encounters.

Chapter 6: Reflections and Proposed Ways Forward

This thesis presents a critical response to the 'necessity' attached to policy and music education within the national context of Malta. More specifically, it expresses and addresses my concern for how these 'necessities' form echo chambers that limit the ways in which curriculum developers, educators, learners, and researchers are able to make sense of music education, policy, and the relationships through which they operate. As I have argued in Chapter 2, the limited pool of existing scholarship pertaining to music education in Malta testifies to the taken-for-granted position occupied by policy within this field. Authors typically assume one of two approaches to policy: problem-solving and/or advocational. Through a problem-solving approach, researchers assume policy proposals as a framework for inquiry, orienting their practices towards facilitating the implementation of proposed changes and the achievement of set objectives within music education. Through an advocational approach, authors assume policy proposals and statements as a taken-for-granted framework in relation to which the value and meaning of music education can be justified and affirmed. I have argued that the adoption of these approaches carries two, often overlapping outcomes. The first relates to the preservation and affirmation of the obvious, uncontentious, and 'necessary' qualities attached to policy proposals, thus firmly rooting the position of practitioner-researchers as receptive agents of implementation. The second encompasses the preservation of taken-for-granted assumptions pertaining to the meaning and value of music education which precede and underpin all curricular and pedagogical contentions. As a result, music education research continues to operate within echo chambers that restrict the space afforded to practitioners for participating in policy, and limit spaces for seeking and pursuing alternatives to established curricular practices.

Within this research project, I have sought to disrupt these echo chambers by reconsidering the 'necessities' through which they function. As an important first step, I have

engaged with alternatives to the taken-for-granted approaches to policy in order to pluralise how policy is known and identify other possibilities for understanding and researching its practices. I have drawn particular attention to the utility of a 'discursive approach' in this regard, and how Michel Foucault's theoretical work and its application serve as useful conceptual and methodological tools for analysing the taken-for-granted. Drawing on the conceptual and analytic possibilities afforded by Foucauldian poststructuralism, I have proposed the work of Carol Bacchi, Susan Goodwin, and Jessica Bonham as particularly useful frameworks for such analyses. I have shown how the non-conventional ways in which these authors approach policy and interview research present salient opportunities for disrupting echo chambers and have exemplified how these can be used to analyse the relationship between proposals and acts of implementation more specifically.

I have scrutinised two sets of interrelated proposals put forward through the 'Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment, Music' (2015) and the 'Secondary Education Certificate' examination syllabus for music (2023). In a bid to politicise policy proposals, I have argued that the 'Learning Outcomes Framework' proposed within the EGPA: Music document, as well as the 'problems' it claims to respond to, are shaped by a framework of assumptions derived from an 'advanced liberal' rationality. These assumptions function to configure how people make sense of the challenges and opportunities afforded by contemporary material conditions, and the corresponding practices necessary to contend with them successfully. I have therefore argued that while these assumptions are represented as universal and uncontentious, they are rooted in contingent histories of practice, and could therefore be considered otherwise. More importantly for music education, this analysis sheds light on how these proposals enable music education to operate through taken-for-granted continuities and universalisms. Through the analysis of the SEC: Music document, I have argued that as a result of such practices, the normative position of 'western classical music',

as the dominant framework for attributing meaning and value to music and music education,

is preserved. I have also argued that learning outcomes defined through this framework are

contingent on a framework of assumptions that have functioned to shape its dominant

position within Maltese music education. In discussing the effects that follow, I have asserted

that the proposals put forward within both documents function to exclude, marginalise, and

devalue learners whose subjectivities, practices, and perspectives stand at odds with 'western

classical music' and the assumptions through which it functions. Drawing attention to

marginalised perspectives, I claim that alternative approaches to understanding contemporary

challenges, opportunities, and the practices 'necessary' to contend with them successfully,

provide useful tools for reconsidering the adequacy of proposals for change and their

implementation.

Here, it is important to reiterate two important considerations that relate to the

implications and objectives of the proposed analysis. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge

that the 'necessities' identified within this analysis are not limited to music education in

Malta. As I have argued in my analysis, the proposals put forward within the EGPA: Music

and the SEC: Music documents are shaped by globalised practices with an extensive

historical legacy and a broad span of influence. Therefore, while this analysis is invariably

shaped according to the idiosyncrasies that constitute curricular policy and music education

in Malta, its outcomes may resonate with contexts of practice that extend beyond the Maltese

context, and beyond music education. Secondly, it is important to highlight that, this analysis

is not only oriented towards problematising the content of policy and music education

proposals *per se*. Arguably, there is nothing intrinsically 'problematic' about the use of

'learning outcomes' within programme design. Nor is there anything fundamentally

problematic about curricular practices structured by the bodies of knowledge through which

'western classical music' operates, or through which any other conceptual framework

operates, for that matter. What I deem to be problematic are the obvious, uncontentious, and universal qualities attributed to these proposals, and more specifically, the ways they operate as taken-for-granted and tacit forms of justification that shape possibilities for thought, and stifle possibilities for thinking. Therefore, the objective of this analysis is not to convince curriculum designers, educators, and researchers to dispose of these proposals altogether, but rather to question their taken-for-granted and universal qualities.

It is important to acknowledge that, while I draw on 'marginalised' frameworks to reconsider problem representations and the conditions of possibility these offer for reconceptualising music education, I do not present concrete alternatives to the proposals put forward within either of the primary texts under analysis. This stands in tension with conventional policy analysis, which typically operates under the presumption that the ultimate purpose of such critical projects is to identify and advocate for 'better' alternatives. The absence of such attempts within this research project is purposeful and can be elaborated by reference to two primary reasons. The first relates to the theoretical stance I have chosen to adopt. As I have argued in Chapter 3, Foucauldian poststructuralism leads us to consider that problems are not objective qualities of reality. Hence, analysts' claims to knowing these problematic qualities are not considered to be descriptive (in spite of the evidence they may invoke to legitimate such claims) but are rather understood to reflect the discursive possibilities available for making sense of something as problematic. The impossibility of knowing problems objectively implies the parallel impossibility of defining singular and absolute solutions to any given problem. Hence, rather than advocating for alternative solutions, poststructuralism implores us to occupy analytic spaces which are detached from the absolute ends proffered by problem-solving.

The second reason relates to the primary objective which has driven this research project: unsettling the various 'necessities' occupying the space within which music

education and policy interact. Among these 'necessities' are the taken-for-granted position that policy occupies within educational research and curricular practices; the common-sense ways in which music education practitioners engage with policy; the taken-for-granted status attributed to policy proposals and their unidirectional relationship with sites of implementation; and perhaps most significantly, the various ontological, epistemological, and ideological assumptions which these 'necessities' preserve. In response, to these 'necessities'. I have sought to visibilise and scrutinise the various ways in which their taken-for-granted position limits our capacity to consider music education through different lenses. More importantly, I have sought to highlight how an understanding of their political (and hence *un*-necessary) qualities may bolster the music educator-researchers' ability to critically contend with their constitutive properties and displace their hegemonic position.

Despite this choice, I do not negate the importance of rethinking 'problematic' proposals and pursuing less 'problematic' alternatives. Indeed, section 5.4 operationalises my commitment to addressing the inadequacies of existing proposals and locating alternative frameworks which may bring about less deleterious effects. However, as my analysis has shown, dominant problem representations operate through complex webs of institutional, structural, and inter-subjective relationships, my analysis has shown that these are too easily subsumed within dominant conceptual frameworks. Therefore, we must not be content with spurious critiques and straightforward solutions. Attempts to displace 'necessities' must be collaborative, coordinated, and well-equipped to contend with the complexities through which they are sustained. The analyses and contentions I have put forward should not be considered to fulfil an end in themselves. Rather, they represent the first step within a broader project oriented towards cultivating a more conscious, critical, and sceptical eye towards the taken-for-granted. In this spirit, I shall propose various 'threads' which emerge out of this research project and which others may pursue and address through further research.

<u>Recommendations for Further Research</u>

The 'necessities' addressed occupy several sites of practice which include but go beyond those analysed within this research project. These include policy texts which precede, succeed, and accompany the EGPA:Music. As illustrated in my analysis, policy texts do not replace one another, but exist and operate simultaneously, shaping and reshaping the conditions of possibility within which each is formed and understood. This interwoven relationship leads us to consider that 'necessities' are sustained, distributed, and disrupted across the policy ensembles within which they appear. By analysing other policy texts, researchers may cultivate a better understanding of the complexities through which dominant conceptual frameworks operate, evolve, and sustain their presence. One example of a text which may serve as a fruitful site for analysis is the 'National Education Strategy 2024-2030', which was drafted shortly after the completion of this research project. Its exclusive reference to the arts as *'a specialised area of studies'* which deserves *'further recognition'* (Vella and Borg Saliba 2024, 54) offers a useful point of entry for scrutinising contemporary conceptualisations of music education. Furthermore, it is important to consider that policy does not only encompass legislated text, but includes those texts which are written in response to legislation and which function to mediate between its proposals and micro-contexts of practice (Ball 2006). These include documents penned by the national Educational Officer for music, Heads of Department, as well as school leadership teams seeking to offer guidance to educators. Such texts similarly serve as important sites for analysis.

In my analysis, I have argued that the position of dominant conceptual frameworks is sustained by complex webs of institutional practices and upheld by the authority and legitimacy attached to them. For example, the proposals put forward by the SEC: Music syllabus are significant because they constitute the only formal pathway available to state

secondary school students for pursuing music as a subject of study within post-secondary and tertiary levels. Compounded by its institutional position (the syllabus board forms part of the MATSEC unit within the University of Malta), it is safe to say that its proposals hold fundamental connections within post-secondary and tertiary levels of study. Hence, those prescriptive texts shaping music, music education, and professional development programs at these levels form important sites for analysis. By locating commonalities, connections, contradictions, and tensions across various sites of institutional practice, such analyses would serve as a useful resource for locating institutional echo-chambers and resources for disruption. As argued by Bacchi (2009), the significance of proposals lies not in their content, but in the various ways they impact the day-to-day lives of their subjects. The author draws particular attention to concepts and categories as useful sites for scrutinising how dominant frameworks shape people's understandings and experiences. In my analysis, I scrutinise assessment and accountability, ability and potential, gift and talent, as well as competence, arguing that the political ways in which their meaning is configured carry limiting and marginalising impacts on music educators and learners. Concepts which have assumed a common-sense position within contemporary policy vocabulary and rhetoric (such as 'social justice', 'equity', and 'critical education') may serve as particularly useful sites for scrutinising the constitutive qualities of policy.

Such analyses may offer an important foundation for contemplating the material effects which ensue. As argued by Bacchi and Goodwin (2016), empirical methods and theoretical perspectives outside poststructuralism may aid in extending such analyses further. Interpretivism, for example, enables analysts to grapple with the situated perspectives and lived experiences of policy subjects. Theoretical eclecticism may enable analysts to cultivate a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the 'necessities' that occupy their fields of practice. Theoretical lenses other than poststructuralism can also be helpful in locating

conceptual frameworks which stand in tension with, and challenge the dominant position of 'necessities'. For example, interpretivism draws attention to the pluralism embedded in the various ways in which educators may interpret, translate, and enact policy proposals (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2011), as well as the situated perspectives in which music learners already know, understand, and do music. These sites of research enable access to alternative epistemic frameworks, as well as practices of appropriation and subversion, which may offer strong opportunities for opposition and re-conceptualisation.

In its attempts to locate alternatives, Foucauldian poststructuralism shifts our analytic gaze from subjective perspectives to the *'twists and turns'* of history, claiming that *'records of discontinuity'* offer useful resources for dissent (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016, 46). In my analysis, I argue that, while limited, historical inquiry pertaining to music education in Malta preserves the exclusive status of 'western classical music'. As argued by Benedict (2009), the ways in which we tell stories about our past carry a substantial impact on how we understand our present and how we are able to act upon it. In light of Malta's complex colonial history, genealogical research offers a salient analytic resource for unsettling the 'necessities' attached to 'western classical music' and locating the various marginalised alternatives which form part of our past. A useful example can be found in the work of Sant Cassia (1989), whose commentary on traditional 'Għana' music leads us to reconsider the contemporary sanitisation of music education from politics.

As I have shown in my analysis, the various epistemological, normative, and metaphysical assumptions that structure dominant frameworks (such as 'western classical music') are fundamentally tied to established pedagogical and curricular practices. Therefore, the alternatives we seek must include conceptual and theoretical tools which enable educator-researchers to envision music education outside these established practices. Existing music education scholarship offers a plethora of resources in this regard. Noteworthy examples

include Juliet Hess's conceptualisation of the *'rhizomatic curriculum'* as an alternative to the hierarchies established by ethnocentrism (2015), as well as the author's later work on a *'discomfortable'* approach to music education, which calls on educators to embrace 'musics' on their own terms and embrace the *'epistemic ruptures'* which ensue (2018). Kanellopoulos's work (2016) on the complexities of knowledge and power which sustain ethnocentric models of music education is similarly provoking, and offers helpful conceptual tools for seeking epistemic equality within the classroom. Such conceptual tools offer fruitful resources for re-conceptualising music education and the 'necessities' through which it operates.

Conclusion

As I have argued in the introductory chapter, this research project is inextricably tied to my own identity. The forms of subjectivity I have occupied across most of my life have been tethered to the very assumptions I have sought to trouble. Since my formative music education was shaped within formal institutions that operate exclusively through theoretical and conceptual knowledge derived from 'western classical music', the ways by which I have known and valued music were fundamentally tied to this framework. This intimate relationship with 'western classical music' was sustained through postgraduate education within university departments and 'conservatoires' whose practices have historically preserved and perpetuated corresponding traditions and cultural practices. These include the very institution within which I have undertaken this research project. Owing to my relationship with the field of practice I sought to scrutinise, the process of unsettling 'necessities' implied troubling what I had known, what I believed to be true, and the very institutional structures within which I had cultivated my identity and found my success. Needless to say, this process carried profoundly unsettling implications for myself and my day-to-day practices. The very process of accepting, embracing, and pursuing the possibility

that what is known can and perhaps should be known otherwise, is deeply challenging. It encompasses a process of grappling with complexities that occupy spaces of intersection, and that are not particularly amenable to conceptual tidiness. This points to the need for rigour in grappling with these complexities, as well as robust conceptual tools and techniques that may assist in this process. While this thesis presents a formalised snapshot of what transpired to be a messy, iterative, and open-ended process, it is hoped that the conceptual tools adopted, elaborated and proposed serve as useful scaffolds and provocations for further research.

The process of unsettling 'necessities' is not an end in itself. Rather, it represents a crucial first step towards cultivating and shaping a field of practice that operates on the basis of carefully considered analyses rather than taken-for-granted 'necessities'. As aptly argued by Focuault:

> *These pre-existing forms of continuity, all these syntheses that are accepted without question, must remain in suspense. They must not be rejected definitively, but the tranquillity with which they are accepted must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinized; we must define in what conditions and in view of which analyses certain of them are legitimate; and we must indicate which of them can never be accepted in any circumstances.* (Foucault 1972, 25-26)

Foucault's work highlights that sceptical and dispassionate approaches to analysis represent an important tool in pursuing forms of practice that do not operate according to what *has* and what *ought* to be, but on the basis of self-conscious understandings pertaining to what *is*, what *can* be, and what kinds of realities these shape for different populations of people. Poststructuralism leads us to consider that whichever way we may choose to practice music

education carries a constitutive impact on different people, and that these constitutive effects need to be considered (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). Furthermore, by drawing attention to the plurality of possible ways we may choose to grapple with music education, poststructuralism leads us to consider that we must always be open to the possibility of alternative practices that may carry less deleterious effects (ibid). Therefore, we must seek a conceptual and analytic space that not only resists the possibility of a music education that can be definite, absolute, or final but embraces the opportunities which this open-endedness affords to practitioner-researchers. Here, it is important to highlight that resisting the possibility of finality does not imply suspending action. Rather, it implies the need to cultivate a more active role for inquiry in informing, scrutinising, and guiding day-to-day practices. These enable us to recast music education in different and possibly more creative ways, invariably being attentive to the effects that these possibilities carry. Ultimately, cultivating such spaces for inquiry represents an important and long overdue step towards pursuing more critical, self-conscious, and unsettled fields of practice for music education in Malta.

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<u>Appendices</u>

<u>Appendix 1: Sample Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form</u>

Research Participation (Informed Consent)

Connecting Music Education: Understanding policy and practice in the context of a recently launched educational framework in Malta

INVITATION

You are being invited to take part in my research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me/us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. You will be given this information sheet to keep. Thank you for reading this.

PROJECT

This study is part of a doctoral research project which attempts to evaluate the ways by which educational policy produces boundaries which define how music and music education are thought about and done in Maltese schools, particularly at SEC level. The project is made up of two main elements: the analysis of policy and related syllabus documents, and research interviews. This study shall contribute to the research project through a set of interviews with 'educators' and 'learners'. These interviews aim to shed light on the boundaries within which music and music education are thought about and done in schools, as well as the ways in which these boundaries evolve.

PARTICIPANTS

This study seeks contribution from a music 'educator' and a Year 9 'learner' from each state secondary school. Given that this study situates particular interest in SEC level music education, educators teaching SEC music at Year 9 will be given priority.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

It is up to you to decide if you want to take part in my project or not. If you don't want to take part, or you change your mind about taking part, having agreed to do so, you won't be penalized in any way. If you do decide to consent to taking part, you will be asked to give your consent by ticking the appropriate boxes in the section below. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. You can withdraw either by leaving the interview and/or by withdrawing consent for me to use whatever contribution you have already made to the research. Again, you won't be penalized in any way.

NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

You are invited to participate in a 30-minute interview set-up at mutually convenient times between January and February 2022. Interviews will be conducted through an online

platform such as Zoom, Teams and Google Meet. With your consent, interviews will be audio-recorded for data collection purposes only. Recordings will be transcribed and analysed as part of the data collection process. These will only be accessible to the researcher and the supervisor. Any logistical details will be mutually agreed at the start of the study.

LIFESTYLE RESTRICTIONS

You are not likely to experience any lifestyle restrictions as a result of taking part in this project.

POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS

There are no foreseeable risks for participants of this project.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS

While people taking part in my project are unlikely to experience any personal benefits as a result, this research provides participants with an opportunity to contribute to the development of Maltese music education. Given that research pertaining to music education (particularly at SEC level) is limited, your contribution will be particularly valuable.

POSSIBLE TERMINATION OF RESEARCH

Should the research project be terminated for any reasons and you and/or the contribution you have made are no longer required for the research, you shall be informed of termination, its reasons and what will happen to any already-collected data.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

Information that is collected about you, for the purposes of the research, will be kept strictly confidential. The only time that confidentiality would be broken is in the event that you disclose risk of immediate harm to yourself or others in which case I may need to discuss this with my supervisor. Information you provide will be anonymised. Any information you provide will be anonymised. Research participants shall be able to access, rectify or erase the data concerning them according to the Data Protection Act Chapter 586 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU2016/679).

STORING PERSONAL DATA AND INFORMATION

Your personal data and any information that you provide for the purposes of the research will be securely stored on a password-protected hard-drive for 10 years and will only be accessible to the researcher and his tutors. If I wish to re-use it within this time period, I will seek your permission to do so. At the end of the period it will be destroyed.

OUTPUTS

The final dissertation may also be shared internally at the RCM and/or with the general public through RCM Research Online. Findings may also be disseminated through journal articles and conference papers/presentations.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This project has been reviewed and granted ethical approval by representatives of the RCM Research Ethics Committee (REC) and the MEDE Research Ethics Committee (MREC).

CONTACT DETAILS

Name of researcher: Samuel Mallia

Institutional Affiliation: Royal College of Music

Institutional email: samuel.mallia@rcm.ac.uk

Name of supervisor: Mary Stakelum

Institutional Affiliation: Royal College of Music

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* Indicates required question

Please provide your e-mail address *

Your answer

Please read each statement carefully and tick the box if you agree. *

☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet above for a research project in which I have been asked to take part and I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time without giving any reason.

☐ I give the researcher permission to collect information about me and from me for the purposes of the research project, provided all information about me will be kept confidential, stored securely and destroyed after 10 years.

☐ I consent to take part in the above-named study.

☐ I give the researcher permission to audio-record the interview.

In which school do you teach? *

Your answer

Information Sheet

☐ I would like to be sent a copy of the information sheet.