

**MUSIC THEORY PEDAGOGY IN MALTA:
Implications for Practice in Higher Education from the
Perspectives of Teachers, Lecturers and Students**

by

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Thesis submitted
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2022

ABSTRACT

This study examines insights concerning teachers' and students' perspectives, strategies and experiences of music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education in Malta.

Inspired by a combination of approaches (case study, constructivist-interpretivist), the research aimed to provide an empirical exploration of music theory teaching at the Malta School of Music (MSM), whilst acting as a backbone, to the researcher's design and structure of two study guides for the higher theory grades. Findings from the empirical part of the study suggest distinctive core skills for all music theory learners in Higher Education. These are aural and sight singing skills, analysis skills, part-writing and composing skills, keyboard harmony and improvisation skills. The theoretical framework has also identified approaches that music theory teachers could adopt for effective teaching such as student-centred and inquiry-based learning, using a variety of music repertoire, adopting creative digital technologies, connecting theory with practice and assessment through portfolios. In particular, responses from the participants in the study suggest that active listening, keyboard harmony and improvisation, analysis through a variety of repertoire, student-centred approach that encourage the students' creative voice in composition, the connection of theory with practice, digital technologies and the organisation of the portfolio assessment were all underscored as being pivotal in the students' musical development.

The thesis concludes with recommendations on the content and ways of teaching of music theory in Higher Education directed at helping students to connect actively with the subject in a pragmatic and enjoyable way. Besides the written submission, the

separate portfolio submission also includes sample material from the final versions of the music theory guides for Grades VII and VIII that the researcher has created, which will form part of the forthcoming music theory workbooks, compiled by the researcher upon the request of the Maltese Government.

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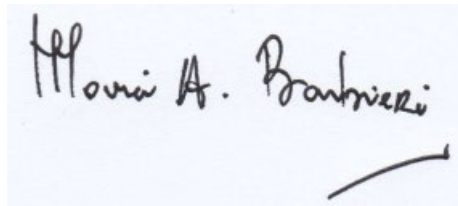
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CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify this work is original and has not previously been submitted in whole or part by me or any other person for any qualification or award in any university. I further certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief, these research papers contain no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the papers themselves.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature reads "Maria A. Barbieri" in a cursive script. There is a small flourish or underline at the end of the signature.

Date: January 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Maria Varvarigou: There is no better supervisor. You illuminated my pathway to this dissertation and helped me in every stage of it. You kept on monitoring, advising and editing my work....never for a moment did I feel abandoned. You knew exactly what to say, and not what to say with impeccable timing. Your confidence in me and your kind words of encouragement have been of immense help. My success in the completion of my dissertation would not have been possible without your support. Your expert guidance, not only as a PhD supervisor, but as one of the leading academics in music education has challenged me to think further, to work harder and provided the right opportunities for me to grow further. I will forever be grateful for your incredible support....I feel so lucky to have been guided by you.

Professor Robert Rawson: I would also like to thank the *Chair of Studies* for his constant support, availability and constructive suggestions which were crucial for the completion of the work presented in this thesis.

Miss Mary Anne Cauchi: I am especially grateful to my friend Mary Anne Cauchi who convinced me to initiate this journey. My sincere and heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to a wonderful friend. Undertaking this PhD has been a truly life-changing experience, but you believed in me and supported me throughout.

Malta Music School: I am ever so grateful to all the teaching staff, to Ms. Odette Chetcuti who during the academic year 2018-2019 was the co-ordinator at the Malta school of Music, and to my students in Higher Education. Thank you for attending the

workshop, the professional development session and for furnishing me with skills for future academic research. Special thanks to MAVC College Principal Mr. Victor Galea who supported me in my journey by his kindness, concern, help and support.

University of Malta: Thank you to the Dean of the Faculty of Education, the Head of Department and to all my colleagues in the Department of Arts, Open Communities and Adult Education. I would like to express my gratitude also to the lecturers from the Department of Music Studies within the Faculty of Performing Arts, for sharing information about their teaching, musical activities and the difficulties confronted in music theory teaching and learning. Your enthusiasm, and scholarly expertise continue to inspire me and fill my life with joy and music.

Malta Arts Scholarship: Thank you to Malta Arts Scholarship. Your generosity will not go unappreciated.

My family: Finally, my deep and sincere gratitude to my family for their continuous and unparalleled love, help, encouragement and support. I am grateful to my soulmate Luke for always being there for me to listen, discuss and help. I am forever indebted to my mum for giving me the opportunities and experiences that have made me who I am. I am grateful to Andreas and Matthias for their constant love and support. Thank you all! Through your moral support I could concentrate on my research and successfully complete this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

PRELUDE

In 2016, The National College of Further Education (NCFHE) proposed new teaching and learning material for the Malta Music School's theory department. The idea behind the initiative proposed, was that students need to engage more in music theory learning through actual music making. Being the only teacher teaching the higher grades, I was asked by the Board of Studies of the Malta Music School to design and compile two study guides for our theory students attending the higher grades. With this objective in mind, I travelled to London, in February, 2016, to participate in the Music Education Expo. Additionally, in April, 2018, I travelled to Riga, Latvia where I undertook a mobility activity for job shadowing under the Erasmus+ programme. At the Jazepa Vitola Latvian Academy of Music, I was a participant during music composition classes at the academy. In September, 2016 I was ready to embark on the research needed before I could actually work on the project. It is hoped that music theory teachers and students are presented with a scholarly framework aimed at promoting and enhancing the development of listening, creating, thinking and performing skills. These four areas of music theory have been extensively studied as part of the research, the outcome of which helped me to design and structure the study guides as proposed by the Maltese Government.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The examination body – ABRSM – published a book in 2009: *Raising an amazing musician: You, your child and music*. In this book, music theory is described as ‘the “nuts and bolts” of how music works, the way in which music is written and constructed, its rules and its language, what the signs and symbols mean and how to interpret them’ (ABRSM, 2009, p. 49). Music theory comprises an important component of the education of western classical music learners across all levels of education – from elementary school to conservatories and academies (Karafillidis, 2011). Karafillidis (2011) argues that through music theory the learners acquire the tools to understand western classical music and the language to communicate their musical ideas. For example, they explore notational representations of sound, they analyse them, and they study their stylistic and historical context. Despite the fact that music theory is a core element of music teaching curricula in Malta, a country with a very rich tradition in western classical music, there has been no research to date that explores music theory teaching and learning in the Maltese Islands. This thesis focuses specifically on music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education in the Maltese Islands through the example of the Malta School of Music, known henceforth as MSM.

1.2 THE MALTA SCHOOL OF MUSIC (MSM)

According to its website, the MSM:

‘strives to help each student achieve the highest potential in playing proficiency, performance, creativity, and musicianship through a number

of stimulating effective and individualized music programmes and distinctive opportunities'.¹

MSM was established in 1975 and it has been one of the most effective governmental schools in nurturing and promoting music performance and artistic activities. Over the years, thousands of students have attended music lessons at the school and many of them have pursued music studies both locally and abroad. The main objective of the school is to prepare students for careers as creative musicians and performers who can successfully contribute to the further development and evolution of the musical heritage of Malta. The MSM forms part of the Mikiel Anton Vassalli College, which is the national network of specialised schools for Visual and Performing Arts education in Malta and Gozo. Some of the most accomplished Maltese musicians and pedagogues, are members of staff who strive to provide an approach to music training that reflects and engages the students to achieve their highest potential by offering the highest quality music instruction and performance opportunities in an intensive music professional education. For example, the students can perform varied repertoire in a chamber setting and/or as part of various ensembles and participate in performances both at school and in venues around the island throughout the year. Some of these ensembles include the 'cello, clarinet, flute, guitar, saxophone and violin ensembles, jazz combos, and the wind band. Furthermore, the school often invites foreign tutors to provide masterclasses and workshops for students and teachers in which 'new approaches and methodologies are experienced and explored'(from the website).

The MSM offers 41 different courses, which cater for the young learner and for the advanced student, recognized by the European Qualifications Council from Level One up to Level Five. Students at the school attend a weekly individual performance lesson

¹<http://mikielantonvassallicollege.gov.mt/> retrieved on 21/12/2021

on the instrument of their choice as well as a group music theory lesson. The school caters for the study of practically all orchestral instruments as well as bagpipes, accordion, saxophone, contemporary guitar, contemporary voice, bass guitar, pianoforte, and classical voice. In addition to the study of the traditional concert repertoire, students are encouraged to work on various styles including contemporary, jazz, and to study works by local composers.

All music performance courses are combined with the theoretical and historical background gained during the music theory lessons known at the school as Music Knowledge and Understanding, hereafter referred to simply as ‘music theory’. Music theory comprises aural cognition and perception, part-writing, voice leading, and counterpoint, musical history, orchestration, analysis, sight singing and improvisation and it involves a wide range of strategies and approaches for building up the students’ musical skills.

The MSM respects and values the worth of each student, offering individualized and differentiated programmes in the pursuit of knowledge and learning through experience. Students, staff, and administration are able to express ideas to one another in meetings and in conversations. This gives each member of staff and each student equal participation in creating an atmosphere, which allows for creativity and establishes the right environment wherein students, staff and administration have an understanding of the goals that need to be targeted and what needs to be done to accomplish such goals. This helps all the members of staff to achieve a better understanding of the needs of our school as a community whose individual members are a source of creative energy in a diverse and ever-changing musical world. The academics at the school of music are very proud of the students’ various accomplishments over the years and look forward to more years of creative output.

Lessons in music theory at the MSM are delivered by teachers qualified in performance, composition or musicology who offer individualized and differentiated tuition in the pursuit of knowledge and learning through experience. To date, teachers who teach music theory rely solely on textbooks of foreign boards, namely the London College of Music, the Trinity College of Music and The Royal Schools of Music. The school has now obtained full accreditation from the National Council of Higher Education in Malta. This council had advised the Board of Studies at the MSM to address the issue of compiling study guides for music theory for the school and for Maltese music teachers in general.

1.3 THE RESEARCHER

I have been teaching music theory at the MSM for forty years and at present I am the only teacher in the MSM teaching music theory at Grades VII and VIII. Through personal experience and discussions with other music theory teachers, I have come to realise that music theory teaching can be taxing because for some educators it can mean teaching a set of difficult and complex rules that do not seem to have any relevance to what they view as actual music making. Although English and other international books are available locally to assist the pedagogue and the student in content matter, especially those students in the higher grades, teaching is often very idiosyncratic and this might negatively impact music learners' motivation to engage in music theory learning. In an effort to make music theory teaching more accessible to teachers and learners I was invited by the Board of Studies of the MSM to compile workbooks, hereafter referred to as study guides, for music theory Grades VII and VIII. My aim for the two music theory study guides was to create resources that are accessible and inclusive but also that make use of the works of established Maltese composers such Pace, Vella, Isouard, Nani and

Francesco Azzopardi amongst others. The study guides are intended to offer Maltese students a rich and multi-layered experience in learning music theory skills required for careers as professional musicians and composers. The study guides are also intended to provide teachers and students with a scholarly framework of pedagogical methods which promote and enhance the development of skills such as listening, creating, thinking and performing. These four areas of music theory practice and scholarship for example, listening, creating, thinking and performing have been studied extensively as part of this research study. This research study, therefore, is being undertaken as a backbone, the outcome of which will help in designing and structuring the two study guides for the higher theory grades.

Before developing the actual teaching material it is important, therefore, to consider teachers' and learners' *perceptions* around music theory as a field of study and its relevance to music making in the twenty-first century. In addition, it is worth considering the *challenges* that teachers and learners have so far confronted when studying music theory. Finally, it is salient to consider what musical *experiences* could contribute to music theory teaching and learning. Perceptions, challenges and experiences have been investigated in this study with a particular focus on Higher Education. Ultimate aim for me, as a music theory teacher and prospective author of the two study guides, was to create an integrated course in music theory for the higher grades, featuring non-Western musics, twentieth-century music and Maltese compositions that equip music theory learners with skills and knowledge necessary for careers in music as well as engagement in music making across the lifecourse.

As a music theory teacher at MSM I would argue that music theory pedagogy in Higher Education at MSM experiences some or all of the following shortcomings:

1. It pursues traditional approaches and strategies to music theory teaching.

2. Music learners have limited opportunities to develop their artistic voice through music theory instruction, for instance through composing activities.
3. It lacks standardization of assessment in the component of sight singing.
4. It is not inclusive of diverse music literature aimed at enhancing students' knowledge of repertoire and analytical skills.
5. It gives limited weighting to keyboard harmony and improvisation.
6. Digital technologies are absent from teaching and learning.
7. It is devoid of making the subject of music theory relevant in the context of today's developments and practices.

This study addresses these core issues, some of which are also experienced by music theory teachers in the U.K, the U.S.A. and in Europe, as it emerges from the section that follows and a detailed literature review in Chapter 2.

1.4 ISSUES WITH MUSIC THEORY TEACHING

Whilst international music educators acknowledge the importance of a comprehensive pedagogy that incorporates composition, improvisation, popular music, and other informal and nonformal methods of instruction in music education (Green, 2002; Moore, 2014; Väkevä, 2006), music theory teaching and learning in the Maltese Islands remains focused on traditional modes of teaching. These modes prioritise western classical repertoire over other musical genres, and analysis of music scores over listening, creating, thinking and performing in music theory instruction.

Music theory is a compulsory subject for all students at MSM. Unfortunately, by adopting the traditional approaches mentioned above, music theory learners often find theory teaching of limited interest and relevance. For instance, MSM students fail to make the connection between the historical and stylistic contexts of the music that they perform

and the repertoire that they explore as part of music theory instruction. Activities such as composition, improvisation, sight singing and keyboard harmony are not integrated in music theory instruction, when these activities could actually enhance the learners' understanding of music theory and musical learning, in general. Unsurprisingly, students cannot draw connections between the music they listen to, regardless of genre (for instance, popular or film music) and concepts of music theory explored in the class. Collectively, students struggle to make a connection between theory and practice because these two disciplines have been taught separately during all the years of the students' musical education. Similarly, teachers at the MSM express a lack of consensus on the function of a music theory curriculum. For some teachers, the function of music theory is to provide conceptual knowledge and skills and to assist and reinforce the work of the vocal and instrumental teacher. For other teachers, the function of the music theory curriculum is to provide encouraging and reassuring support in aural and analytical skills.

One particular issue, which was prevalent in the U.S. in the mid-twentieth century and continues to resonate, is whether music theory, aural skills and keyboard harmony should be taught as an integrated comprehensive course or as separate courses. There has been a shift in curricular format in the mid-fifties favouring an integrated musical approach to teaching music theory (Cathey, 2015). Cathey's (2015) research argued for a curricular format where aural skills, music theory and keyboard harmony are taught as separate skills rather than an integrated approach, despite the fact that earlier music education research by Nelson (2002) revealed that relatively little emphasis is placed on keyboard harmony, when taught as a separate skill. More recently, in 2017, at the conference on music theory entitled *Pedagogy into Practice* that took place in Lee University, Cleveland, Tennessee it also emerged that few students in the twenty-first century find music theory relevant to their music studies. During this conference, the use

of digital technologies as a way of making music theory more relevant and engaging in the class was debated alongside the role and impact of popular music on music theory instruction. Finally, pedagogical issues such as the best teaching strategies to incorporate historical music theory in today's classroom, the variations among the types of music theory notation systems, the best ways to negotiate between 'classical' music, world music and recent popular genres and current streaming services such as Spotify and iTunes (see Appendix 6) and their effect on music theory pedagogy were explored (Conference Report *Pedagogy into Practice*, 2017. Jenkins & Ripley, 2017).

Overall, a variety of music theory scholars seem to agree that the motivation behind the pedagogical practices should be a priority in music theory teaching and learning. A few years earlier, Bain (2011) had argued that learners learn best when they solve problems that are intrinsically valuable and meaningful to them. On the one hand, therefore, there are issues such as which type of music theory notation should be used, whether theory teaching should follow a historical pattern – such as teaching the stylistic features of Chopin and Brahms before teaching the structures, styles and ideas of Palestrina or Bach and how can theory teachers negotiate film music and world music amongst others in their work. On the other hand, music theory teaching and learning should appear relevant to both the learners' and the teachers' musical interests. Laitz (2016) argues that students should not only come across such terms as octatonic, invertible counterpoint, species, ritornello form and so forth, but should also explore the compositional techniques that make these terms dynamic. He also stresses that today's restricted curricula limit model compositions in the theory class and improvisation in the aural class (Laitz, 2016).

With a focus on the music theory teachers, scholars such as Snodgrass (2017, p. 4) argue that music theory pedagogy is an area that calls for specialised training – 'the study of music theory pedagogy is a valuable subset of the discipline and a scholarly one

at that'. Snodgrass expresses the hope that music theory teachers continue to explore the motivations behind pedagogical practice and to reflect on the ways through which they can 'integrate deep learning in both [our] classrooms and scholarship' (Snodgrass, 2017, p.4). She argues for teaching *strategies* rather than content in the music theory classroom. Gauldin and Wennestrom (1989) specify three areas in music theory pedagogy that require specific attention: Firstly, a more robust pedagogy of analytical methods and compositional strategies should be developed. Secondly, music technology should be used to facilitate the development of aural skills and sight singing. Thirdly, are the pedagogical influences on theories of cognition as well as the implementation of experimental findings in perception. These have only recently begun to be explored in a systematic manner (Gauldin and Wennerstrom, 1989). Correspondingly, music theory teachers need to help students connect new knowledge with previous knowledge and musical experiences, evaluate students' progress and new knowledge, and banish the perception that music theory is the 'hardest' course in Higher Education (Follet, 2013).

Fournier *et al* (2009) expressed a strong view about engaging performance students with music theory in support of their performance studies. Clague *et al* (2009) underscored that music teachers should enable the students to establish a clear link between theory and the historical context of the repertoire they rehearse. Davidson and Lupton (2016) agree with Clague *et al* (2009) and reiterate that there is a serious disconnection between music theory programmes and real-world music practice. They argue that music theory should also embrace the study of contemporary musical compositions.

Music theory teachers are usually aware that technology can improve students' engagement and motivation by changing the structure of the traditional classroom. Music technology can offer opportunities for real-world application of an array of musical practices including listening, creating, thinking and performing. Therefore, music

technology should feature as a tool for learning in music theory instruction. Music theory in the twenty-first century classroom should reflect the digital technological developments and their impact on students' learning (Gouzouasis & Bakan, 2011). It is important that music theory teachers are aware of digital music applications and how they could be brought into the music theory classroom.

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study initially started as a practice-based research study. In the first year of the study, it became apparent that the material in question alone, that is, the compilation of the study guides, could not be developed and designed unless data on the experiences of music theory teaching and learning from different stakeholders, including teaching staff and students, was collected and analysed. A case study methodology was deemed appropriate, in that it enabled the researcher to closely explore and investigate the perceptions, strategies and experiences of other colleagues teaching music theory, as well as the perceptions, strategies and experiences of music students at grades VII and VIII level. The researcher's own experiences of teaching specific sample chapters during the academic year 2018 – 2019 and students' responses, updated and informed the study guides in light of the feedback received. Through the sample chapters delivered during the academic year 2018 – 2019, the researcher had the opportunity to plan and deliver each chapter of the study guide with her students, evaluate and analyze their responses after each chapter in order to generate new plans and make necessary amendments. It was considered appropriate to ask the students of the 2018 – 2019 cohort for their views on the sample chapters that were in the process of being developed. In that way, the students could contribute to the improvement of the chapters and indirectly the researcher could gauge their views on effective music theory teaching and learning. From the students'

feedback, the researcher could also extract the essential skills and approaches into developing the sample chapters which were being explored during that academic year at the MSM. The study guides in their final form, therefore, emerged as a collaborative process through direct and extensive interaction with the researcher's students and fellow teachers. Through the methodology adopted, the changes in music theory teaching and learning will only be introduced and put into practice after the research has been completed. The study guides served as a way of blending the research with practice, because concurrently with the study, the researcher has been consolidating the final version of the chapters and this could only be possible after the research had been conducted.

There are two interconnected strands to this research project. The first is an investigation of the perceptions, strategies and experiences of music theory teaching by individuals who teach music theory in the Maltese Islands. These individuals are music theory teachers, university lecturers and composers. The second strand is an exploration of the perceptions, strategies and experiences of music students at Grades VII and VIII at MSM. The three research questions, therefore are:

1. How do music theory teachers in the Maltese Islands perceive and relate to effective music theory teaching in Higher Education?
2. How do music theory students at MSM perceive and experience music theory teaching and learning?
3. How do effective music theory curricula in Higher education which respond to the needs of twenty-first century music students and teachers look like?

As already stated above, whilst this research was being conducted, the researcher introduced various chapters of the study guides in her teaching (More information on the

content and presentation of the study guides appear in the portfolio which is being submitted with the written submission). These chapters generated discussions on how music theory teaching at levels VII and VIII could respond to the needs and interests of the twenty-first century learners, which form part of the data of this study (see Chapter Six). Because these chapters form part of the author's original work on developing effective music theory curricula in Higher Education, they form part of this thesis submission. In other words, this thesis is a portfolio submission of two components: the written research and sample chapters from the study guides. Both components are original work of the author, they are interconnected material submitted together, and they both make a unique contribution to the area of music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, data was collected from teachers and students of one Higher Education institution in Malta, with one class of Grade VII and one of Grade VIII. Therefore, due to the small number of participants, the findings cannot necessarily be extrapolated on a bigger scale. Secondly, the population of the two classes was very diverse: sixteen year olds studied music theory alongside mature students aged fifty-eight . Therefore, the responses cannot be representative of all music theory classes in Higher Education, where there is usually a homogeneity in terms of the age of the students participating. A third limitation was that all composers and university lecturers interviewed were male. Currently, there are no female lecturers delivering composition lectures in the music department of the School of Performing Arts at the University of Malta. I hope that this will change in the years to come. Finally, the epistemological position of the researcher was rooted in an interpretivist approach. This in itself

determined the nature and the objectives of the approach. In this sense, the results of this dissertation could be deemed as biased. Nevertheless, the researcher's situational bias could in fact be the strongest advantage to this research as it allowed her access to all parties involved in planning, implementing and experiencing music theory teaching and learning. What is more, adequate monitoring by other theory teachers at MSM counterbalanced the researcher's situational bias in analysing and reporting the findings from this research.

1.7 THESIS OVERVIEW

This study is organised in eight chapters. Chapter One sets the scene of music theory teaching in the Maltese Islands. It presents some key issues around music theory teaching in Higher Education and it articulates the research questions that guided this study. The literature on music theory teaching and learning, with a particular focus on Higher Education, is reviewed in Chapter Two. Additionally, skills that ought to be developed as part of music theory teaching and specific approaches to effective music theory learning that emerged from this literature review and formed the basis of a theoretical framework on effective music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education are presented. Chapter Three connects philosophical perspectives on effective music education with music theory instruction in Higher Education. These perspectives are significant in reinforcing the discourse on the use of specific teaching and learning approaches. A proposed theoretical framework on effective music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education is presented at the end of Chapter Three. This framework provided a structure for the analysis of the data collected as part of this study. Chapter Four presents the philosophical paradigm, the role of the researcher and her teaching philosophy, the research methodology and the research methods adopted by this study. A case study

approach was applied to the MSM music theory programme for Grades VII and VIII. Individual and focus group interviews were the methods used for the generation of the data. Chapter Five presents an analysis of the responses from composer-teachers, music lecturers and music teachers, all referred to as music theory teachers. Chapter Six presents an analysis of the responses from music theory students at MSM. Chapter Seven presents a detailed discussion of the findings of the current study. The concluding chapter, Chapter Eight, presents a summary of the findings, examines the implications of the study and offers a way forward for further research on music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education in the Maltese Islands and internationally.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW: MUSIC THEORY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CONTEXT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores current issues in music theory teaching and learning. It also identifies and discusses the components of an effective music theory curriculum in Higher Education as these have emerged from a detailed review of scholarly work on music theory. Finally, it details effective approaches in music theory teaching in Higher Education. The review is organised under the following themes: (1) current issues in music theory teaching and learning; (2) the music theory curriculum; and (3) approaches to teaching the music theory curriculum.

To begin with, Cherlin (2000) argues that students find no relevance in learning music theory because they cannot apply the knowledge in everyday music practice. Therefore, helping learners find relevance in understanding the theory behind practical music making, is a compelling challenge for music theory teaching. Davidson and Lupton (2016) affirm that there exists a serious disconnection between Higher Education music programmes and real-world music practice. In line with this, critics of music theory argue that music theory components are suited to a restricted area of music, namely, ‘common practice’ western art music. In their comprehensive review, Davidson and Lupton (2016) assert that new times call for new ideas, such as music theory courses taking account of a variety of musical genres. Wason (2002) states that music theory courses have avoided contemporary music and have drawn back to historical approaches. Wason encourages educators to make music theory a relevant subject.

On the contrary, Snodgrass (2018) underscores that there seems to be a renewed interest in teaching music theory on the part of music theory teachers. This interest has resulted from an array of pedagogical approaches and textbooks as well as through great advancements in music technology which have found their way into the music theory classroom, especially in Higher Education. Current curriculum development and pedagogy debates have critiqued traditional curricula on music theory as being too archaic and anachronistic (see Davidson & Lupton, 2016 for a comprehensive review). New approaches to music theory teaching that incorporate performing, composing, arranging and improvising with music theory, aural training and history (see Davidson & Lupton, 2016 for a comprehensive review) manifest pluralism, reflect diversity, reject the theory of ‘tyranny of the canon’ (McKenry, 2013, p. 133), and promote the notion of acquiring music theory knowledge in an enjoyable way.

2.2 CURRENT ISSUES IN MUSIC THEORY TEACHING AND LEARNING

The 2011 National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) specified the broad goals in teaching music theory – namely ‘to think in music, to read, write and perform music with understanding, to contribute to artistry’ (as cited by Marvin, NASM, 2012, p.255). Current discourse on music theory pedagogies revolves around the function of music theory and on the content of an effective music theory curriculum.

On the function of music theory, some researchers argue that music theory is to act as a support to students’ performance studies. For example, Karafillidis (2011) stresses that knowing the historical and stylistic context of an excerpt that a student is practising, can help the student to provide a faithful and artistic interpretation of this excerpt. Unfortunately, performance studies are currently taught separately from theoretical studies. Instrumental teachers seem to be the ones who need to take the

initiative to show their students how music can assist with critical listening and also how knowledge of music theory enhances musical understanding and experiences (London, 1990; Page-Shipp & Niekerk, 2014).

Moreover, with reference to the function of music theory, Marvin (1994) stressed that theory classes should nurture students' intrinsic motivation in learning music by focusing on the practical application of harmony in the analysis of music literature and by encouraging students to create stylistic compositions and to perform them. Marvin (1994, p. 47), claims that 'students learn better when motivated by their own intrinsic motivation in a subject, rather than by external systems of rewards and punishments'. She added that music students are usually highly motivated to excel as performers, but they do not always see the connection between what is done in the music classroom and their performance on the concert stage. This opinion is echoed by Fournier (2009, p. 142), who emphasised that most students in Higher Education already display an interest in their music studies but they do not always 'position theory instruction at the core of musical education'. So a strong argument is developing that music theory tutors need to make connections between students' performance and theoretical foundations to boost music theory learners' motivation to engage in music theory teaching and learning. It is argued that this could be achieved by developing students' comprehensive musicianship (Marvin, 1994), through harmonic and formal analysis of music literature, directed listening, part-writing, composing, in-class performance and discussion.

Music theory tutors that foster and promote students' intrinsic motivation, target their teaching on practical applications of harmony study, focusing mostly on the analysis of music literature in stylistic composition and in performance. This consideration is echoed by Bribitzer-Stull (2003) who agrees with Marvin specifying that the most effective way to promote motivation for performers, is also through analysis. Furthermore, Fournier (2009) is of the opinion that intrinsic motivation has to be fostered

by analysing the actual repertoire being practised by the students themselves in the performance class. Fournier (2009, p.143) explains that real performances of the repertoire by the students ‘forge a tangible link between music theory and performance’. In addition, analysis of works of upcoming performances and attending these performances as a class, can enhance students’ motivation. Furthermore, Fournier insists that the historical and cultural aspects of the music being analysed must not be overlooked. All excerpts from musical repertoire discussed in the music theory class need to be linked, where possible, to their historical and cultural origin. Marvin (1994) suggested specific experiences and discussions in the theory class which can connect music theory and the performance aspect. For instance, making students aware of the powerful effect of melodic decoration in the repertoire of their own instrument, illustrating the distinctive colour in approaching the dominant chord through the Neapolitan sixth chord, and voice-leading patterns that prolong the tonic are specified by Marvin as examples which connect the musical theoretical concepts to interpretive decisions in performance. To sum up, embedding performance and music analysis of repertoire performed by the students into music theory teaching could facilitate enjoyment in learning music theory and a deeper understanding of music making and learning.

On the content of an effective music theory curriculum, the manifesto of The College Music Society (hereafter known as CMS) released in 2016, embraces *diversity*, *integration* and *creativity* as the core goals for curricular music theory development. The *manifesto* stressed that *diversity* comes from exploring repertoire outside the western classical tradition and that students should have hands-on experience of music of diverse traditions. Marvin (2012) highlights that music theory curricula are often structured around development of ‘a harmonically-based understanding of tonal music and tonal forms, followed by an introduction to twentieth-century and contemporary music’ (p.

256). It is recommended, therefore, that music theory textbooks should include jazz, world music, popular and theatre music.

Hoag (2016) states that *integration* in the CMS manifesto is defined as the instructional synthesis of keyboard skills, aural skills, music theory, music history and performance. In line with this, she remarks that students are expected to use their aural and keyboard skills to hone their written theoretical knowledge. Clendinning and Marvin (2016) underscore that theory teaching should be interdisciplinary. Their pedagogical approach shows preference to integrating listening and written skills, to intertwining performance and history with eclectic popular musical examples in addition to common-practice repertoire.

Furthermore, the CMS manifesto proposes that music theory should nurture *creative* processes, including improvisation and composition. Marvin (2012) claims that instrumental teachers should connect theoretical concepts with interpretative decisions in performance, but at the same time the theory classroom should be musical, relevant to what students learn in their instrumental lessons, and it should challenge students to higher degrees of artistry. However, the CMS manifesto reveals that one of the shortcomings in music theory education is the lack of experience of music students in the creative processes of improvisation and composition, and in preparing performers for the interpretation of existing works. Hoag (2016) critiques the manifesto for limiting the definition of *creativity* to improvisation and composition and claims that the manifesto implicates that ‘... the majority of music students graduate [with] little to no experience, let alone significant grounding, in the essential creative processes of improvisation and composition’ (Hoag, 2016, p.17). This probably implies that creativity should include other facets of music learning such as performance and listening.

Researchers have consistently shown interest on students’ varied musical backgrounds, experiences and interests, and how these impact the students’ overall

achievement in Higher Music Education, including music theory instruction. To begin with, there are studies that link success in academic pursuits with an enhanced sense of self-worth. Burland and Pitts (2007) identified an interconnection between students' experiences of anxiety and musical backgrounds with regards to academic achievement in respect to music knowledge and understanding. As regards what music theory teachers can take from this research, it could be argued that the transition from high school to university might lead music learners to experience anxiety (also in Pitts 2002), which might impact their own sense of musical expertise and identity. For instance, there is diversity of Syllabi at A level, meaning that consistency of music knowledge and understanding skills cannot be assumed in Higher Education. What is more, students within higher education settings

Secondly, research underscores that previous experiences, students' expectations and their personalities are evident in students' attitudes to learning and to their levels of motivation. Feichas (2010) explores the differences in the students' attitudes vis-a-vis their different backgrounds. In her study, students' backgrounds were classified into three categories: 1. students who obtained their music knowledge and understanding skills through informal learning; 2. students who were classically trained in a private or in an established institution; and 3. students whose backgrounds comprised both classical and informal training. Feichas argued that it is advantageous to integrate different pedagogical approaches of the interrelated dimensions of formal and informal learning for the benefit of a wide range of students from different backgrounds students. In a similar vein, Moore (2013) pointed towards the indirect advantage which students who have attended private musical instruction could have over those students whose music tuition relied solely on the state (Moore, 2013). A later study by Moore (2014) revealed that students who did not have the opportunity to attend private music lessons and who had not accessed a higher music education course, acknowledged that the lack of access to music theory

knowledge in their prior learning, as a limiting factor, in terms of teacher education qualifications and also in terms of further postgraduate opportunities.

To sum up, current issues in music theory teaching and learning revolve around the function of music theory, which is argued to be one that supports the students' performance studies, that intrinsically motivates the students to learn music by applying knowledge of harmony in the analysis of music literature, in composition and performance; and one that promotes *diversity, integration* and *creativity*. *Diversity* refers to music theory teaching and learning including music of diverse cultures; *integration* refers to exploring diverse musicianship components through hands-on experiences; and *creativity* recognises the significance of exploring creative process not only in improvisation and composition, but also in performing and listening. **Finally, the impact of students' varied musical backgrounds on their success in music learning and how this could impact music theory instruction in Higher Education has been highlighted.**

2.3 THE MUSIC THEORY CURRICULUM

There are various viewpoints on the ingredients of an effective music theory curriculum. Davidson and Lupton (2016) argue that music theory curricula should draw on pedagogies that reflect the two characteristic features of the twenty-first century, namely diversity and pluralism. Marvin (2018) identifies spiral learning as an effective strategy in a repertoire-driven curriculum. Campbell (2014) contends that the music theory curriculum should be fully equipped with the toolkits that the students require for applying the knowledge and skills that they need. Moreover, Feichas (2010) and Fautley and Murphy (2013) argue that all music learners, but especially musicians in Higher Education, should experience an education that helps them to develop both the theoretical

and intuitive knowledge, and the aural and technical skills through both formal and informal learning.

2.3.1 Part-Writing and Composition

Part-writing is a prominent component in established music theory curricula (Murphy & McConville, 2018) and in several music theory examinations across different expertise levels, part-writing is required. However, through her research Marvin (2012) found that the curricula of music theory place more attention on analysis and style composition than on part-writing. As a result, she argues, large and important works are left untouched. Wallace and Weaver (2017) also reported that with integration of keyboard harmony in the curriculum, there has been a decreased emphasis on part-writing as a written activity. Lively (2017) explains that part-writing is directly related to the knowledge of traditional composition and the ability to interpret and realize a figured bass. He proposes that traditional part-writing skills must be taught systematically and suggests a simple list of part-writing ‘rules’ that could guide and help the students to avoid part-writing errors.

From a theoretical perspective, acquiring the skill of figured bass realization requires in-depth and systematic training. Remeš (2017, p.66) argues that J. S. Bach’s chorales are ‘ideal tools’ for teaching part-writing. Remeš emphasises that through part-writing Bach’s chorales, the student learns the skill of observing how single or ornamented lines can project several implied voices. Remeš asserts that chorale harmonisation can serve as a vehicle for harmonic understanding. Moreover, the students learn chord spelling, they hear multiple voices simultaneously, they perceive modulation, they acquire basic singing and keyboard skills, they recognize melodic similarity, and they harness the expressive quality of unessential notes. Remeš (2017) reiterates that the

interplay between part-writing, analysis and composition promotes the development of creativity and diversity in the music classroom.

Additionally, Remeš (2017) believes that part-writing can give music teachers a concrete stylistic and conceptual vantage point to teaching theoretical concepts. In an attempt to explain the crucial component of part-writing, Gawboy (2017) made a bold statement specifying that historically four-part-writing should be the first step in learning style composition. Some years earlier Marvin (2012) argued that students should be enticed into composing through using binary form, then study two-part and three-part inventions and the dances of the Baroque suite. Subsequently, students should be introduced to Modal Mixture and chromatic harmony, thus experiencing works of the Romantic era. Modal, atonal and serial works should be introduced later on – hence the music curriculum would give the students the opportunity to explore different forms in depth (Marvin, 2012).

Music theory at the advanced grades (VII and VIII) as well as in Higher Education, places particular emphasis on studying and understanding compositional techniques. Benjamin (1989) stressed that for these to be of relevance to the learners, they need to be realized in a musical context. The activity of composing helps to draw the students' awareness to the connection between theoretical concepts and their application when creating original music. Knowledge and awareness of compositional techniques need to be in place before creativity can actually flourish. Searby (2017) insists that the teaching of composition should be practical and active.

In the music theory curriculum of higher grades, students are expected to learn to harmonise using the Classical style. Gauldin (2009) affirms that for creative projects in composing, such as melody harmonisation, teachers need not only the knowledge and ability to state which choices are better when harmonising, but also why these options are better. In practical terms, educators should be able to demonstrate thematic contrast,

changes in texture, harmonic rhythm, sequence patterns, remote modulations and certain chromatic chords such as the augmented sixth chords and the Neapolitan sixth chord.

Gauldin (2009) emphasises that students should be taught effective melody harmonisation and reiterates that comparisons utilizing multiple harmonizations of the same tune (say a Bach chorale) are particularly useful and instructive in establishing the interaction resulting from the linear and intervalic relationships of the chorale. Gauldin claims that in the Bach chorale harmonisation, students need to show how to elaborate the bass with continuous background motion and proposes that the teacher should also teach harmonization of modal chorale tunes, focusing especially on specific features of this literature. Text painting techniques such as sudden shifts of keys, unusual harmonic progressions, imitation, sequences and chromatic passages should all be brought to the students' attention. Gauldin (2009) also argues that students should be exposed to accented melodic dissonance, remote and enharmonic modulations and chromaticisms; and that they should analyse the overall design, the tonal scheme, its texture, its climatic points, possible use of sequences, technical pianistic features and modulations. To sum up, Gauldin believes that through direct involvement in this creative process of harmonisation students should look at music from the composer's side and understand stylistic compositional approaches. This could influence the way in which students analyse and perform their own compositions in the future, which is exactly what music theory instruction should try to fulfil.

Starting from a different vantage point, Searby (2017) suggests that a framework for introducing composition should take off with a graphic score composition. Students should be enticed to present a graphic score composition in four parts showing a variety of texture and timbre, thus encouraging students to think away from traditional notation. Subsequently, students' next composition topic should be based on rhythm – a composition featuring non-pitched instruments (similar to Varese's *Ionisation*). Searby

proposes that after that, composition should concentrate on line rather than harmony; therefore, he recommends that students should concentrate on pitch and the creation of monody. This, he posits, should be followed by a composition using atonality or serialism idioms. A central tenet in today's students' interests is popular music. To this end, Searby advocates that students should be inspired to compose a pop song or other work for voice. In line with this, the MSC *manifesto* (2016) states that systematic composition studies that weave concert music practices in the European tradition with song-writing approaches from popular music, expand the creative process's spectrum. Finally, Searby (2017) projects the idea that at this stage students should feel free to compose any five-minute composition.

Birson (2017) uses the 'galant' style composition as an outlet and a guide for his students' compositions. He asserts that the primary teaching goal in his composition assignments is to inculcate in his students an understanding of the overall 'galant' approach to phrases, so that eventually they will be able to compose in all forms, including ones featuring modulation to remote keys. To achieve this, Birson begins with four-bar phrases, proceeds to antecedent/consequent periods, theme and variations, binary dance forms and concludes with a rondo. Birson's example demonstrates how the study of harmony could involve both the technical and the creative aspects. Technical aspects involve playing harmonic progressions, and realization of their symbolic outlines, whilst the creative tasks include harmonization of a given melody through improvisation based on harmonic progressions and composing in a variety of specific styles.

In an attempt to explain the multifaceted nature of style-based composition, Rogers (2004) emphasizes that students should be given the opportunity to present their knowledge of harmony, part-writing, metre, phrase structures and form whilst incorporating such skills as motivic development. Such creative compositions, be it a minuet or a popular song, could be a meaningful way of engaging students with some

elusive elements of musical style. Rogers argues that students should establish the compositional framework themselves; the teacher should not be giving detailed explicit instruction.

To sum up, the teaching of composition as part of music theory instruction at an advanced level (VII and VIII) and in Higher Education has evolved from the nineteen eighties and nineteen nineties to today. In the eighties and nineties, music teachers mostly focused on teaching composition through analysis of appropriate models. The pedagogy involved students composing upon specific models demonstrated by the tutor (Searby, 2017). Searby argues that unfortunately students sitting for 'A' Levels in the U.K. still compose in the western classical style specified by the tutors and posits that this leads them to having gaps in their compositional knowledge, technique and most importantly, their creativity, when they start their undergraduate music courses. Searby affirms that the pedagogic approach to teaching composition should have its roots in practice: students should be asked to listen and analyse extracts and to respond creatively to works being provided. This active learning approach could also offer opportunities for learners to explore a topic collaboratively, as collaborative learning 'is becoming one of the most powerful ways to deal with the challenges of development in music and higher music education' (Gaunt and Westerlund, 2013, p. 1). Similarly to Searby (2017), Morris (2000) insisted that music theory needs to be associated with musical experience. For instance, students should be given opportunities to submit their compositions to other performer peers, thus providing them with valuable performing experiences of their works as aspiring composers.

2.3.2 Aural Skills and Sight Singing

Every concept in music theory instruction must be understood from the perspective of sound itself. Scholars strongly believe that the aural skills component in the theory class should embrace the development of the ear for the study of music, for the performance of music, for creating music and for enhancing the enjoyment of listening to music itself (White and Lake,2002). More importantly, tutors should focus their attention on students' memory skills during music theory instruction in Higher Education. Chenette (2018) illustrates Karpinsky's (2000) four component model of (1) hearing, (2) short-term melodic memory, (3) understanding and (4) notation. Karpinsky (2000) underscores working memory's fundamental role to aural skills instruction arguing that learning to hear and read music with understanding is the most important goal music theory teachers should set for, for their students. He explains that since a teacher's goal is to teach students to hear and perform real music, it is crucial that real music is used as much as possible during music theory teaching (also in Chenette, 2018).

In a similar vein, students learn the value of sight singing through systematic practice. Sight singing on a daily basis could help students gain the confidence in this skill. For example, simple stepwise diatonic melodies in a variety of keys could be used at the beginning, leading to more challenging examples. Students can tap the rhythm of the entire melody, look at the general contour of the melody, consider the range (in case the given pitch is not comfortable and the student prefers to sing it in a different key), sing the scale and the tonic triad, including the fifth below and look for any patterns in the melody. As the skill is developed, students should be encouraged to perform at a steady tempo and avoid starting and stopping as they sing because it is important that the flow of the melody in the sight singing excerpt is maintained (Johnson, 2008).

Specific techniques aimed at helping students' skills in the aural class should be promoted and developed. The tutor could use scale degrees for sight singing, four-part singing and keyboard harmony. Scale degrees should be practised and at a later stage applied to music dictation. Besides these learning opportunities, the use of ear-training software MacGamut or Pratica Musica (see Appendix 6) is highly recommended.. Alternatively, the tutor could write his own material for the aural component using a modern music notation software, create MIDI file and record them onto CDs (Kang, 2008).

Concerning the development of the inner ear, it is significant to take into account that, Rheinberger and Boulanger demanded a highly developed sense of inner hearing from their composition students. It is reported that an interesting component in Boulanger's music theory teaching was her Wednesday afternoons meetings. These she devoted to singing part-songs and motets with her students in order to help them foster an appreciation for vocal textures (Bomberger,1998). In particular, aural training in Higher Education leads to a collection of aural, practical and written skills and to theoretical knowledge which are all transferable to music practice. Aural training features prominently in the development of inner hearing, audiation and perception skills, so it could be argued that music theory instruction in Higher education should strongly promote the development of aural skills in a systematic method, thus providing a strong foundation and answers the need for integrating these skills in a more holistic music theory programme (Reitan,2009).

Higher Education has the responsibility to guide students to 'learn to listen' in active ways so that they may 'listen to learn' about music during their coursework and throughout their lives (Gawboy, 2017). What is more, aural skills should be incorporated in the 'written' theory classroom (Marvin, 2012). Evidently, then, the prevalence of aural

tuition and solfeggio² instruction in the music core programme are skills which students should aim at fostering: students should be able to read and understand notation, have a sense of rhythm and use their voices with accuracy. All these skills can be fostered in the music theory classroom, especially in Higher Education through attention to aural skills' instructional experiences (Karafillidis,2011).

A broad base of content knowledge in examining the development of tonal harmony through scores and listening to music is considered as essential to effective learning in Higher education. The ability to connect what students hear and what is learnt in music theory is significant in determining the successful outcomes of the students in the aural skills class. What is more, many music theory teachers stress that melodic and harmonic dictation help the performers to develop their skills in comparing the sound of the notated information with the actual sound generated during practising. Specifically, when teaching melodic dictation, the teacher should encourage the students to connect the sounds of their imagination to what they perceive aurally, visually and kinesthetically (Durham, 2007). It is apparent, then that the benefits of developing aural skills during music theory instruction are numerous: composers listen to the music of their imagination and 'notate' what they hear; conductors and performers look at the printed music, they imagine the sound and they 'compare the imagined sound to what they actually hear' (Phillips,2007).

Specifically, an informal learning approach (Green, 2009) can be applied in the aural skills curriculum. Copying recordings by ear promotes self-directed, peer-directed and group learning (also Varvarigou, 2017). Students develop aural skills through deep involvement in listening, performing, improvising and composing (Varvarigou, 2017; Piagentini, 2019). Fostering error detection skills through copying music by ear from

² Solfeggio is the musical term used for singing using the sol-fa syllables.

recordings enhances the ability to analyse and internalise musical examples as well as nurtures sight singing and dictation skills (Fleming & Taylor, 2019). **In addition, aural training pedagogy can contribute to students' development of intonation skills (Bergby, 2019). Interestingly,** the students at the Norwegian Academy of Music learn to use their aural skills when studying new repertoire as part of their instruction in music performance. This happens by getting an overview of the piece being performed, identifying its structure, practising the piece, and finally memorizing it. There is a strong argument therefore, that music theory instruction should incorporate elements of music performance so that students' aural skills are enhanced and put into practice through the repertoire that they study (Jakhelin, 2019).

2.3.3 Improvisation

Music theory scholars underline that much is to be gained from using improvisation in the music theory class. Larson (1995) highlighted that improvisation skills inculcate teaching confidence in the teacher. Also, Lovell (2019) argues that the immediacy of improvisation helps inexperienced students to assimilate learning skills in real-time. Schubert (2002) specified that the counterpoint in the Renaissance meant improvised polyphony for singers. Renaissance improvisation was highly 'constrained' in that correct improvisational counterpoint was limited to a set of choices. Cumming (2013) believes that it is this limitation of choice which makes singing improvisation possible in the music theory class.

Integrating improvisation in music theory curricula by integrating musicianship and aural skills in Higher Education has been a topic of great interest for quite some time (Azzara, 1999). Covington (1997) believed that improvisation creates an 'active environment' that helps students to internalize musical schemata. Both Larson (1993) and

Covington (1997) affirmed the significance of improvisation as a core component in the development of musical skills. Stevens (2019) adds that improvisation should be an integral part of students' music learning, listening and making.

Palmer (2014) and Engelsdorfer (2018) argue that improvisation can be a valuable pedagogical tool in the music theory classroom in Higher Education because through improvisation activities, students could acquire a thorough understanding of theoretical concepts. Additionally, Sayrs (2019) remarked that improvisation should be situated as central to aural skills and affirmed Stevens' (2019) argument specifying that aural skills should be re-centred around solving real-world creative problems that depend on the ability to think in sound.

On the topic of improvisation Marvin (2012) explains that improvisation should be structured and within a given framework. She believes that this makes improvisation less intimidating for those new to this practice. She adds that systematic improvisation should also embrace different genres – jazz and classical and when appropriate lead to song-writing approaches of popular music as a means of expanding the creative experiences of the learners.

Improvisation as a central part of the music theory curriculum, helps the teacher to determine to what extent fundamental concepts have been internalised by the students and to evaluate their musicianship's development. The model which Lovell (2019) proposes, encompasses improvisation of vocal exercises in the theory class, intended to help students 'map' the solfège syllables onto scale steps in such a way that these become one and the same in their mind. This is intended to enhance the development of aural skills. **Knowing and understanding** the function of a pitch by singing the correct syllable is of paramount importance, but this has to be done systematically and structurally depending on music theory grades. The basic model is as follows: As a first step students are asked to improvise using only pitch patterns in a major mode. Students are encouraged

to assimilate the common pitch patterns of tonal music and to learn to quickly recognize these patterns and memorize them. Singing and playing these common pitch patterns of tonal harmony in various keys at the piano facilitates improvisation. As a second step, students are asked to improvise using leaps in the major-mode tonic key. As a third step, students improvise through using leaps to notes 'ti' and 're'. Finally, Lovell proposes vocal improvisation drills using tonal pitch patterns in the minor mode. In Lovell's classes, this progressive and systematic drilling of improvisation is supported by jam sessions where students are placed in a large circle and are asked to sing simple ostinatos on which other students improvise vocally. Lovell remarks that improvisation students are expected to observe rhythm consistency besides accuracy in pitch and solfège (Lovell, 2019).

Improvisation in the theory class could include keyboard exercises along with analytical tasks. Keyboard improvisation material for students in Higher Education include melodic, contrapuntal, harmonic and through-composed material (Chess, 2005). Additionally, improvisation can embrace play-along, echoing, sing-and-play, transposition, fill-in the blanks, figured bass and vocal exercises. Adopting different models could allow music theory teachers to combine improvisation as an integrated approach to music theory learning in Higher Education. Callahan (2015) states that improvisation at the keyboard can be of special significance to music theory students in Higher Education as learners can be encouraged to try different music theory concepts at the keyboard in aural, creative and tangible ways. Keyboard improvisation also facilitates the learning process of the written component of the theory curriculum by making it active, aural and creative and by drawing links between the theoretical part and the performance, listening and compositional activities that are involved (Callahan, 2015). Including keyboard improvisation in the music theory class can present issues regarding class size, staffing of instructors, time allocated, assessment and students' ability or

inability in playing the piano. Callahan proposes a technological route aimed at surmounting these logistical and pedagogical constraints – the *Smartmusic* software programme (see Appendix 6). This is a web-based programme used in music education, which supports individual practice. This programme offers notated and aural guidance and a recording platform. Students play, sing, listen, echo, self-accompany and improvise using the keyboard. This material could then be sent to the instructor who in turn sends feedback on each assignment to the students. Callahan utilised *Smartmusic* to guide and record students' keyboard work in his music theory classes. Files were uploaded weekly in Finale (see Appendix 6) with assignments which featured melody harmonizations, fill-in the blanks, bass realizations, treatment of dissonance, playing of harmonic progressions and spelling and resolving diatonic chords (Callahan, 2015).

All things considered, improvisation is an activity that can open new perspectives regarding teaching and learning in music theory as its very nature of real-time creative performance, demands the prompt creating of music rhythmically, melodically, harmonically and contrapuntally. Improvisation can be approached on a structured level (Marvin, 2012; Lovell, 2019) or in complete freedom of form, content and structure. Either way, encouraging improvisation can invigorate the teaching and learning processes of music theory pedagogy in Higher Education.

2.3.4 Music Analysis

Another central skill in the music theory class is the score analysis component where students are encouraged to think analytically. This skill involves chord spelling and stacking, harmonic analysis and keyboard harmony (Lively, 2017). When teaching music theory at higher grades, it has become increasingly important to equip students with solid analytical skills (Walker & Renwick, 2000). Marvin (2012) explains that musical works

should be analysed as soon as the student has acquired some basic understanding of musical form. For example, dance suites, popular songs, or sonatas should be used to identify phrase structures, diatonic harmony and form. Meyer (1996) argues that few students learn to appreciate the structure of a piece when actually they should be encouraged to analyse the structure. What is more, in teaching music analysis, Lively (2017) argues that learners should be given the opportunity to see several examples of each musical concept.

To address the issue of repertoire knowledge, Searby (2017) suggests that students should listen to contemporary and twentieth-century repertoire such as *Farbenmusik* (colour music), minimalism and aleatoric music as well as be familiar with Schenker's (1868-1935) analytical approach of tonal music. Schenker posits that tonal music belongs in its organization around levels of structure, in such a way that specific features become points of stability or resolution, while other points have intricate and detailed functions (Walker & Renwick, 2000). Engaging students in music analysis using contemporary approaches such as Schenker's approach could assist them in sharpening their analytical skills, interacting more in the classroom through discussion with the teacher and fellow students, and in producing more variety in their written work (Bribitzer-Stull, 2003).

2.3.5 Keyboard Harmony

Through keyboard harmony students learn how to synthesize harmonic progressions, voice-leading, aural recognition and improvisation (Oksanen, 2012). Keyboard harmony provides the possibility of using one's imagination without following strict notation. Choice of chords and keyboard harmonisation can be decided by the performer himself. In parallel with this, Nelson (2002) states that keyboard harmony is significant to students learning voice-leading and part-writing. He emphasizes the importance of playing

figured bass examples on the keyboard and underscores that keyboard harmony offers valuable insight into the harmonization of varied repertoire such as chorale melodies and folk songs. In her book *Theory Essentials* Mayfield (2012) urges students to apply the contents learnt of each chapter on the keyboard. Mayfield advocates the integrative approach wherein keyboard applications involve composition exercises.

In convergence with this, Wagner (1992) articulates that keyboard harmony is an important subject but unfortunately is not given the attention it merits in music theory teaching and learning. Snodgrass's survey (2016) indicated that using keyboard harmony as a springboard for improvisation is not frequently reported in music theory research and practice. Firstly, the resources and workbooks that are available offer limited help to the students with the process of transposition on the keyboard. Spranswick (2014) specifies that learning how to harmonize at sight and to assimilate figured bass are skills which can be learnt over a period of time and with regular practice. Secondly, there should be more attention on how to approach keyboard improvisation. Marvin (2012) suggests that keyboard improvisation should be structured within a given framework, which would allow learners to internalise music structure and later translate it into performance decisions which could influence interpretation and generate greater artistry. Callahan (2015) claims that incorporating keyboard work into theory instruction shows evidence of substantial, positive impact on students. On the whole, it is argued that keyboard harmony could be a very useful tool for music theory learners as it enhances their aural skills, understanding of musical structures and their creative musical decisions.

2.4 APPROACHES TO TEACHING: THE MUSIC THEORY CURRICULUM

In general terms, music theory instruction in Higher Education should provide differentiated work that builds on previous material, keeps students engaged through

carefully paced lessons, uses appropriate questioning techniques to structure, probe and elicit responses from students and should reinforce essential material (Button, 2010). Instructional challenges pertaining to teaching music theory in Higher Education can be overcome only through careful reflection of the teaching approaches that a tutor may choose to select (Lively, 2017). Goals, objectives, challenges and time requirements to learn the new material must be identified. Lively (2017) suggests that in the music theory class in Higher Education, the tutor may feel the need to review the fundamentals at the beginning of the class, because of the wide disparity of knowledge and skills of the students. The following paragraphs explore literature on two core approaches to effective music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education identified by scholarship, namely student-centred learning and inquiry-based learning.

2.4.1 Student-Centred Learning in Music Theory Teaching in Higher Education

Chenette (2017) favours the idea that the music theory curriculum should promote student-centred learning. Shaffer (2014) emphasizes that a student-centred curriculum treats the student as the subject and the materials as the objects to be explored. Furthermore, Stamatis (2014) firmly specifies that student-centred learning encourages student engagement, promotes active learning, and the creation of individually designed projects. Therefore, there is a strong argument for developing music theory curricula in Higher Education in ways that make both the teaching and the learning meaningful experiences for all involved. Specifically, Buonviri (2018) found that instructional approaches such as offering individual attention to students, using questioning technique and connecting sight to sound could be very effective tools for music theory teaching as it encourages students to later engage in self-directed learning.

Helping students to connect the unfamiliar with the familiar has been recognised as a successful strategy for facilitating learning in the music theory class (Jimenez, 2016) as it makes music theory meaningful to the students. One way of doing so is by introducing musical concepts using styles of music which students are familiar with. Jimenez (2016) emphasizes that pedagogical benefits are maximized when educators use familiar extracts of music to introduce, clarify or reinforce new concepts.

Based on the assumption that students 'learn' better when they are intrinsically motivated, Marvin (1994) and Fournier (2009) suggested that the best way to promote intrinsic motivation to performance students is through analysis of repertoire of upcoming performances. Clague et al. (2009) added that using music analysis in every theory class to model active listening, inculcates in the students' minds a visual diagram of form, harmony, texture and timbre.

Contextual listening presents challenges and it is an important skill which most students will not acquire without regular instruction from the tutor (Clendinning, 2008). Students should be taught to identify tempo, metre, phrase lengths, cadences, aspects of form, style and genre. Clendinning (2008) suggests starting with aspects of music that are easy and proceed to more complex ones to engage students into the listening experience. Listening to music analytically, involves listening to music attentively. A repository of familiar pieces will help students understand the context of various types of works and will give an insight to students of what a genre of music is like (Clendinning, 2008). Typically, students need to hear a piece in a new genre a few times to acquire a sense of what the music feels like, to discover its length and structure and what type of elements the composition engages. Additionally, Clendinning remarks that writing down a melody or a bass line from a musical excerpt, hearing a modulation or establishing musical form, require musical memory. The basic strategy to enhance musical memory skills is to practise listening and to seize musical sounds in memory. It is the tutor's role to build up

the students' confidence in this component of the music theory class. Overall, this can be achieved by starting with relatively simple tasks and building on to more complex ones and by engaging music literature in every lesson (Clendinning, 2008).

2.4.2 Inquiry-Based Learning in Music Theory Teaching in Higher Education

The pedagogy of inquiry-based learning which includes experiential learning, project-based learning and problem-based learning (Clark 1995) are educational approaches that refer to learning by doing. In particular, experiential learning contextualises knowledge through reflection (Clark, 1995). Kardos (2018) commented that these pedagogies are suitable for creative, practical and technical music instruction, because they encourage the practical application of theoretical knowledge. What is more, Kardos (2018) stressed that music theory learning in Higher Education should encourage students to create, collaborate, and discover. Additionally, Kizas (2016) suggested differentiated teaching in the theory curriculum by grade levels. He argued that differentiated teaching should address the needs of the students, their learning styles and their preferences. He also remarked that students should be exposed to music from other cultures, through performance, student presentations, guided listening and, if possible, the input of guest artists.

In an attempt to explain and synthesize the multifaceted nature of different instruction approaches in music theory, Lively (2017) proposed a set of recommendations to help the music theory teacher. Lively (2017) states that the structure and sequences of instructional material are pivotal in the music theory class. Instructional material and specific content should be clearly described in the curriculum. Also, a central tenet to successful learning is regular homework.

Assignments and formal assessment activities promote inquiry-based learning as they ensure that students are maintaining their focus on the learning objectives. Moreover, Lively (2017) emphasises that a positive learning environment in which open classroom discussion is encouraged can alleviate the challenges presented, thus encouraging all the students to maintain a dynamic and cooperative approach to learning.

The aural and written component of the theory class in Higher Education present a variety of challenges. Firstly, the tutor is confronted with significant challenges as to how to help students master the knowledge and skills required. This is more pronounced when the music theory class has students with mixed abilities and musical backgrounds (Cox, 2008). Secondly, a significant part of the teacher's skill in melody harmonisation is to deliver a knowledge of common musical formulas. Patterns such as harmonisation of common three-note tonic-oriented stepwise melodic patterns in the early stages of harmony instruction is crucial. Students should be encouraged to adopt strategies to reflect sensible decisions in the process of melody harmonisation (Rogers, 2008). Kraus (2008) maintains that the tutor can strengthen basic functional pitch relationships in major and minor scales by using various techniques namely playing a tonic drone in the bass during one of the hearings and having students hum the tonic softly. Students who need more support should be encouraged to use a limited range of pitches. The tutor should assist the students to develop a strong sense of pitch function in relation to the tonic. Students can also be asked to bring their own instruments to the theory class and to play back dictated patterns. Moreover, Kraus (2008) is of the opinion that building up the scale gradually for sight singing and dictation will strengthen the students' sense of pitch function, thus achieving the goal of better relative pitch.

2.4.3 Teaching Counterpoint – Chronology, Content and Relevance

The study of counterpoint is crucial when learning composition (Bomberger, 1998). The subject of counterpoint should be integrated in the core music theory curriculum. Through the study of species counterpoint, students in Higher Education do not only learn how to compose motets, inventions and fugues, but also learn how voices relate to each other in pitch, how the voices move vertically and how dissonances are prepared and resolved. This discipline should be taught either stylistically-based using the sixteenth and the eighteenth-century techniques or through generic contrapuntal writing. Music theory students should be knowledgeable about the connection and application of the principles of voice leading and the treatment of dissonance to the study of Western music (Karpinsky, 2000).

Chronology, content and relevance are the three issues associated with the value of counterpoint teaching. In the teaching of harmony, the real goal is the integration of harmonic and contrapuntal principles. The study of diatonic harmony should precede the study of contrapuntal technique and through using harmony as a starting point, it is possible to teach counterpoint. So, from the pedagogical perspective it is not the ‘antithesis of harmony, but its equal partner in the formation of structurally coherent tonal events’ (Mancini, 1989, p. 219).

Counterpoint is one of the most rewarding and rich textures in music and is an important skill for any aspiring songwriter and composer. Counterpoint should be learnt, internalized and integrated in composers’ compositions. Once students know the basic concepts involved in contrapuntal techniques, this can be integrated in their compositions, to make them more meaningful and effective (Leach, 2010).

Music theory teachers should underscore the relevance of counterpoint on students’ overall music education and should approach the counterpoint as a form of

training in musical composition instead of a self-contained discipline. General principles of counterpoint need to be transferable to real-life situations and not restricted to one particular style. Belkin (2009) affirms that Fux's method of species counterpoint does have pedagogical value. Its main advantages are that students can concentrate on the matter of line and dissonance, the use of the cantus firmus provides a framework of the overall form and the fact that students are using the most elementary harmonies makes the concept of dissonance easier to understand. Moreover, emphasis on vocal writing is an excellent starting point to contrapuntal writing. Also, the absence of motives frees the student from formal consequences and finally the progression from two-part to three-part and four-part writing is logical. **As the students progress**, species counterpoint can cause lack of enthusiasm and initiative on the students' part, because of its tedious and restrictive constraints. To avoid that, music theory teachers should encourage the students to plan the harmonic structure of an extract, its harmonic rhythm and expand from simple to more complex harmonic structures. Belkin asserts that these are the most obvious constraints when teaching counterpoint in the species style. Other approaches to teaching counterpoint are style-based, the most common being imitating the style of Palestrina or Bach (Belkin, 2009). In addition, Belkin (2009) emphasizes that counterpoint principles are often obscure. He maintains that students must sing individual lines whilst the other lines can be either sung by the other students or played on the piano; and by writing many counterpoint exercises, the students can become familiar which notes can be combined. Belkin also proposes that music theory students should compare and grade why a particular dissonance is 'harsh'. Finally, Belkin upholds the principle that any contrapuntal exercise from the simplest to the more complex should be discussed and evaluated as a real composition on its own. When counterpoint is approached as a composition and not as an exercise, it becomes more relevant to the learners (Belkin, 2009). **In the same vein it can be argued that in an age** where a number of composers have

forsaken melody and harmony, the study of counterpoint is still a useful discipline for aspiring composers in that it is a significant tool for voice-leading and independence of parts (Ward-Steinmar, 2011).

The topic of counterpoint is the most divergent in terms of pedagogical approach, repertoire and intended learning outcomes (Marlowe, 2016). Marlowe questions whether educators should teach subjects via the species or the ‘direct’ approach, whether teachers should focus on the modal or tonal counterpoint, what rules should be discussed and how much analysis and model composition of counterpoint should music teachers promote. Marlowe states that through her personal experience, a combination of the species method and the direct method yields the best results. Basic species counterpoint and an introduction to part-writing is beneficial to all students – this should be contextualised in both analysis and model composition. Marlowe (2016) specifies that using both approaches will appeal to different learning styles in the classroom: some students enjoy rule-driven work, others feel more engaged in applying concepts in their creative instincts via composition and others excel when discussing both approaches in class.

Moreover, Baker (2017) proposes incorporating Galant Schemas using Gjerdingen’s schemata³ as the basis for students’ writing of two-part counterpoint. After being familiarized with the basic structure of the schemas, students are asked to decorate the structure. This facilitates the learning principles of structural hierarchy, melodic figuration and idiomatic musical movements. By adding a third voice to the music, the students were led to compose smooth engaging lines for each voice in a multiple complex texture (Baker, 2017).

To sum up, there is general consensus amongst music theory scholars of the value of counterpoint studies for music theory students in Higher Education. Despite the

³ Gjerdingen’s schemata are musical phrases that function as rhythmic, melodic and harmonic frameworks for passages of music during the eighteenth-century Galant style.

recognition of the salient role that counterpoint should have in every music theory curriculum in Higher Education, there are different perspectives on the content used and the sequence of teaching it to the learners (i.e. chronologically; through vocal writing; or Gjerdingen's schemata). Nevertheless, there is agreement that counterpoint can enrich music learning and for students who are aspiring composers, learning counterpoint can be of relevance and benefit in that it teaches them voice-leading and how that functions in musical compositions.

2.4.4 Creative Digital Technologies in Music Theory Instruction

Digital technologies have opened up possibilities which can transform Higher Education for the better for the twenty-first century music theory student. Covach (2013) explained that open online courses could be both immersive and comprehensive and offer students more pragmatic opportunities. Beeland (2002) found that lessons taught through technology were reported by the students as interesting and engaging. Schneider (2016) contends that technology can constructively change the learning process in such a way that students experience the joy of learning whilst also experiencing excellent assessment and feedback by their teacher.

Within scholarship on music education, it has been argued that the use of technology necessitates a radical pedagogical shift (Grant, 2013) where educators 'need to welcome a critical attitude towards existing musical practices' (Väkevä, 2010, p. 66). Furthermore, Raschke (1999) expressed the view that an online music class or a learning site as an addition to the face-to-face music theory class creates a more dynamic place to learn music theory. MacDonald and Byrne (2002) made a list of music technology tools that could be used in every music classroom. These include electronic keyboards, multi-track recorders, sound modules, synthesisers, hardware sequencers and a range of

software applications. They argue that these enable sequencing, notation, editing and recording through MIDI and acoustic means. However, one of the reported challenges for educators is to motivate students to using technologies for educational purposes (Oliver & Goerke 2007). More importantly, Gouzouasis and Bakan (2011) state that the emergence of these instructional technologies necessitated a paradigm shift in the way music is made and diffused on a worldwide scale and question whether educational practices with digital technologies are truly music making, whether they meet the skills of classically trained music teachers and whether they match teachers' traditional conceptions of what can and cannot be taught in music. Nevertheless, Gouzouasis and Bakan (2011) firmly believe that music curricula and pedagogies should be reconsidered to include digital educational technologies. They also warn that failure to recognise the broad impact of digital media will make our educational practices 'obsolete'.

Composition classes using software Garage Band (see Appendix 6) are generally teacher-driven and are normally taken by non traditional music students (Dammers, 2012). Other studies indicate that in order to utilise technology effectively, teachers must gain confidence and the applicable knowledge (Cefai, 2015; Johnson, Jacovina, Russell & Soto, 2016). In other words, music theory teachers in Higher Education should be comfortable with using programmes that encourage student engagement with music technology. **Music theory teachers are compelled to plan**, to predict and adjust to both new technologies and emerging forms of music and to integrate them in the curricula (Gouzouasis and Bakan, 2011).

Most music theory curricula make increased use of technology in teaching. The availability of free download musical scores provide unlimited access to all students' course materials. Mobile connective platforms for music theory teachers provide a powerful resource for music theory instruction. For instance, the online 'Music Theory Online' publication known as MTO (Koozin, 2014) has been an open-access medium

authored, produced and collaborated by scholars since its inception in 1993. MTO is a resource that introduces new analytical approaches for the study of contemporary music repertoire; articles on analysis of popular music, specifically focusing on rhythmic patterns, lyrics and vocal expression; and exploration of non-western and jazz music. In addition MTO's offers a platform for dialogue among music theory scholars and learners.

Digital media should form part of curricula and pedagogies (Gouzouasis & Bakan, 2011). Digital technologies in music theory teaching can be used for instruction, mapping out of learning goals and learning material which should enhance the organization of the theory classroom from an instructional standpoint (Schneider, 2016). Marvin (2012) reiterates that through smartboards teachers can project a music notation file, notate a melody, listen to it and save it for future use. In this way, active learning is encouraged and promoted. Raschke (1999) explains that an exciting feature of using a website in the music theory classroom is the availability of sound examples which reinforce the written and visual information. The music theory teacher has, therefore, many opportunities to create a single multi-media experience incorporating texts, description, graphics, sound and interactivity to engage the students. Raschke also emphasizes that video and audio clips can make the music theory class more interesting and engaging.

Some years prior to this, Gouzouasis and Bakan, Kiesler (1992) had referred to the potential impact of the digital technologies in the music theory classroom. She had asserted that technology can be seen as reinforcing traditional compositional practice. Kiesler explained that by attaching computer software sequencers to their multi-timbral synthesizer using MIDI, the students have the opportunity to record their compositions directly from the synthesizer's keyboard and store it as digital data in the computer's memory. This data could also be converted to standard notation. For example, students could compose a string quartet by inputting one part at a time. In addition, repeated playing by the system allowed for constant revision (Kiesler, 1992). Kiesler's view is

reinforced by Schneider (2016) who maintained that for creative work, the use of recording software, such as GarageBand should be encouraged. Such digital tools can record students' work and check if the performance of the work composed was accurate. What is more, such music making platforms such as Ableton Live, Sountrap and GarageBand offer the students in the theory class the possibilities to own a virtual orchestra of music instruments and to use 'smart instruments'. Such complete software music products could help them to choose the material they need to insert in their compositions (Gouzouasis & Bakan, 2011).

There is a strong argument articulated by music theory scholars that digital technologies in the music theory classroom should be engaged in the service of pedagogy. Grant (2013) explained that the teacher should consider the use of digital technologies based on their educational merit and not merely on their innovative applications. Digital platforms are convenient and effective in helping music theory students with appropriate apps and websites which streamline content for lessons in solfège, chord building, etc. Streaming platforms like Sound Cloud (see appendix 6) allow music theory teachers to record musical ideas and lessons and upload them to an account for their students' access (Gosden, 2013). Digital composition tools like free smartphone apps, Digital Work Station, and Logic (see Appendix 6) can enhance the music student's learning to compositional techniques. Sayrs (2019) stressed that programmes such as SmartMusic (see Appendix 6), which act as an electronic tutor software, engage and assess music theory students in a number of skills, such as match pitching, music reading, development of short-term and working memory, dictation of melodic and harmonic progressions and error detection amongst others. Through SmartMusic, the students perform music notation displayed on the screen and the software can assess the performance of pitches and rhythmic accuracy. Through these targeted and customised materials, students are provided with immediated and nuanced feedback.

For Sayrs (2019) digital technologies provide music theory students the opportunity to direct their own learning. Heap (2019) explored how the game ‘Fundamentals Wizard’ increased student engagement in his music theory classroom. He found that the game facilitated the creation of in-class activities such as the Class Album, which is a collection of pieces created, curated and performed by the students. The best pieces from this class album were then set to lyrics and subsequently recorded.

The ‘flipped’ music theory classroom is a pedagogical approach which has the potential feature of improving the teaching and learning outcomes in higher music education (Grant, 2013). The benefits of flipped classrooms are various. Firstly, the students learn at their own pace and direct their own learning. Secondly, they engage actively because the flipped classroom becomes the interactive space where students construct their own knowledge collaboratively in ways that are meaningful to them. Thirdly, they receive personalised feedback. Overall, Grant (2013) argues that there is evidence that the ‘flipped’ approach increases student learning and improves learning outcomes in music theory in Higher Education.

Student activities which a tutor in the ‘flipped’ theory classroom can engage with, are several. Firstly, students can look for supplementary information and musical examples which were not provided in the pre-delivered content and share them with their peers. Alternatively, students can find and share case study examples of musical works that illustrate issues relating to course content. Secondly, students can apply knowledge learnt in the pre-delivered content and apply it to an unknown piece aimed at encouraging students to problem-solve aspects of the unknown piece regarding its structure, form, compositional techniques and theoretical knowledge. Additionally, students can participate in their performance-based compositions, whilst recording the process and performance for others. During the ‘flipped’ music theory classroom students can create a collaborative written report, or an audio-video recording or multi-media content to be

used by other students as a learning resource. Students can engage further by applying and extending theoretical principles to new musical works and settings. They can also create quizzes and tests. Finally they can engage in group or whole-class discussion, maintaining a record of the discussion to share it with others (Grant, 2013).

To conclude, this section highlighted that music technology in the music theory class should be fun, interactive and a reflective tool to build inspiration and motivation and to provide meaningful music making opportunities for both students and teachers. However, existing literature on the effects that the pandemic has been having on music education reveals that the sudden change imposed on teachers – i.e. adapting to online teaching, brought to the surface that most music teachers have been inadequately prepared for this sudden shift (Daubney and Faultley, 2020). Additionally, Nichols (2020) remarks on a catastrophe that is unfolding, namely that, students of less affluent backgrounds are having their music studies suspended because they do not have access to digital infrastructure. Nichols (2020) raises concerns regarding these marginalized students and emphasizes that this inaccessibility not only perpetuates inequality but accelerates it (Nichols, 2020). Nevertheless, during the unprecedented times and challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, some music theory teachers have managed to interact with music theory students across different online platforms. Musical games, apps and related digital tools created a fertile pedagogical music environment for music theory learning so much so, that whilst students could remain at home and engage in music theory learning, music theory teachers were pedagogically engaged and supported student learning by adapting to these new technologies and integrating them into meaningful curricula via various online platforms (de Bruin, 2021). Specifically, LaCour (2020) affirms that the present hybrid teaching of music theory has coerced him to change the traditional approach of handwritten notes and paper handout, whilst promoting the web-based programme Artusi (see Appendix 6). This programme is designed to allow music

theory students in Higher Education to screen share, it enables guided practice, it enables the tutor to give immediate and constructive feedback, and more importantly allows students infinite practice with sound and real-time feedback. LaCour (2020) believes that music software like Artusi could augment music theory teaching and learning experiences for both the learners and the tutors and not restrict them.

2.4.5 Using Music Repertoire from Different Genres

Music learning should include diverse repertoires and should consider ways in which it resonates with the musical and cultural realities outside the institutionalised community of formal music education. Popular music, for instance, is listened to and enjoyed by most listeners as part of their everyday lives. Professional work opportunities are available as a composer-song or as writer-producer and other roles related to this field (Campbell, 2014). Furthermore, classical music performers are often called to perform popular music. Therefore, music learners in Higher Education need to have experiences of popular music as part of their studies (Feichas, 2010; Varvarigou, 2017). Through the study of popular music, the learners experience great diversity of music practices that could help music theory learners build analytical skills useful for listening to and creating music (Clendinning, 2017).

Music educators have much to gain from embracing popular music in the classroom (Chenette, 2018). To begin with, students identify with such repertoire, so it bridges the gap between the music that learners are taught in formal education and the music that they listen to informally (London, 1990; Green, 2002). Folsie (2004) and Ripley (2011) assert that excerpts from popular music used for pedagogical reasons as examples are usually simple, straightforward and demonstrate particular analytic points. Folsie (2004) claims that popular music can provide music instruction with endless pedagogical

examples which might have lasting impressions on the students. He explains that popular music often presents difficult harmonic concepts in a concise and succinct manner. This allows students to quickly connect chord symbols with harmonic functions. What is more, the clear texture found in many popular tunes facilitates understanding of harmonic rhythm and harmonic function – this promotes connection between aural and written work. Through standard harmonic progressions and melodic patterns, students find it easier to remember musical patterns that aurally resemble other works familiar to them. Furthermore, Folse (2004) and Green (2008) argue that popular music is a familiar genre for most students and thus this invigorates classroom dynamics. Folse (2004) underscores that music theory curricula should change accordingly to include texts of popular songs. Finally, Chenette (2017) emphasises that including popular music in the theory curriculum helps students to learn to think and adapt to future realities.

The inclusion of popular music in the curriculum instigates music education to focus on the complex aural and creative processes by which popular musicians engage in music. Through this ‘progressive’, ‘vernacular’ method, the music educator creates a learning community that values students’ expertise. In such communities, the teacher is a participator and a co-learner (Salazar and Randles, 2015). Chenette (2017) offers suggestions as to how popular music can be integrated in the music theory class:

- Sonatas from the common-practice period can be compared and contrasted with popular songs. This could lead to discussions on different aspects of technicalities of harmony, structure, and of melodic shape.
- Specific popular songs can be analysed from the perspective of a Bach-style part-writing and voice leading. The most common harmonic progressions and their resolutions in popular songs can be investigated and analysed.
- Improvisation of a twelve-bar blues using a predetermined chord progression can be used for both improvisation and aural skills. Popular music can be integrated

in aural skills through the task of asking the students to transcribe pieces and indicate their harmonic progression.

- In the harmony class students can analyse a simple minuet and compare it to a popular song which uses a cycle of a specific number of chords. These should be compared in terms of harmony, cadences, and modulations.
- During counterpoint lessons, students can analyse and describe the relationships between the outer voices of a rock song using such terms as parallel, similar, oblique or contrary motion.
- During lessons on music form, students can evaluate the verse-chorus structure and compare it to structures from the common practice period.

Chenette (2017) emphasizes that the traditional curriculum can be enriched and changed. Embracing popular music in the classroom can prove beneficial to both teachers and students.

2.4.6 Assessment Through a Portfolio

Assessment is a stage within the teaching process that aims to evaluate the knowledge, skills and competences obtained within a given framework of time (Duțică, 2018). In assessing music theory, all elements of an effective music theory curriculum should require close attention. Currently, two approaches are widely used in the assessment of music theory, especially in the higher grades. These are: a holistic approach that provides students with a single grade (Sadler, 2008), and the standards-based approach, where students receive multiple grades, pertaining to clearly defined objectives (Duker, Gawboy, Hughes & Shaffer, 2015). The former approach has the advantage of providing music theory students with a clear idea of how each specific assessment will affect their final grade. This approach follows the practices used in general pedagogy music theory

teaching (Duțică, 2018). The latter approach is particularly useful and relevant in composition, analysis and part-writing. For example, students receive separate grades for realizing figures, for voice-leading or for use of chromatic chords. This provides them with feedback on different components, which helps them set goals for improving their performance in these different components (Duker, Gawboy, Hughes & Shaffer, 2015).

The three approaches of oral, written and practical components should complement each other as the three pillars of assessing any subject. Therefore in oral assessment music theory, students could be exposed to different excerpts through which they will need to demonstrate their achieved skills by explaining concepts and structures analytically and critically. Theory-based written assessment could be implemented by assignments, activities, quizzes and written analysis of musical texts (Duțică, 2018). Similarly, Manolescu (2002) emphasizes that conversation has great flexibility to promote and portray educational messages. Written theoretical skills include various types of creative texts, and music text analysis. These two modes of assessment should be complimented with practical assessment, such as sight singing, aural training, keyboard harmony and improvisation.

In an attempt to develop assessment approaches which determine whether standards are being met, debates emerged as to which type of assessment should be used to measure progress to meet specific standards. Several researchers (Arter & Spandel, 1992; Draves, 2009; Frazes Hill, 2008; Thornton, Ferris, Johnson, Khusro Kidwai & Yu- Hui Ching, 2011) argue that creating a portfolio of music theory activities, better demonstrates students' knowledge, problem solving and critical thinking through a systematic approach of documentation of the students' experiences in the various components of the theory curriculum (Silveira, 2013). A portfolio aims at helping the students to learn what they can do and what they can achieve (Silveira 2013). The portfolio's material could include any number of assignments or creative tasks,

performance tests, sketches from compositions, concerts, reviews and teacher's feedback. The music portfolio could then be used to demonstrate student's interaction with musical learning in general. The portfolio could display students' creativity in improvising, composing, arranging and 'responding', which involve music analysis, music evaluation and relating music to other arts and music history knowledge. Portfolio assessment can be an effective means of documenting students' learning and can be used as a communication tool during parent-teacher conferences (Silveira, 2013). In line with this, Gawboy (2017) provided assessment approaches which encouraged 'creativity and self-determination' in the theory classroom; these included an oral interview focused on compositional elements, a brief, traditional written examination and an original composition project.

The portfolio of students' works can attest a wider range of student knowledge, critical thinking and problem solving (Artel and Spandel, 1992). Silveira (2013) adds that portfolio assessment can provide evidence of students' attitudes, skills, abilities, achievement and growth. The goal of the portfolio is to demonstrate the student's progress, effort and achievement as well as showcase work such as assignments, creative tasks, sketches from composition project and concert reviews, amongst others. Each piece of work should be assessed against a detailed rubric both by the tutor and the student. In addition, portfolios can be either paper-based or electronic: both offer possibilities to demonstrate and document students' musical experiences on how to interact in music, not just through performance (Silveira, 2013). What is more, through software programmes the student's creativity in the music theory class can be exhibited in the music portfolio. Compositional work to be included in the portfolio could include all sketch material prepared prior to submitting the final product. Music analysis, music appreciation relating to other arts and history could also be components in the portfolio, demonstrating students' learning, processes, and achievement over a period of time (Silveira, 2013).

Finally, portfolios can act as communication tools during student conferences, illustrating students' work to administrators, school and community board members (Silveira, 2013).

Assessment of music theory in Higher Education should align with the wide range of musical practices performed outside higher institutions (Hewitt, 2009). Specifically, Lehman (2008) argues that tutors should move beyond traditional method of instruction. Additionally, he reiterates that assessment and instruction should coexist at all stages of music theory learning in Higher Education and that assessment should be transparent and clear to the learners. Lastly, feedback should be interpreted with cautious and diligence. Duțică (2018) explains that written evaluation could include assessment of compositional creativity tests and analytical assignments such as: a composition of melodies with modulations; a composition for a solo voice; a composition of a harmonic accompaniment to a stipulated melody; a composition where themes are transferred into new rhythmic variations; an analysis of the harmonic structure of given extracts; and the identification of deliberate errors in music scores. Oral assessment could include conversations, by an individual or a group, of musical concepts. Findings of general literature to music teaching show that effective use of questions in the classroom stimulate thinking, assess students and engage students profoundly (Dirkse, 2014). Learning to ask perceptive questions about music excerpts enhances musical growth through active collaboration of the intellect, the emotional, the physical and aesthetic awareness (Rogers, 2008). Dirkse (2014) suggests that questions should be directed to all students, each question followed by 'wait time'. Questions should be precise and answerable. Additionally, questions should require students' thinking and they should elicit maximum student participation. Lastly, these two types of assessment (the written and the oral) can be integrated with practical performance tests including sight singing, rhythmic/melodic and harmonic dictation, improvisation and performance of students' compositions.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed current research on the teaching and learning of music theory, in Higher Education. It started by describing current issues in music theory teaching and learning. These concern the function of music theory and the content of an effective music theory curriculum. Subsequently, the chapter reviewed studies that explored the content of an effective music theory curriculum. Different components have been identified as significant in supporting music learners' music literacy and musicianship. These include part-writing and composition, aural skills, improvisation, analysis and keyboard harmony. The next section explored effective pedagogical approaches to teaching and assessing music theory. With regard to teaching, it was proposed that student-centred and enquiry-based learning should be at the core of every music theory curriculum in Higher Education. What is more, it was argued that specifically to music theory teaching and learning, music technology and the study of a variety of music repertoire can be key components to nurturing learning. Furthermore, different ways of using counterpoint in music theory have been discussed. The section concluded with considerations on effective assessment of music theory. The idea of using a music portfolio was proposed as a useful way to assessing all the different components and skills of music theory learning in a way that is motivating and relevant to the students. Figure 2.1 summarises the emerging themes from this literature review on the components of an effective music theory curriculum and the approaches to teaching it in Higher Education.

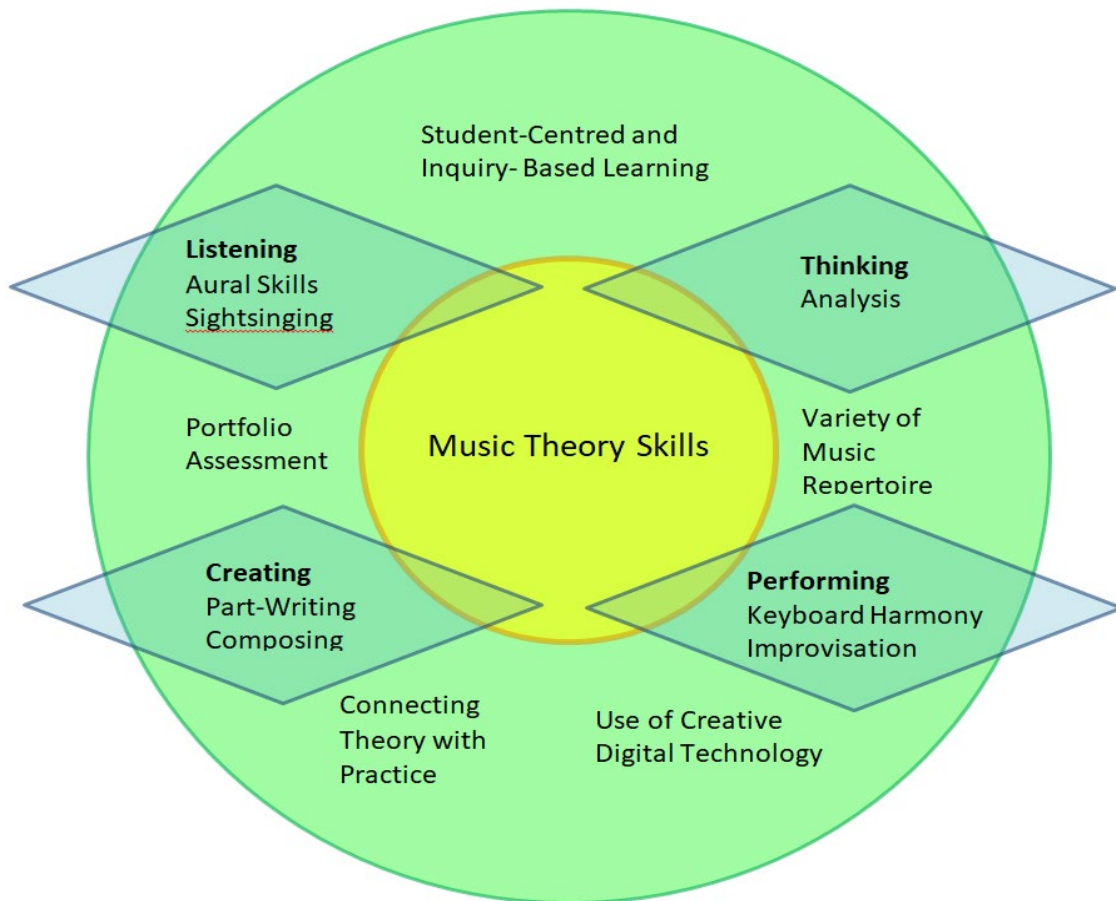


Figure 2.1: Effective Music Theory Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Skills and Approaches – an emerging framework.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW: MUSIC EDUCATION PHILOSOPHIES AND THEIR APPLICATION IN MUSIC THEORY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two reviewed scholarly literature on the skills that the music theory curriculum in Higher Education should target and develop in music learners. The core skills identified were part-writing and composition, aural skills and sight singing, improvisation, music analysis and keyboard harmony. The review also explored effective approaches to teaching counterpoint, to incorporating digital technologies, to using music repertoire from different genres and to assessing students through portfolios. These approaches as proposed, need to be nurtured in a student-centred and enquiry-based environment. Literature on Higher Education suggests that such practices create ideal conditions for learning (Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall, 2009). This chapter presents a review of different philosophies on music education, and it explores how these relate to music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education. The reason for exploring these different philosophies and linking them with music theory teaching in Higher Education, is because music theory teachers' beliefs about effective teaching in general and music theory, shape the way they approach the subject regardless of the skills and approaches to teaching identified by music theory curricula.

Theory informs practice and practice reinforces theory in music teaching and learning. Abramo (2012) and Westerlund and Väkevä (2011) argue that music educators' theories should always be aimed at improving practice and for creating new possibilities

for richer professional dialogue. In her paper ‘What philosophy can bring to music education: musicianship as a case in point’, Jorgensen (2003) states that music philosophers can clarify ideas, interrogate common places and suggest application to practice. Jorgensen asserts that the philosophers ask questions that help clear the meaning and instigate reflection on the part of those engaged in music education, interrogate what is ‘taken-for-granted’ and think through the possibilities of better thought and practice in the future. Westerlund and Väkevä (2011, p. 46) assert that the crucial point about philosophies is that they are ‘options’ for our thoughts and that they ‘provide us tools’. So essentially, this chapter focuses on different music education philosophies aimed at helping music theory teachers to identify how these music education philosophies shape the way they teach and by extension, how their students learn.

Praxis is an important element of effective music teaching and learning as it deals with the embodiment of knowledge and experience of music. The importance of praxis was emphasised by music pedagogues such as Elliot (1995), Green (2008), Swanwick (1979), and Regelski (2000). Regelski (2006, 2009) believed that music education should strive to turn presentational musical practices into participatory practices that lead students to share active music making. Participatory approaches in which the emphasis is on integrating as many participants as possible in the ‘doing’ are inherently democratic and should be given the merited value by school music (also Regelski, 2006). Green (2008, p. 185) argued that the approach to music education that ‘validates embodied knowledge, competences and experiences’ gives voice to students and their music, thus enabling them to participate in building curriculum knowledge and enhance their learning. The following paragraphs summarise some key principles of philosophies on music education as articulated by Bennett Reimer, David Elliot, Keith Swanwick, John Paynter, Edward Gordon, Estelle Jorgensen and Lucy Green. These are mapped onto the

skills that music theory teaching should foster and the approaches proposed by the literature.

3.2 REIMER'S 'MINDFUL' LISTENING

Reimer (1970) stated that the overall aim of music education is to develop every student's capacity to experience and to create expressive qualities of sound. He believed that the central focus of the music curriculum should be on musical works which are both 'symbolic' and 'expressive'. For Reimer (1997) the listening aspect of music theory is pivotal in aural perception, in harmonization, in contrapuntal writing and in analysis. Music students in Higher Education need to develop their listening skills (Reimer, 1997). If students are enticed to learn to listen actively during music theory classes, they will be able to listen to each other when they perform. As Baumgardner (2011) argues, the more performance members are able to listen and communicate with each other, the better the performance. Reimer suggested that teachers need to engage students into what music they listen to and how to listen to it 'mindfully'. Reimer's 'mindful' listening (1997) includes analysis of pieces, comparison of extracts, reflection and connection of extracts to social, cultural and historical issues, reflection upon one's personal experiences and one's imagination to deepen personal interpretation of music. Music theory students in Higher Education can then share their insights and meanings of their listening experiences with each other. A musical work should be listened to in its entirety first. Afterwards, as Reimer suggested, that reference should be made to the melodic material, the harmony, the rhythm, the texture, its tone colour and its structure. Furthermore, Reimer (1997) insisted that students need to listen to different layers of melody and harmony and connect them with cultural and historical aspects. Specifically, Reimer (1989) stated that the more advanced the listener is, the more likely one would be able to associate the musical piece

with one's life experiences. Lastly, the teacher's language about the musical work should be descriptive and symbolic; interaction with the musical work should promote and enhance our feelings through musical experiences.

‘While the affective response to the elements of music is indeed ineffable, the elements which can arouse the response are not. They are the teacher's stock in trade... the basic materials for teaching and learning at every level (Reimer, 1989, p. 54).

The value of music teaching through an aesthetic approach is also highlighted by Reimer. Reimer's (1970, p. 28) aesthetic approach posits that music has beauty and can develop a form of intelligence that affords ‘meaningful experiences unavailable in any other way’. Reimer states that music provides insight into the nature of feeling – this is achieved by appreciating the aesthetic qualities of music. In *A Philosophy of Music Education* he stated:

‘An experience-based philosophy of music education is one that focuses on and cherishes all the many ways music can be experienced and all the many musics offering the special experience music provides’ (Reimer, 2003, p. 69).

Reimer reiterates that all students' musical experiences ‘educate’ their inner felt life and they broaden and refine their feelings. Music's affect on feeling and emotion are central tenets in aesthetic music education. Reimer's philosophy on aesthetic education and on the importance of listening should be intrinsic components in music theory teaching. Music theory students should be given the opportunity to explore the aesthetic value of music through composition and listening. Thus, a student-centred and enquiry-based

approach, suitable for music learning in Higher Education, as literature in Chapter Two highlighted, can be reinforced and celebrated.

3.3 ELLIOT'S PRAXIAL MUSIC EDUCATION

David Elliot's advocacy of a praxial philosophy for music and music education was brought to fruition in his 1995 groundbreaking book *Music Matters*. The most influential debate in the area of philosophy of music education and its impact on music theory pedagogy is the dichotomy between a praxial and an aesthetic approach to theory teaching and learning. As mentioned earlier Reimer's 1970 philosophy, posits that music has beauty and can develop a form of intelligence that affords 'meaningful experiences unavailable in any other way' (p. 28). Elliot diverges from this idea and postulates that music is a multi-dimensional human phenomenon involving music making and music listening.

Elliot's praxial philosophy states that music is 'something that people do' (Elliot, 1995, p. 42), so he uses the term 'musicing'. Musicing includes performing, improvising, composing, arranging, conducting and listening. Elliot's concept of musicing is collective, multi-dimensional and inclusive. Elliot (1995) claims that music is at least a four-dimensional concept requiring firstly, a doer (be it a musician or musicians), secondly, some kind of musicing or doing (be it listening, performing, improvising, composing, conducting and arranging), thirdly, something done (this is mostly concerned with the development of musicianship and musical creativity) and fourthly, it requires the complete context in which the doers do what they do (Elliot, 1995, p. 39-41). Furthermore, in higher music education, Elliot argues for an instructional approach that combines musicing and listening by which Elliot instigates students to be reflective practitioners. During listening activities in the music theory classroom in Higher

Education, students can discuss the context of a musical piece, the context of the performance and the performer. Elliot and Silverman (2015) suggest that a discussion in class about the political, the ethical and the social context can help both teachers and students to go beyond just analyzing and interpreting the musical extract.

Elliot (1995) argues that all forms of music making depend on musicianship. The contents of musicianship correspond to diverse ‘musical challenges’ – improvisation, composition and arranging are key components in musicianship which can be taught and learned. According to Elliot, musicianship is the key to acquiring ‘self-growth’, ‘self-knowledge’ and ‘optimal experience’ (1995, p. 89). Musicianship in theory teaching in Higher Education should be developed in all learners through problem solving. To make music successfully, ‘procedural knowledge’ is developed by immersion in real classroom practices. For Elliot performing is the main musical activity of our culture and this needs to be reflected and demonstrated in the classroom. Furthermore, Elliot stresses that the teachers needs to be mentors and models to their students.

Very pertinent to this study is Elliot’s emphasis on students’ engagement in composition and that students should hear their compositions interpreted. It is also important that the students perform musically and expressively. The contextual approach to composition in the music theory class in Higher Education should provide the teachers with compositional techniques, model works, evaluative criteria and recordings which could help the students to apply the stylistic features that they learn on their compositions (also Barrett, 2006). Elliot asserts that the development of musicianship is intimately related to the authenticity of the musical situations in which learning and teaching take place. For example, a composition of a twelve-bar blues is learnt by performing with a group of musicians who can play and improvise a twelve-bar blues. This ‘procedural knowledge’ can only be developed in conditions where ‘real’ music is made in ‘real’ circumstances (Elliot, 1995, p. 285). Martin (2005) also states that through Elliot’s style

practice, students are learning what to listen for in music of a specific style, thus developing the musicianship needed to produce music of that particular style when they compose.

It is significant to note that Elliot discerned between the cognitive and the interpretive processes and music making. Indeed, in the cognitive process, Elliot states that the listener compiles, processes, arranges and revises aural sounds but real music making is developed in relation to composing, singing and playing (Elliot and Silverman, 2015). This was confirmed by Elliot's students, Peter Hatch, Keith Loach and Alyssa Mendes, who stated that Elliot encouraged them to compose in different styles, including pop and rock styles (Elliot & Silverman, 2017). As a teacher himself, Elliot adopted a student-centred approach by encouraging his students to perform their compositions in class. Moreover, his composition students affirmed that besides composing, Elliot encouraged them to make arrangements for small groups. These were performed, revoked, revised and re-performed each week. Class discussion and constructive feedback was informal. Elliot enticed his students to compose and improvise in different styles, for instance 'soundscapes', free improvisation, dodecaphonic music, electronic styles, hip-hop, rock, pop and blues. According to Elliot, auditory and performative experiences reinforce musical concepts and equip the students with the skills required to acquire 'self-growth', 'self-knowledge' and 'optimal experience'.

Lastly, Elliot's concept of developing musicianship and creativity concurrently was emphasized by Barrett (2005). For instance, when the music theory teacher is teaching students to compose two-part imitative counterpoint in eighteenth-century style, then the teacher should simultaneously teach them to sing the contrapuntal line composed independently, sing it in relation to the others and ask the students to reflect about their choices regarding implied modulations, thematic motives, and imitation. In this way, students could learn that music making is not a matter of sound producing only, but a

music making practice which involves reflection and discussion. These, in turn, could help the students to select the best options to produce creative outcomes.

3.4 SWANWICK'S 'THEORISING' MUSIC

In *Music, Mind and Education* (1988, p. 6), Swanwick states that the general cognitive approach of music education could be equated to theorising: 'no human mind is free from the impulse towards theorising, anymore that human physiology can get by for without breathing'. According to Swanwick, with theorist's theorising, one can challenge 'the arbitrary, the subjective, the dogmatic and the doctrinaire' (op, cit, p. 7). Furthermore, Swanwick (1988) believed that theories are the necessary basis to practice. Swanwick posits that one way of making certain that genuine musical experience pertains to the lesson is by the use of real musical ideas in specific musical context – this he calls 'features'.

Swanwick's *Musical Knowledge: Intuition, analysis and music education* (1994) is a significant contribution to the music educational field, for it focuses on a sequential musical knowledge development. Swanwick argued that musical knowledge could develop initially through experiences of sound (materials), then through use of sound for expressive purposes (expression), then through patterning of ideas into structure (form) and finally, through finding a personal philosophical significance (value). Swanwick (1994, p. 25) emphasizes that valuing 'characterizes the deeper levels of musical experience'.

Swanwick argues that music educators need to plan for musical knowledge and understanding 'of' music to occur. For Swanwick knowledge 'of' music is always crucial in musical learning and he places it at the top of the objectives in the classroom. Young people engage with music because it is relevant to them and knowledge 'of' music is

hierarchically top to knowing 'how' and knowing 'about' music. Music students need to construct 'meaningful relationships' with their own music and with the music of others. An integrated and comprehensive approach will help the music teacher to plan for knowledge 'of' music in the theory class.

Philpott (2017) underscores that by putting musical meaning and understanding intrinsically in music education, Swanwick demonstrated what is about music that is so important to us. Swanwick stresses that any model of development must be musical and attained from the nature of music itself. Clear curricular objectives in music theory programmes at Higher Education should address perceptions of relevance of materials. This should improve students' engagement who would then relate the learning tasks with their personal goals adopting a student-centred approach to learning. Also, in music theory classes in Higher Education, students should be encouraged to use new concepts learnt in their composition. These compositions should be performed or sung. If curriculum objectives are clear and relevant, students' motivation could increase. Assisting students to connect music theory with music practice through performance is also vital (Swanwick, 1979) and it would promote an enquiry-based approach to learning. Involving music theory students directly in music making through listening and performing of their own compositions will enable the students to experience the four fields of musical development: materials, expression, form and value. Theory teachers should realize that engaging in these four layers of musical development requires understanding of recognition and comprehension of musical syntax, termed by Green (2006) as 'inter-sonic meaning'.

The music theory teacher needs to plan for knowledge 'about', 'how' and 'of' music in the theory class. As an example, these concepts emphasised in Swanwick's writings have been applied to the waltz in A minor, opus 12, No. 2 by Grieg (Appendix 1). The knowledge 'about' would entail its structure. The waltz is in ABA form ending

up with a coda. The teacher should bring to the students' attention that this piece starts off with the minor modality, moves on to the major key in the B section but returns to the minor modality in the A section. The teacher should then explain that it is in simple triple time, typical of a waltz. A notable feature in this waltz is the melody in the bass occurring from bars thirty-seven to bars fifty-two. Also, there are sequential patterns in bars twelve, fourteen and sixteen. The 'how' refers to the teacher's reference to the sequence of minor, major, minor keys of the waltz. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to perform it accurately focusing on indicated notation, articulation, tempo and to know how to give prominence to the melody played in the left hand from bars thirty-seven to fifty-two. When teaching knowledge 'of' the waltz, the teacher should target the expressive characters of the extract – the shaping of the two eight-bar phrases from bar three to bar ten and from bar eleven to eighteen. Also, the potential of the different expressive characters of the melody played in the left hand should be reinforced and very well articulated.

Swanwick underlined the need to integrate composition, performing and audience listening because each component reveals different levels of musical understanding. During music theory in Higher Education students should be guided to learn analytical techniques in their historical context. This could help students realize that when studying analytical skills they also understand the communicative side of music composition – how the composer intended to communicate – and adhere to the spirit of the composition. Performers need to interpret what the composer had in mind as stylistic context. All in all, Swanwick's philosophical approach to music education highlights the importance of the study of composition and performance in their historical context as part of the music theory class.

3.5 PAYNTER'S 'MAKING UP MUSIC'

The introduction of creative music education has been an invaluable contribution to the discipline of music theory pedagogy. Paynter and the English educators Murray, Maxwell-Davies, Dennis and Self argued that students gain knowledge and understanding only through individualistic and creative practical music making (i.e. a student-centred approach to learning). This new approach changed the landscape of music education in the late nineteenth seventies in England. In Paynter's view 'education does not begin with specialist boxes filled with facts to be memorised. It should be child-centred and start from the needs of the individual' (Paynter and Mills, 2008, p. 4).

Starting from *Sound and Silence* (1970), Paynter's and Aston's philosophy was that of an active approach to learning through music making and reflecting on the making process. This is similar to Elliot's philosophy of praxial music education. Paynter and Aston believed that teaching and learning can be developed by teachers who are conversant and share the interest at working with sound – the raw material from which music is created. For Paynter and Aston thoughtful music making is in itself the educative process. Paynter (2002, p. 224) stated that composition – 'making up music' – was 'the most natural thing in the world' and that the only stimulus students need is the encouragement and opportunity to play with sound.

Paynter knew that music was exciting for students to approach and explore independently and this could be addressed by a number of different ways in the music theory class in Higher Education (Spencer, 2010). For instance, every student could explore sounds through working at composing projects (an enquiry-based learning approach). As a direct influence of Paynter's work, composing became a foundation subject in the curriculum. Students in every music class could get close to the essence of musical activity and explore 'what the individual has to say' (Paynter, 1982, p. 32).

Paynter asserted that music ‘is not one thing, but many, many things and provided we teach it *musically* there are any number of paths that we might usefully take’ (p. 32). Paynter argued that music education should build on the experience of organizing music as events that present ‘the truth’ of the musical *idea* (Paynter & Mills , 2008, p. 131). For Paynter the teacher’s role was solely that of a facilitator.

Paynter’s philosophy to teaching composition in higher music education could be embedded in practice during music theory teaching. Creative and active learning are fundamental in music theory practice. Paynter emphasized that collaborative composition in the music theory class should be at the heart of music pedagogy. This could support students’ musical knowledge, skills and aptitudes (Bautista, Toh, Mancenido & Wong, 2018). Williams (2010) suggested that the ideal composition curriculum should integrate both the technical and the creative goals to fully prepare the music theory students for future activity as composers. Paynter stated that composition should not necessarily be notated. Music theory students should be encouraged to also compose in graphic notation. Graphic score composition helps the students to discover the nature of music notation, its purpose and its limitations (Searby, 2017).

In the theory class, students can be encouraged to use ‘found’ sounds in their compositions. Technological development has permitted hardware and software tools to be used in their compositions. For instance, electronic keyboards have the possibility to offer a range of sounds which are very similar to the ones heard in popular music. Thus, the students in Higher Education can connect better with the world outside. Students have the ability to create their own music by inserting layer upon layer to edit, and play back their compositions (Cain, 2004). From the work of John Paynter to the present day, composing music has become a part of every music theory class.

3.6 GORDON'S 'AUDIATION'

The American psychologist and music pedagogue E. E. Gordon states that musical thinking and learning depend on the ability to 'audiate' or imagine tonal and rhythmic patterns internally. Gordon's musical learning theory encompasses six stages of audiation whilst listening to, reading, writing, performing, improvising or composing music using familiar and unfamiliar patterns. Gordon (2007, p. 399) states that audiation is 'Learning and comprehending in one's mind the sound of music that is not, or may never have been physically present. It is not imitation or memorization'.

The six stages of audiation are:

- Stage 1: momentary retention
- Stage 2: imitating and audiating tonal and rhythm patterns and recognizing and identifying a tonal centre and macrobeats
- Stage 3: establishing objective or subjective tonality and meter
- Stage 4: retaining in audiation tonal patterns and rhythm patterns that have been organised
- Stage 5: recalling tonal patterns and rhythm patterns organised and audiated in other pieces of music
- Stage 6: anticipating and predicting tonal patterns and rhythm patterns

Gordon's philosophy of music learning states that music aptitude is developmental. Similar to language, educators guide students' learning through interactions. These interactions should nurture audiation skills, music aptitudes and music achievement. Learning sequence activities are essential tools for tonal and rhythm audiation development and should always involve a continual, sequential interplay between imitation learning and inference learning, introducing always sound before symbol.

Gordon bases music learning theory on his research in music aptitude – which is the potential each individual has for music achievement (Gordon⁴, 1995). Music aptitude is the possibility for music achievement; music achievement is the realization of this possibility. Music aptitude and music achievement are dependent on audiation, that is students’ aptitude and achievement depend on their music thinking and music thinking leads to music understanding (Gordon, 2007).

Music theory is the highest level of inference learning and the highest point of hierarchy in Gordon’s audiation theory. For Gordon the objective in music theory teaching is literacy, that is the ability to read and write music with full comprehension. Comprehension requires the ability to aurally imagine what is notated. This is of special significance to sight singing and ear training classes forming part of music theory teaching. For this purpose, Gordon worked on developing taxonomies of rhythmic and tonal patterns to support his music learning theories (Brink, 1983). Music theory teaching in Higher Education can be improved if it is directed towards improving mental hearing (Hiatt & Cross, 2006). Therefore, audiation should be part of the toolkit of every music educator, because it nurtures an array of musical skills that have been identified in Chapter Two as necessary for music theory learning. For example, students need to develop musical schemata and the ability to discriminate between the notes that they sing. Accurate singing requires auditory feedback processing. The students need to possess musical schemata which tally with the music that they are being asked to sing and notate in class (Telesco, 2013). Listening and singing are the two skills necessary to develop the ability to audiate. However, music reading can be integrated with listening and singing. This should help the students to acquire notational audiation skills, that is the ability to ‘hear’ a melody given only the tonic and the notation (Hiatt & Cross, 2006). Gordon

⁴ E. Gordon’s music learning theory was based on his research on musical aptitude and it was published in numerous outputs such as Gordon, 1965; 1979; 1982; 1989a and 1989b.

affirms that theoretical understanding should only be introduced after all steps of audiation have been mastered. In the aural skills music theory class, teachers can evaluate students' ability to audiate noted music by asking the students to sing it. The students need to have an accurate mental picture of the melody in order to sing it accurately. If the students are unable to sing the melody correctly, that is an indication that the student has not mapped the music's visual picture with its aural presentation. Likewise, if a student is not able to notate a melody after listening to it several times, this is another indication that the student has not correctly mapped this aural perception to its cognitive and visual representation.

3.7 JORGENSEN'S 'COMPREHENSIVE MUSICIANSHIP'

Jorgensen explores the roles of philosophy in music education. For Jorgensen music teaching is an art and a craft. She argues that teaching is an imaginative, creative process that is itself musical. Jorgensen offers a metaphorical lens to examine the practical work of music teachers. In her text *In Search of Music Education* (1997), she investigates the tensions between the meaning of education and music. Jorgensen argues that an individual forms musical meaning through individual spheres of musical validity. The musical image of each sphere, combines with others to create patterns – an individual's “collage of beliefs and practices” (p. 66). Effective music education must draw from multiple influences and must speak to the individual experiences of each learner. Jorgensen argues for a broader conception of music education – she views music education as a ‘world’ rather than a western phenomenon and she maintains that music experiences should be examined both contextually and historically.

Jorgensen (1992, p. 98) argued that ‘there has been relatively little analytic philosophy’ in music education and maintained that in music education ‘philosophical

thought has been dominantly synoptic' (p. 75), meaning that most education philosophy is constructed in 'top-down-fashion' (as quoted by Elliot, 2012) often with little concern for the conceptual and critical analyses. Jorgensen emphasizes that education is both theory and practice and calls for a more integrated theory-practice approach that is rooted in reflection. Jorgensen suggests a pedagogical model where theory and practice are 'dialectic'. Bringing the dialectical model could provide a way of sorting through some complex situations in combining music theory together with practice (Jorgensen, 2001). In practical terms this means that teachers should be provided with the tools to help the students make connections between theory and practice. Jorgensen regards the curriculum not as a set of instructional topics to be covered, but as an experiential situation involving the interactive relationship between student and teacher and beyond the larger context of external societal influences. For Jorgensen the curriculum must be dynamic and continually being improvised, negotiated and contested. Jorgensen suggests a form of 'comprehensive musicianship' and sees musicianship as:

one attempt to marry a skill-based approach to music making with its appreciation, to overcome the bifurcation between the doing and receiving music, and to create a holistic and integrated approach to musical instruction (Jorgensen, 2003, p. 200).

Music theory teachers in Higher Education should be given the space to express their own musicianship in composing with students and to refine their skills in helping students to develop their composing, improvising, listening and performing skills. Jorgensen (2016) says that creating music in theory classes instigates joy. The joy of the aspect of composing music along with performing and listening should be placed at the centre of the musical experiences of both the educators and the learners. Jorgensen (2016, p. 17) also adds that:

‘composing is necessarily about an intuitive grasp of an imagined whole, the honing of that vision into a cogent and articulated image that is so engrossing that it seems apart from and even transcendent to ordinary experience. The various elements are transformed into sounds and sometimes sights as an inspired and inspirational piece of music that is made for the joy of it, for the composer’s sake as much as for others.

Jorgensen’s philosophy regarding music composition is that composition, being a practical subject, is learnt along as one ‘does’ it. Jorgensen emphasizes that the skills required to compose enables students to understand and express their innermost feelings better.

3.8 GREEN’S INFORMAL LEARNING AND NON-FORMAL TEACHING

Informal music learning refers to the natural and spontaneous learning of music. In her book *How Popular Musicians Learn* (2002) Lucy Green identified five characteristics found in learning contexts where individuals learn informally. Firstly, music learners develop skills and knowledge by working on music they like. Secondly, copying, and embellishing music happens by ear using audio recordings. Thirdly, learning takes place alone and in friendship groups, working largely or entirely independent of a teacher or other expert. Fourthly, the learners play whole ‘real-world’ pieces of music rather than simplified pieces, and fifthly, music learners integrate listening, playing, singing, improvising, and composing throughout the process of learning. Green found that, through learning in these ways, popular musicians report experiencing high levels of enjoyment and motivation and can develop advanced musicianship emphasizing aural, improvisatory, and creative aspects.

Green (2002) claims that informal music learning as manifested by popular musicians, tends to be less prioritised in the curriculum. Building connectivity between school and community-based musical learning experiences that enhance the music programme within a school is crucial for students. When there is no connectivity students feel disengaged, find little relevance in the school's curriculum and they tend to find pleasure in learning outside the school (also in Dillon, 2001).

Green (2008) also compared informal learning to the 'creative music movement' of the nineteen seventies: in the creative music movement the musical choices were teacher driven; in informal methodologies, students are allowed to listen, perform, improvise, compose and choose their own repertoire in an independently creative manner. Furthermore, students are encouraged to watch and listen to other students rather than depend on the expertise of the teacher (enquiry-based learning). In addition, music students are given responsibilities to develop teamwork and leadership skills. During non-formal teaching, teachers are requested to define the task, observe, provide support, suggest, model, listen to students' goals and objectives. In non-formal teaching classrooms, tasks need to be designed to accommodate and include all the mixed abilities of the students in the classroom. To sum up, informal learning and non-formal teaching in the music theory class in Higher Education should aim to immerse the learners into the musical environment in a hands-on fashion through listening, performing, composing and improvising, where learning objectives are set by the learners who choose the material themselves. Higher Education tutors should necessarily devise a plan for the lesson, but respond as the learning unfolds. They should 'stand back, observe, diagnose, guide, suggest and model attempt to take on pupils' perspectives, and help pupils achieve the objectives that they set for themselves' (Green, 2008, p. 152). Through these approaches, music theory students have more opportunities for self-expression, collaboration and independent thinking. Finally, Green (2009, p. 125) argues that "formal" and "informal"

ways of learning are not mutually exclusive, or even as having clear boundaries between them'. She also highlights that

‘There is much to learn from opening our eyes and ears to the world of informal musical engagement, as well as that of formal music education, and most particularly from considering the interface between the two’
(Green, 2010, p. 92).

Heuser (2005) wrote that very little was known about the pedagogical practices and the common experiences of those involved in informal and formal music learning. For instance he argues that during informal learning the learning itself can be incidental (when a musician comes across a particular music style/piece of music) and also intentional (when he/she wants to learn how to sing and play it). Similarly, Lines (2009) states that informal learning affirms the idea that participation in music through self-initiated study and peer group music activity is fundamental to what music learning is all about. These are exactly the processes for music learning that Elliot, Swanwick and Paynter advocated in their philosophies.

Present curricula in music theory might be challenged by the application of informal music learning approaches, however, these are timely as they respond to the needs of the twenty-first century learners. Salazar and Randles (2015) argue that the inclusion of popular music in the curriculum instigates music education to focus on the complex aural and creative processes by which popular musicians engage in music. Through this ‘progressive’, ‘vernacular’ perspective the music educator creates a learning community that values students’ expertise, promoting student-centred learning. Mans (2009) states the importance and necessity for teachers to engage in an interactive pedagogy where student centeredness is applied in its full sense. In such learning communities the teacher is a participator and a co-learner. By making use of this shift

towards ‘a progressive pedagogy’ music education can become more accessible and culturally relevant to more students. This is a need that has also been articulated by the music education philosophers Reimer, Elliot, Swanwick, Paynter, Gordon and Jorgensen as mentioned above.

Väkevä (2009, p. 10) also argues that popular music can offer ‘a gateway to further knowledge of music, music literacy and theoretical concepts’. In addition, Dunbar-Hall (2009) is convinced that students learn through active involvement in ‘informal’ performances. His belief of ‘ethnopedagogy’ provides a fascinating interpretation of Green’s notion of informal learning through popular music.

Some years prior to this, Green (1988) underscored that more engagement in performing, composing, listening and understanding through both formal and informal learning could direct students to a deeper understanding of its inherent value and meaning. According to Jaffurs (2006), there exist clear intersections between formal and informal music learning and he agrees with Rodriguez (2009) specifying that educators should explore these intersections to help students develop their musicality. Similarly, Folkestad’s (2006, p. 135) underscores that

‘Formal – informal should not be regarded as a dichotomy, but rather as the two poles of a continuum; in most learning situations, both these aspects of learning are in various degrees present and interacting.’

Moore’s pilot study on Musical Futures (2019), revealed that through informal music education, music making in the classroom was reconstructed into whole class collaborative participation. Teachers stated that they had experienced a more innovative approach to pedagogy and assessment in music teaching. Interestingly, students’ increased motivation, interest and opportunities for musicing (Elliot, 1995) were more apparent. More importantly, the study highlighted that through immersing the learners

into an informal music environment, students' achievements in transferable skills, self-esteem, motivation and confidence were on the increase (Moore, 2019).

Music theory teachers working within Higher Education need to explore what the musical interests of their students are in order to devise curricula that make music theory studies relevant. For instance, popular music may be used as an introductory tool to further music literacy and theoretical concepts (Väkevä, 2009; Rodriguez, 2009; Salazar & Randles, 2015). Furthermore, the traditional classroom-based approach to teaching music theory might not necessarily reflect the way that twenty-first century musical learners learn, for it disconnects learning from the way in which students experience music (Salazar & Randles, 2015). Rodriguez (2009) emphasizes that teachers should be prepared to engage students in informal learning approaches such as learning music by ear (as opposed to reading notation) (Varvarigou, 2017; 2018) and in friendship groups to entice formally-trained students who are looking for more creative and more flexible music making, and students who do not usually participate in performance ensemble (see also Green, 2008 on informal learning in the secondary school).

Music Education Philosophers	Key Beliefs	Relevance to Music Theory Teaching	Application to Music Theory Teaching
Reimer	Mindful Listening	Listening for Composing	Promoting Active listening
Elliot	Praxial music education	Listening, Performing, Improvising, Composing, Arranging and Conducting.	Developing multifaceted musicianship
Swanwick	Theorising music	Music theory objectives and issues to be connected with students' performance	New concepts to be introduced through students' own compositions
Paynter	Making-up music	Composition and improvisation	Curriculum to integrate both technical and creative goals of composition and improvisation
Gordon	Audiation	Music aptitude and achievement are dependent on audiation	Audiation is the key for singing, notating, and improvisation skills. Musicianship depends on the ability to audiate.
Jorgensen	Theory and practice in dialogue	Comprehensive musicianship	Composing, performing and listening: central tenets in music theory teaching.
Green	Informal learning and non-formal teaching	Student-centered; enquiry-based; influenced by popular musicians' learning	Learning by ear from recordings; non-formal teaching; vernacular music repertoire; integration of composing, performing, listening, arranging during the learning process

Table 3.1: Application of music education Theories to music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter explored seven philosophical approaches to music education and connected them to music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education, with the aim to underscore the importance for every teacher to identify their own belief about the role that music theory can play in a curriculum in Higher Education and by extension in each learner's musical journey. Reimer, Elliot, Swanwick, Paynter, Gordon, Jorgensen, and Green all have distinctive philosophies, each contributing a unique perspective to effective music theory teaching in Higher Education (See Table 3.1). Elliot emphasised the praxial element of making music, Reimer and Gordon focused on mindful listening and audiation, respectively. Swanwick and Jorgensen stressed the significance of theorising and comprehending music, Paynter favoured 'making up' music and Green underscored the importance of informal learning and non-formal teaching. Despite the different standpoints, all philosophers are in agreement on one concern: music is an essential part of human existence and hence music education is a valuable and necessary segment of education. Providing music theory teachers with the above philosophical approaches enables these educators to realise the significance of music theory teaching for all music learners as this knowledge allows them to listen, play, think about and create music in a way that is worthwhile and fulfilling for them. Through informal learning in the music theory class (Green), the learners use music that they like and identify with, whilst engaging in mindful listening (key component to music learning according to Gordon and Reimer). By composing, performing, and improvising music theory learners also engage in praxial music education (Elliot, Green) and they are encouraged to 'make-up music' (Paynter, Green) whilst at the same time develop knowledge of theoretical concepts (Swanwick and Jorgensen). To conclude, Higher Education should consider how different music education philosophies could work in synergy to nurture the learners' musical skills

and their interest and love for music making and listening. Figure 3.1 puts together all the components of a proposed theoretical framework on effective music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education, as elaborated in Chapters Two and Three.

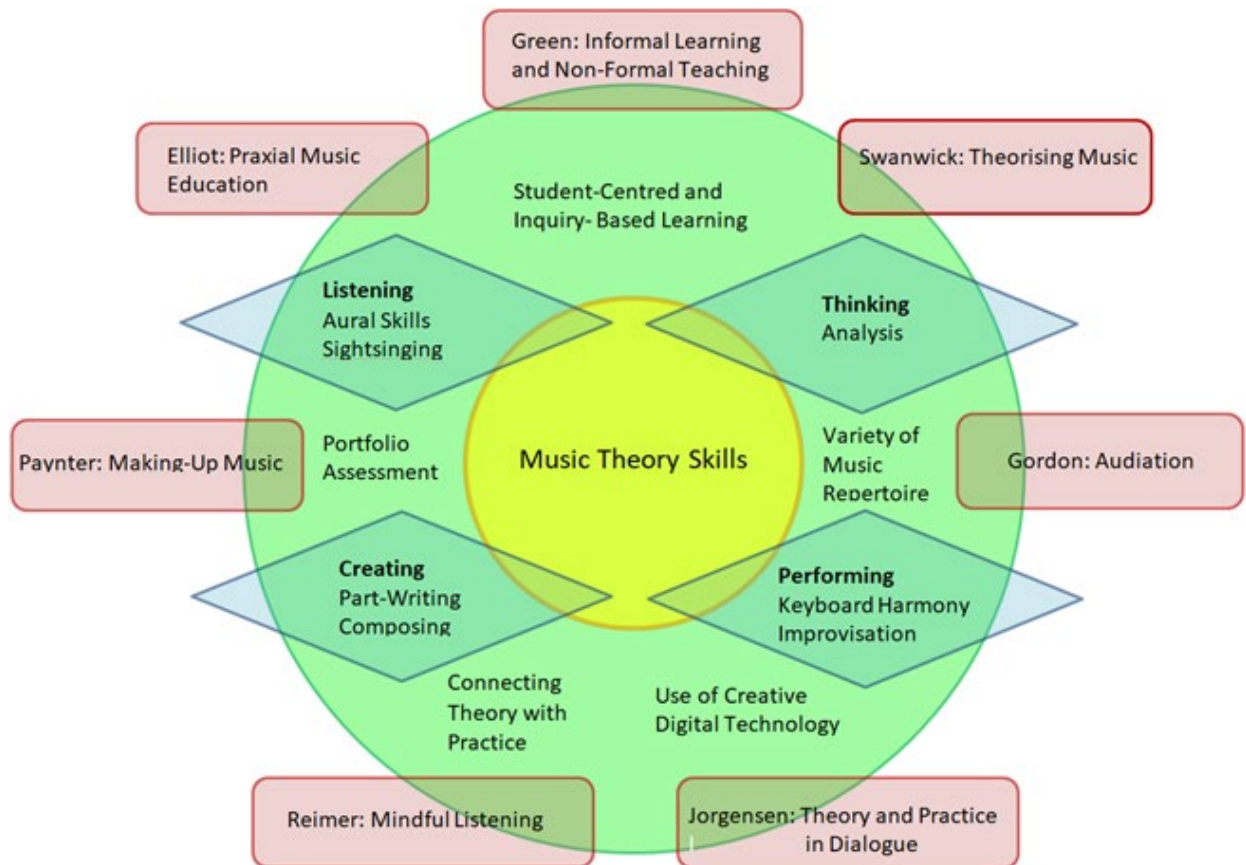


Figure 3.1: Effective music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education: Skills, Approaches and Philosophies – A proposed theoretical framework

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the methodology and methods adopted in order to explore music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education in Malta. As outlined in Chapter 1, this study focused on the Music School of Malta (MSM) as a case study for investigating the perceptions, strategies and experiences of both the music theory teachers and the students on music theory teaching and learning. A qualitative approach was therefore deemed the most appropriate.

This chapter starts with a presentation of the theoretical framework on effective music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education that emerged from a synthesis of the literature discussed in Chapters Two and Three. It then presents the philosophical paradigms of this study, the methodology, the research methods and it describes the research processes. The author also explains why this study was not undertaken as an action research study, which one could argue that action research could have posed as a reasonable alternative to the case study approach. The chapter concludes by discussing issues of validity and reliability, methodological limitations and ethical considerations.

4.2 A PROPOSED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON EFFECTIVE MUSIC THEORY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The framework that emerged from a detailed discussion on extant literature on music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education identified key music theory skills and the approaches through which these could be developed in Higher Education. It also acknowledged that philosophical approaches in music education could influence the

music theory teachers' perceptions and beliefs about effective music theory teaching, and therefore their inclusion in discussions on developing effective music theory curricula was deemed essential by the researcher. The proposed theoretical framework could act as a guide to those designing programmes on music theory in Higher Education that maximises music learners' development as all-round musicians. This proposed framework offered a structure through which to explore music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education within the specific context of the Maltese islands.

To begin with, four groups of fundamental music theory skills have been identified. These are: Listening, Performing, Creating and Thinking. Listening includes aural skills and sight singing. Performing includes keyboard harmony and improvisation. Performance skills connect music theory learning with the students' artistic expression of the music studied. Creating skills include part-writing and composition and encourage the students to explore their imagination and to experience creative processes at first hand. Thinking skills refer to analysing music and have a direct influence on the overall perception of music theory learning. Having analytical skills enables students to think critically about diverse music literature that they enjoy listening to and perform. It is important to note that some skills intersect. For example, sight singing arguably supports the development of listening skills but it is also connected to Performance. I did not put it under the performance category, though, because the focus of sight singing is not necessarily on performance but on the learning of the music through attention to listening to what one is performing. Similarly, improvisation was placed under performance skills and not under creating skills because when one improvises one is creating 'new material' but what is important about it is, that it is physically performed. This very fact allows the 'new material' the space and time to be changed and re-created (Varvarigou, 2019).

At a second level, the framework highlights approaches that foster the development of music theory skills within the specific context of Higher Education. These

include the explicit connection between theory and practice (for instance music concepts and how these are performed on the students' instrument; or how repertoire studied by the students through playing or singing could be analysed, sight sang and improvised); the use of creative digital technologies, the availability and application of a variety of music repertoire, and assessment through a music portfolio. Portfolio assessment featuring assignments, creative tasks, sketches from composition projects, concert reviews, teacher's feedback and student's self assessment is acknowledged as the ideal way of assessing music theory, a discipline so diverse and encompassing so many musical practices.

These four approaches, which are music theory specific, intersect with the principles of promoting student-centred and inquiry-based learning, which are relevant specifically for teaching and learning in Higher Education. Uniquely, digital tools continue to redefine music theory learning and have fundamentally changed how music theory is taught and how skills can be developed. In addition, using a variety of music repertoire from different genres such as jazz, European, classical, folk, popular and world musics, allows students to listen to, perform, create and think in music that is diversely rich and exciting. What is more, the skills needed in the theory class cannot be nurtured unless theoretical concepts are infused with practical experience that helps students enrich, discover and develop their learning.

At a third level, the proposed framework demonstrates how it is grounded in music education theory. In particular, seven theoretical perspectives have been identified as relevant to music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education. These are Reimer's 'mindful listening', Elliot's 'praxial' music education, Swanwick's 'theorising music', Paynter's 'making up' music, Gordon's 'audiation', Jorgensen's 'comprehensive musicianship', and Green's 'informal learning and non-formal teaching'. Firstly, Reimer's philosophy on aesthetic education and listening acknowledges the significance

of the music theory skills identified, especially listening, in fostering lifelong music learners. Elliot's 'praxial' approach specifies that learning music is a matter of artistic knowing 'in action'. Music theory is concerned with developing musicianship and creativity through performing, improvising, composing, arranging and listening. Swanwick's contribution to the sequential musical knowledge stresses that the model of development in teaching must be musical and attained from the nature of the music itself. Paynter's theories emphasized that creative and active learning are fundamental in music theory practice. Collaborative composition should be at the heart of every music theory class. Furthermore, Gordon's theory on audiation is significantly important in the theory class, as audiation should be part of the toolkit of every music educator. Jorgensen's theory affirms that composition being a practical subject, is learnt along as one 'does' it. Finally, Green proposes that teachers should be as hands off as possible allowing the learners to learn music through using vernacular repertoire that they like and identify with, through learning by ear from recordings, and through integrating listening, performing, composing and arranging as part of their learning process. These philosophical approaches enable the music theory teacher to realise the significance of music teaching for all learners, as this knowledge empowers students to listen, to create, to perform, and to think in music in rewarding and meaningful ways. Before moving into the section on the philosophical paradigm, the methodology and the methods, it is worth reminding the reader of the research questions that guide this study. These are:

1. How do music theory teachers in the Maltese Islands perceive and relate to effective music theory teaching in Higher Education?
2. How do music theory students at MSM perceive and experience music theory teaching and learning?

3. How do effective music theory curricula in Higher Education which respond to the needs of twenty-first music students and teachers look like?

4.3 THE PHILOSOPHICAL PARADIGM

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state that paradigms are the researcher's accomplishment that hold the ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs together. The ontological and epistemological realms identify the beliefs of the researcher that shape the research itself. Crotty (1998, p. 3) underscores that epistemology is 'a way of understanding and explaining how I know what I know'. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 183) state that the epistemological paradigm examines the relationship between the knower and knowledge and asks 'how do I know the world?'. Epistemology is the tool which helps researchers make meaningful sense of the world. From the epistemological perspective, the researcher and the participants are co-creators of the knowledge.

This study is positioned within the constructivist and interpretivist paradigms. Constructivists believe that individuals construct meaning or reality based on the interactions within the social environment. Knowledge is constructed and it is possible to find multiple socially constructed realities. Walker and Lambert (1995) illustrate that in the constructivist approach to learning, knowledge and beliefs are formed within the learner. Learners endow experiences with meaning, and learning pursuits cause learners to acquire access to their experiences, knowledge and beliefs. Furthermore, they argue that when learning takes place within a social context, it can be enhanced by shared inquiry. Walker and Lambert (1995) emphasise that the construction of knowledge and meaning necessitate reflection and metacognition. Finally, they claim that when assessing their own learning, learners play an essential role and the end result of the learning process is often varied and unpredictable.

Strauss and Gorbun (1990) assert that in the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher tries to represent an external reality as accurately as possible. In the interpretive paradigm, people interpret their worlds in individual ways (Cain, 2012). A constructivist and interpretivist paradigm has been selected as it allowed for the unfolding of a contextualized understanding of the researcher's, other music theory teachers', teacher-composers' and students' practices at the MSM. Creswell (2007) states that the researcher's interpretations and perceptions become part of the research thus subjective and interpretive inclinations run throughout the inquiry.

Clarity in the alignment of philosophy, methodology and methods is fundamental to ensure the accuracy of the research process (Annells, 1996; Crotty, 1998). Constructivism and interpretivism run through this research design. Throughout the inquiry the researcher adopted Stake's (2006) approach to a case study, which is closely aligned with the constructivist and interpretivist direction. The approach is underpinned by a strong motivation to discover meaning and understanding of the issue in context. The researcher's role in producing the knowledge was crucial and Stake emphasizes that the researcher's interpretative role is fundamental in the process of the inquiry. The researcher had to understand the case i.e. teaching and learning in Higher Education in the Maltese Islands, and most specifically at MSM, by 'experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its context and in its particular situation' (Stake, 2006, p. 2). The researcher explored the multiple realities of the case, the MSM, and tried to interpret it within an integrated system – comprised of the perceptions, strategies and experiences of the participants involved.

4.4 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER AND TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

The researcher's own teaching and educational experiences strike a chord with the constructivist approach to learning. In this study, the researcher acted both as a music theory teacher within a Higher Education institution in the Maltese Islands and as the researcher. The researcher came to the study from the perspective of a music educator with teaching experiences in early years, primary and tertiary classroom settings. In particular, the motivation to find useful information for music theory teaching, affected the researcher's lenses, whilst designing this research project. Her enthusiasm for the subject helped the researcher to identify, embrace and challenge music theory teaching throughout the research and writing process with the hope of providing the MSM with two music theory guides for Grades VII and VIII that reflect current discussions on the music theory skills and core components of an effective music theory curriculum.

Through this study, the researcher's role was to take a systematic approach to investigating and improving music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education in Malta. As a practitioner-researcher the researcher also wanted to become the learner by finding out with and from her students how the music theory guides that she was designing, reflect their needs and interests in music learning in general and in music theory, in particular. As a practitioner-researcher she sought to encourage her students to think in music, to read and write with understanding, and also to contribute with their compositions to the local scene.

The researcher's role in this qualitative case study was multifaceted. The researcher: (a) developed teaching material for music theory at levels VII and VIII; and (b) collected data on the experiences of music theory teaching and learning from different stakeholders, including her students experiencing learning through the teaching material that she developed; and (c) reflected on participants' perceptions, strategies and

experiences of music theory teaching in Higher Education. The researcher then coded and analysed the participants' responses with the aim to update and inform the study guides in light of the feedback received and her own experiences of teaching this material.

At this stage, I consider it important to detail my own teaching philosophy, as this philosophy unavoidably influences the way I undertook this research. My teaching philosophy, as it has been developed after having taught music theory for forty years or so, is based on four core ideas: the use of popular music in supporting learning, helping students to think in music, acting as a reflective practitioner, and promoting purposeful listening. Firstly, all along the years, I became conscious of the importance of popular music as a pedagogical tool towards understanding music theory. Popular music has provided me with an endless supply of pedagogically relevant examples that have made lasting impressions on my students; the reason being that students are familiar and conversant with this type of music.

Secondly, I want to make students think in music, that is, knowing what the music looks like and how it sounds. I believe that students should be able to recognize the concept on the written page, recognize it when it is played, play it on the piano, sing it, write it, improvise on it, resolve it and apply it in their compositions. Thirdly, developing the study guides helped me to be self-critical as a teacher with my students and colleagues: involving students in decision-making when planning and processing the study guides helped me to develop digital music literacies and musicianship skills aimed at facilitating students studying music theory in Higher Education. As part of my teaching I always try to find opportunities to investigate my own practice. Through this research study I had the opportunity to plan and deliver each chapter of the study guides with my students, evaluate and analyze their responses after each chapter in order to generate new plans and make necessary amendments. The study guides, therefore, emerged as a collaborative process through direct and extensive interaction with my students and fellow teachers

during the academic year 2018-2019. My ultimate aim was to challenge the present system wherein each component of the music theory curriculum, that is, aural tests, solfeggio, harmony, counterpoint, form and analysis, are treated and taught as separate components. As part of this reflective process I always tested curriculum ideas through action. However this study is not an action research study as will be explained at a later stage.

Fourthly, all these years I have been promoting ‘purposeful listening’ (Green, 2002) of the work of different composers within a variety of musical genres and styles by including a variety of musical examples. I feel that developing listening skills – skills in audition and mindful listening, are salient for every process in music learning. I tried to incorporate this approach into the study guides. I wished through the guides to equip my students with the necessary tools aimed at facilitating harmonic analysis and to help them compose contrapuntally in different styles.

To sum up, these four principles that constitute my teaching philosophy have influenced the way I undertook the research and analysed the data. Therefore, I am aware that I constructed the reality of music theory teaching at MSM through my own eyes and experiences, and I interpreted other stakeholders’ perspectives with as much objectivity as it could possibly be. This should facilitate the designing of the study guides at Grades VII and VIII which will be implemented by other music teachers in Malta, and hopefully internationally.

4.5 THE QUALITATIVE INQUIRY AND THE CASE STUDY DESIGN

Educational research in the nineteen seventies welcomed enthusiastically the case study research as a way of evaluating curriculum design and innovation (Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995). Case study research promoted the need to determine the

impact which education programmes had, to provide appropriate evidence for policy and practice implementation. Research conducted to date shows that case study research is a particularly valid form of inquiry especially when involving human behaviour and social interaction related to a particular topic of interest.

Case study research is a qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Stake, 2006). Qualitative research is aimed at investigating lived experiences that lead to subjective understandings that are explored in 'real-life' settings. Yin (2003, p. 13) defined case study as an 'empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context'. In every case study, knowledge is constructed by the individuals in unique ways.

Case study research is particularly useful when the boundary between issue and context is not obvious (Cresswell, 2014; Flyvberg, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). A case study design was considered appropriate for this research because it allowed for a comprehensive view of teaching and learning of music theory in Higher Education in Malta. Moreover, this design enabled the researcher to view music theory teaching at MSM from various perspectives (that of the fellow teachers, students and composers) in order to understand the challenges that all these music theory tutors faced when engaging in music theory teaching and learning (Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, 2006).

In the course of this reflective and reflexive research journey, every effort was made to observe the canons of qualitative research. Interaction between participants and the researcher was of paramount significance whilst the researcher was immersed in the field. Using this methodology allowed the researcher to focus thoroughly on teachers', teacher-composers' and students' own perspectives, on their perceptions and experiences of music theory teaching and learning. Marshall and Rossman (2014) argue that an understanding of human behaviour can only be obtained through an understanding of the

framework within which subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings and actions. Therefore, a complete picture was sought throughout the study so that what Stainback and Stainback (1989) referred to as holistic description of events, procedures and philosophies that occur in natural settings, could be achieved.

The natural setting of this study was the MSM, the only school of music on the island which provides music education for students. The MSM is located just outside the capital, Valletta. The school offers diploma and grade examinations both in performance and in theory. As mentioned in Chapter One, the school has now obtained full accreditation from the National Council of Higher Education in Malta. This council had advised the Board of Studies at the school to address the issue of compiling theory of music study guides as per each grade for the music students of the school. The researcher was assigned to prepare and compile the grade VII and Grade VIII theory study guides. Drafts of this resource, which is in the final phase of preparation, were used during the academic year 2018-2019, purposely intended for this current study.

Students at the MSM receive a high degree of personal attention during their instrumental lesson, thus ensuring meaningful learning experiences. This one-to-one individual lesson is supported by group music theory lessons. The MSM has a total enrolment of seven hundred and three students, twenty seven full-time teachers and thirty two adult educators.

This study has adopted a case study methodology and not action research (Cain, 2010, 2012. Laprise, 2017). This is because firstly, a case study methodology allowed the researcher to investigate and understand music theory teaching and learning at Grade VII and Grade VIII levels at her own institution, that is the MSM. Secondly, a case study approach enabled the researcher to closely explore the perceptions, strategies and experiences of other colleagues teaching music theory, as well as the perceptions, strategies and experiences of music students at grades VII and VIII. Finally, although the

ultimate aim of the study was for the author to compile study guides for music theory at Grades VII and VIII that would be relevant and useful to teachers and learners alike, there was no cyclical process of reflecting on practice, taking an action, reflecting and taking further action, despite the fact that draft material from these Guides have been used. Whereas in action research changes in music theory teaching and learning would have been introduced and trialled whilst the study was being conducted, (Petrik, 2016; Cain, 2008; Schmidt Jones, 2016) through the methodology adopted, the changes in music theory teaching and learning will be introduced and put into practice after the research has been completed.

4.6 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND PARTICIPANTS

The study was conducted using qualitative research methods. These included:

- In-depth interviews with individual composer-teachers.
- Focus group interviews with three full-time music lecturers at the Bachelor of Music Programme, University of Malta, lecturing in composition, musicology and performance.
- Focus group interviews with music theory teachers currently teaching music theory at the MSM and
- Focus group interviews with students of grades VII and VIII.

For a summary of all the participants recruited, see Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: The Participants Who Contributed To This Study.

Participants	Number
Composers-teachers	3
Lecturers	3
Music Theory teachers	6

Music Theory students grade VII	15
Music Theory students grade VIII	7

4.6.1 In-Depth Individual Interviews with Composer-Teachers

Lum & Rahman (1994) state that Yin posits that the interview is a very significant source of data which allows the researcher to gather useful information from different perspectives. Three composer-teachers participated in this study and their perceptions and experiences of issues pertaining to music theory teaching and learning at Higher Education were sought. The individual interviews were conducted formally in a single sitting. Each interview lasted one hour and was audio recorded. All three interviewees specialize in music education. This gave more context to the findings of this study.

- Composer 1 specializing in the technique of morphing.⁵
- Composer 2 is a composer-educator specializing in the area of contemporary art music and composition for the media and music technology.
- Composer 3 is a composer, educator and conductor.

These individual interviews followed a script and an in-depth interview protocol (see Appendix 3 for a list of questions).

The interviews focused on teaching music theory by engaging stylistic compositional approaches. In the interviews the researcher enquired the interviewees whether they had received specific training in the teaching of composition; if they were still active composers, and whether they had ever worked as composers or songwriters. The significance of music composition as a subject in the music curriculum was discussed in depth. The researcher delved into the most important skills that composition teachers

⁵ Morphing in music is the blending of two or more sounds by the gradual transformation from one sound into another, or the transfer of features of one sound onto another sound.

should be competent and qualified in. Furthermore, the pedagogical skills of teaching composition were thoroughly reviewed and analysed. The researcher also asked the interviewees whether they felt that they possessed the right aptitude and proficiency to teach composition. In line with this, the researcher and interviewees elaborated on the different teaching strategies music teachers need to adopt when teaching particular topics and concepts to different ages of students. Specifically, best experiences in teaching composition with present and past students were taken up and examined. The researcher asked the interviewees to expand on their preparation as professional composer-teachers, and how they facilitate composition activities with students in Higher Education. The element of compositional techniques featured prominently during the interview. The researcher probed and invited the interviewees to talk about the types of music that they focus on, with the students when working on compositional techniques. Other questions related to the rationale, process involving pre-planning or the intuitive process which encourages trial-and-error and other exploratory means of composing. The researcher also asked whether composing in the learning contexts was crucial and relevant in the field of music education in the Maltese curriculum and extracted their views as to what the main issues of interest in the discipline are.

A central tenet of the interview were the challenges which composer-teachers discern when teaching composition. The researcher needed to know what the function of music technology in composition learning settings is, and how such composer-teachers incorporate it in their teaching strategies. Subsequently, the technological tools used for teaching composition and the way these tools are used, were considered and deliberated. The researcher also enquired about how the process and the product of students' learning in the composition class were evaluated. Moreover, the meaning of creativity and its evaluation in composition was explored. The researcher questioned the composer-

teachers whether they found differences relating to gender when teaching composition. Finally, composition textbooks and resources were discussed.

4.6.2 Focus Group with Full-Time Music Lecturers at The University Of Malta

This focus group interview was undertaken with three current music lecturers at the University of Malta, who were selected on account of their experiences in the field of music education. The three lecturers are all full-time lecturers in the music department in the school of Performing Arts at the University of Malta. During the focus group interview with full-time music lecturers the researcher focused on the philosophies of good music pedagogy teaching (see Appendix 4 for the questions).

- Focus group member one is the Head of Department and his specialization is in the area of ethnomusicology and world music.
- Focus group member two is a composer/conductor with areas of specialization in opera and composition.
- Focus group member three is a senior lecturer specializing in teaching Fundamentals and with main interests in Baroque music.

4.6.3 Teachers' Focus Group Interviews

Semi-structured focus group interviews were undertaken with six music teachers at the MSM outside the context of a workshop organised during 2018. These interviews addressed conditions and factors that allowed teachers to develop good practices, the characteristics for effective music teaching, as well as the knowledge and competencies which a music teacher at Higher Education should possess. A digital recorder was used to record the interviews, which were later transcribed verbatim by the researcher. A pre-determined set of interview questions was used (see Appendix 4). Participants could add

any other information that they felt was relevant. Questions were focused on the cognitive aspects of concepts, such as processing of the elements of music including terms such as monophonic, polyphonic and homophonic, transformative melodic fragments, changes in melody, rhythm, keys, modulations, ornamentation and dynamics. The researcher created all questions after having planned an outline of each chapter of the study guides. These focus group interviews lasted approximately one hour each in duration.

In addition, a workshop was organized at the MSM in June 2018. This drew on recruiting teachers from the MSM. Since this research is being undertaken in the researcher's own practice to improve pedagogy and content of theory of music at the school, the workshop was of significant help to the researcher. Furthermore, the case study research is widely acknowledged to be beneficial in terms of professional development. The workshop lasted three hours and during the first hour, the researcher presented the goal and the objectives of the workshop. The components of the music theory programme at the MSM, the constraints of the programme, music theory teaching methodology, the curriculum, the inclusion and relevance of counterpoint, the use of technology were all targets for discussion. Strategies for teaching students in Higher Education and different approaches to assessment were also debated. The researcher posed the research questions to the participants, after which the attendees were divided into small discussion groups to talk about specific questions. This established the environment of conversation that was so prevalent during the workshop. The discussions with music teachers aimed at helping them consider the motivation behind MSM's curriculum and pedagogical practice and how these could be implemented and integrated in the classrooms. The notion of questioning became a focal point for various discussions following the given presentation. The researcher took field notes during the workshop. After conducting the workshop, the researcher transcribed the audio recorded material and began data analysis by writing commentaries.

Subsequently, on Thursday the 28th of November 2019, a professional development session took place at MSM, where the researcher was invited to deliver a two-hour intensive session on the following theme: ‘Investing in Music Theory Pedagogy’. This was made possible thanks to the re-established collaboration between the Austrian Embassy and the Mikiel Anton Vassalli College, the MSM (formally known as the Johann Strauss School of Music). Over eighty teachers, both theory teachers teaching at the school and studio teachers benefited from this reflective training session which focused on pedagogical implications in music theory teaching. The researcher directed her delivery towards curricular developments, the philosophers’ theories on music theory instruction, instructional methodologies, learning modalities, theories of learning, aural skills, listening and analysis, assessment and the future of music theory teaching and learning in this transformative digital world.

4.6.4 Students’ Focus Group

The purpose of the students’ interviews was to facilitate discussion around the topics presented in the study guides. Two focus group interviews were conducted: one cohort belonging to Grade VII and the other to Grade VIII. Four separate focus group sessions took place each one lasting one hour. The total time of focus group interviews undertaken was four hours. Students were asked to indicate which features of the chapter they particularly liked and enjoyed. Students had to be specific, provide examples and justify their answers. Students in the focus group were asked a number of open-ended questions after each topic of study guide was discussed. This was of special significance and concern to the researcher, who wished to make improvements when they were deemed necessary by the students. Moreover, concepts especially pertaining to the study of part-writing were thoroughly reviewed, discussed and analysed. Students’ views concerning

the presentation of the guides (i.e. the use of fact boxes and illustrations) featured prominently during these meetings. The researcher required the interviewees to expand on the presentation of the topic in discussion, its techniques and its application. In line with this, the content of the new material presented in class was encouraged to be in the foreground of their new compositions. This shed light on participants' experiences of concepts learnt in that particular chapter of the study guides and how the students viewed these experiences in relation to their experience in composition. Specific questions were designed to feature the pedagogical concepts of different topics together with the relevant examples. Additionally, the students were asked to reflect on their experience particularly when applying the new concept into their musical compositions (See Appendix 7). Data was collected from students of one scholastic year. Music theory sessions of two-and-a-half hours duration were delivered by the researcher on a weekly basis. Music theory lessons embraced aural training, solfeggio, part-writing and voice-leading, counterpoint, form, active listening and analysis. With the permission of the students, some of their compositions appear in this thesis to demonstrate how music theory concepts have been applied in practice in the students' compositions (See Appendix 7).

All interviews of students' focus groups were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. The total number of students registered in the grade VII programme during the academic year 2018-2019 amounted to fifteen, whilst the number of Grade VIII students amounted to eight. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 provide information on the participant students. The students have agreed for their real names to be used in the presentation of the data.

Table 4.2: Grade VII Music Theory Students 2018-2019

GRADE VII MUSIC THEORY STUDENTS 2018-2019			
	NAME OF STUDENT	AGE	LEVEL OF INSTRUMENT PRACTISED
1	Jenny	59	Violoncello Grade V
2	Julian	14	Clarinet Grade VII/Piano Diploma
3	Michela	15	Violin Grade VIII/Harp Grade V
4	Christian	28	Classical Voice Grade VIII
5	Kelsey	16	Flute Grade VI
6	Christabelle	19	Harp Grade IV
7	Jurgen	19	Percussion Grade IV
8	Emma	16	Violin Grade VIII
9	Claire	15	Piano Grade VII
10	Nathan	15	Piano Diploma/Classical Voice Grade IV
11	Brenda	25	Classical Voice Grade VI
12	Rachel	25	Piano Grade VII
13	Melissa	15	Piano Grade VIII
14	Anne	16	Violin Grade VII
15	Alexia	15	Piano Grade V

Table 4.3 provides information on the Grade VIII music theory cohort for the academic year 2018-2019, students' age and level of instrument practised. Again, the students have agreed for their real names to be used in the presentation of the data.

Table 4.3: Grade VIII Music Theory Students 2018-2019			
GRADE VIII MUSIC THEORY STUDENTS 2018-2019			
	NAME OF STUDENT	AGE	LEVEL OF INSTRUMENT PRACTISED
1	Curtis	18	Saxophone Grade VII
2	Brandon	16	Piano Grade VIII
3	Matthew	15	Piano Grade VIII/Violin Diploma
4	Audrey	18	Clarinet Grade VII
5	Maria	18	Violin Grade VIII
6	Darren	17	Clarinet Grade V/Classical Voice Grade IV
7	Quintin	42	Classical Guitar Grade III

4.6.5 The Content of the Study Guides

The development of the study guides was very much influenced by the feedback received by the students however, its content was pre-determined and in line with curriculum considerations of the MSM. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 indicate the official course content specifications for Grades VII and VIII Theory. The content includes developing the students' knowledge in the areas of harmony, counterpoint, and composition, developing aural awareness, engaging in solfège and in active listening. The differences in content underline the importance for a sense of progression as the students' musical skills and awareness increase.

Table 4.4: The Official Course Content Specifications for Grade VII Theory

GRADE VII

HARMONY

- Diatonic secondary seventh chords in major and minor keys – function, resolutions and inversions
- Secondary dominants/ tonicisation
- Diminished seventh chords
- The neapolitan 6th chord
- Implied modulations
- Modulation from minor to closely related keys
- Suspensions/pedal notes – I and V

COUNTERPOINT

- Introduction to Two-Part Practical Counterpoint

COMPOSITION

Rhythm:

- Graphic score sound picture
- Composing a rhythmic canon for cymbals, woodblocks and drums
- Composing a layered ostinato for unpitched percussion instruments using the aba structure

Pitch:

- Composing in the modal idiom
- Composing using the pentatonic scale
- Composing using the whole-tone scale
- Composing a round and a canon
- Composing a medieval dance
- Composing a baroque dance in simple binary form

AURAL

- Writing the upper or lower part of a two-part passage.
- To identify chords in a harmonic progression.
- To state whether any passage beginning in a major key modulates to the dominant or its relevant minor.
- To answer questions on the features of a piece including the general perception of texture, form style and period.

SOLFEGGIO

- Solfeggio Rihards, pp. 35-41

ACTIVE LISTENING

- Der Freischutz –C. M. Von Weber
- Erikonig-Kie Forelle-An Sylvia – F. Schubert
- Revolutionary Etude – F. Chopin
- Symphonie Fantastique – H. Berlioz
- The Hebrides – F. Mendelssohn
- Les Preludes – F. Liszt
- Violin Concerto in D major – P. I. Tchaikowsky
- The Valkyrie –R. Wagner

Table 4.5: Official Course Content Specifications Grade VIII

GRADE VIII

HARMONY

- Diatonic chords – extension of the triad: 9th, 11th and 13th chords
- Chromatically borrowed and altered chords.
- Augmented 6th chords
- Other chromatic chords
- Modulation to remote keys
- Applied secondary dominants
- Chromatic and enharmonic modulation

COUNTERPOINT

- Practical Two-Part Counterpoint

COMPOSITION

- Composing a twelve-bar blues
- Composing a popular song
- Composing a theme with variations for keyboard or trio
- Composing a simple string quartet in the style of the Classical Period
- Composing a piece for keyboard using a five-note tone row

AURAL

- Writing the upper or lower part of a two-part passage.
- To identify chords in a harmonic progression.
- To identify the modulations in a short passage: modulations will be directed to related keys.
- Consolidation of matters relating to any of the musical features of musical excerpts of any musical genre and style.

SOLFEGGIO

- Solfeggio Rihards, pp. 42-53

ACTIVE LISTENING

- Voiles – C. Debussy
- Rumanian Folk Dancing – B. Bartok
- Rhapsody in Blue – G. Gershwin
- Rite of Spring – I. Stravinsky
- Pierrot Lunaire – A. Schoenberg
- Five Pieces for Orchestra – A. Webern
- Violin Concerto – A. Berg
- The Love of Three Oranges – S. Prokofiev
- Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima – K. Penderecki

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESSES

To analyse transcripts from individual and focus groups interviews the researcher used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis has been used extensively in qualitative research in music education (See Varvarigou, 2014; 2016; O' Bryan, 2015; Power & Power, 2018; and Perkins, Yorke & Fancourt, 2018). All focus group and individual interviews were coded by hand, using both emic codes, that is, those emerging from the data and etic codes, that is, those deriving from the literature and the research questions. In trying to understand the case, Stake (1995, p. 78) reiterated that 'sometimes,

we find significant meaning in a single stance, but usually the important meanings will come from reappearance over and over'. Verbatim transcription of all interviews was prepared for the data analysis phase of the research. The problem of transcription and analysis is well recognised as Riessman (2008, p.50) notes, 'we play a major part in constituting the narrative data that we analyse'. The researcher read, reflected on and made analytic memos throughout the process. Data analysis resulted in 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of music theory teaching and learning at the MSM.

In the immersion phase, students' transcripts were read several times, thus ensuring an in-depth familiarisation of the researcher with the raw data. Researcher coded interviews using an inductive approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data analysis was ongoing during the data collection period through a constant comparative approach. Field notes, also proved useful evidence for emergent themes (Creswell, 2007). Sample material chapters were presented during each lesson and through their implementation, emerging themes in music theory pedagogy in Higher Education were identified. When all the data was analysed the researcher looked for relationships between the themes. As recurring themes emerged, the researcher was then in a better position to understand the relationships between the themes. In the following phase the final overarching themes were revised. Themes were sorted out into various levels by formulating a hierarchy wherein lower-level themes were sorted together under higher-level themes. For example, positioning music theory pedagogy as the central theme, the remaining themes discuss tools and resources, digital technologies, the connection of theory with practice and assessment. The students' responses revolved around connecting theory with practice, singing and aural discrimination skills, studying historical contexts and feedback on the study guides.

4.8 ISSUES OF VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In qualitative research rigour relies on trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Trustworthiness underpins the consolidation of detailed descriptions from participants who bring along different perspectives to their shared engagement. Lincoln and Guba (1986) also acknowledge that credibility, transferability and confirmability as important elements of trustworthiness in qualitative research. The credibility of this study was addressed in numerous ways. The established relationships that the participants had with the researcher provided an important element of credibility in that the researcher could trust the participants to be honest about what they argued and discussed. All the participants were familiar with the practitioner-researcher and were comfortable to work and collaborate with her. Also, the music theory teachers reviewed interviews' transcripts for veracity. In addition, methodological triangulation (Cain, 2012) was successfully employed, where multiple data collection tools – i.e. individual and focus groups with teachers and students and in different settings and phases of the research - helped to provide evidence for triangulation (Patton, 2002). Efforts towards credibility involved member checking wherein data, interpretations and conclusions were shared with the participants.

By offering detailed and contextualized descriptions of the setting and the participants, the study was able to have enough information to draw conclusions about transferability to a particular situation (Merriam, 2009). The study presented a description of the setting – the MSM, the University of Malta, the practitioner-researcher's classroom together with a description of the participant music theory teachers and students that allow the readers to make decisions regarding transferability of results to their own situation (Creswell, 2007). Finally, with reference to confirmability, the researcher was cautious to show respect for privacy, to establish an honest and open interaction and to avoid

misrepresentations of the participants' opinions and perspectives (Warusznki, 2002). Therefore, the supervisors acted as critical friends in cross-checking the overall thematic analysis and the interpretation of the responses from the participants involved in the study.

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Several ethical considerations were observed to ensure that the study was conducted in an appropriate manner (Mouton and Babbie, 2001). The researcher was responsible to completely inform the participants of the different aspects of the research. In an introductory letter sent to all participants, the researcher introduced herself, explained the background to her study, the objective of the research, the participants' potential role, the procedure and feedback expected from the discussions and interviews. Participation of the respondents in this dissertation was voluntary. Participants had the right to withdraw from the project at any stage if they wished to do so. Decision for participation was made without any pressure and coercion. When all participants agreed that they had understood all the components of the information letter clearly, they were asked to give their consent to participate in this study by signing a written consent form (see Appendix 8). The researcher made certain that the ethics review checklist was completed for ethics review approval. The ethics chair of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Canterbury Christchurch University UK, approved the researcher's application. This also included the overseas ethic declaration for research undertaken with participants outside the United Kingdom and the general risk assessment form. A formal ethical compliance letter was issued in due course from the office of Research and Design, Integrity and Development (CCCU) (see Appendix 8).

The ethical concerns of anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were paramount throughout the research process. Every effort was made to ensure that no

identification of who produced what information, was to be revealed in public. The researcher made sure that anonymity and confidentiality were observed throughout the procedure. **This study focused on the perceptions and experiences of composers, lecturers and teachers. For the purpose of anonymity, these will be referred to as Composer 1 (C1), Composer 2)C2), Composer 3 (C3), Lecturer 1 (L1), 2 (L2) and 3 (L3), and Teachers: T1, T2, T3, T4, T5 and T6.** However, it is worth noting that the music students who participated, wished for their real names to be presented. The researcher gained permission from the principal of the MSM – the research site. The gatekeeper, that is, the principal of the MSM, provided site access. It is to be noted that the gatekeeper herself had encouraged the researcher to initiate the study after she had been asked by the National Council of Further and Higher Education to develop music theory resources for the entire school population.

4.10 METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations to this study. The first limitation is that the research site was one school, with one music theory class for grade VII and one for grade VIII. Also, there was a change of enrollment of the surveyed classes because of participants' drop out from school. Increasing the number of schools and classes may enhance the generalizability of the findings of this study. Secondly, in terms of the methodology chosen, the size of the sample of the student groups could be taken as a limitation. Due to the small size of the students, which was not more than eight and fifteen in the two music theory classes, the data collected and the findings that emerged cannot be extrapolated on a broader scale. The school's population is on the increase and future research can be conducted with a bigger number of student participants.

Another limitation could be that teaching took place in a mixed-age classroom. This had several effects on the classroom environment. The researcher devised strategies which created a balance between the sixteen year olds and the mature students. The researcher provided opportunities of self-directed learning for all participant students. Teaching music theory classes where the age of the students was the same or roughly the same would probably yield different responses from the students on their perceptions, strategies and experiences of music theory learning in Higher Education at the MSM.

Another limitation could be that interviews were not all conducted the same way, which could have influenced the responses of the participants. In one instance the researcher found herself conducting a Skype interview at the request of one of the respondents, a composer-teacher, who insisted that he was too busy for a face-to-face interview. During the Skype interview there were certain situations when it was virtually impossible to have eye contact due to camera positioning. The researcher believes that eye contact is a powerful tool for building up robust data during an interview. Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) suggest that face-to-face interviews provide more detailed responses. The interviews had to seriously take into account how questions were posed, not to make interviewees uncomfortable. The interview was structured and the researcher realized that each composer had a different style in answering. The researcher noted that during the interview she needed to gauge the atmosphere of the interview and realized that the composers preferred to articulate their views but there were instances when composers were asked subject questions that they were not particularly at ease answering. The researcher realised that she had to be extra cautious not to let interviewee veer off from the focus of the research.

Finally, the epistemological position of the researcher is rooted in an interpretivist approach; this in itself determined the nature and the objectives of the approach. In this sense, the results of this dissertation can be deemed as biased. The researcher's situational

bias could in fact be the strongest objection to this research. Due to the researcher's personal beliefs, the researcher could have designed the type of questions she asked on a way that inadvertently influenced the responses. This was counterbalanced by adequate monitoring through external checking by the supervisors leading to comprehensive auditing.

4.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter started by presenting a proposed theoretical framework on effective teaching and learning of music theory in Higher Education as it emerged from a detailed study of literature on music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education. The framework will structure the analysis of the data in the chapters that follow. Subsequently, the chapter presented the philosophical and the theoretical assumptions underlying the research methodology of this study. In addition, the researcher outlined and provided a rationale for the suitability of the research methodology applied in this study as well as her position as a researcher-practitioner. The nature of the research asked for the qualitative form of inquiry bound by the constructivist-interpretivist approach. Therefore, a case study approach was adopted. The methods used for the collection of data, included the focus group and individual interviews with composer-teachers, university lecturers, music theory teachers and students, and feedback from the sample chapters presented during the academic year 2018-2019. The data were analyzed thematically. The chapter concluded with a brief discussion of validity and reliability issues, ethical considerations and the methodological limitations of this research study. The two chapters that follow present the analysis of the responses from the participants of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES FROM COMPOSER – TEACHERS, MUSIC LECTURERS AND MUSIC TEACHERS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an analysis of the responses from composer-teachers, music lecturers, and music teachers teaching music theory on issues related to effective music theory instruction in Higher Education. This chapter will address them all as music theory teachers, for they have all been involved in teaching music theory in different contexts, including Higher Education. Their responses are presented in this chapter collectively. The theoretical framework illustrated in Chapter 4 structured the presentation of the data. The two main themes of responses revolved around the *musical skills* to be developed through music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education and effective *approaches* to music theory teaching and learning. Six distinct sub-themes emerged under the first theme. These are (1) The function of the music theory curriculum; (2) Nurturing aural training skills; (3) Nurturing sight singing skills; (4) Sources and approaches for developing analytical skills; (5) Incorporating keyboard harmony, improvisation, composition and performance; and (6) Combining different types of notation and counterpoint. Four sub-themes emerged under the second theme. These are: (1) Using technology to enhance music teaching and learning; (2) Connecting theory with practice; (3) Pedagogies and resources for integrating composition; and (4) Assessing music theory learning in Higher Education. (See Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: The main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of the responses from music theory teachers.

<i>Musical skills to be developed through music theory teaching and learning</i>	<i>Effective Approaches to music theory teaching and learning</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The function of the music theory curriculum 2. Nurturing aural training 3. Nurturing sight singing skills 4. Sources and approaches for developing analytical skills 5. Incorporating keyboard harmony, improvisation, composition and performance 6. Combining different types of notation and counterpoint 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using technology to enhance music teaching and learning 2. Connecting theory with practice 3. Pedagogies and resources for integrating composition 4. Assessing music theory learning in Higher Education

5.2 MUSICAL SKILLS TO BE DEVELOPED THROUGH MUSIC THEORY TEACHING AND LEARNING

5.2.1 The Function of a Music Theory Curriculum

Although most music theory teachers agreed that it is of utmost importance to make MSM students think in music, it emerged that there is a lack of consensus on the function of a music theory curriculum. **In adhering to the perceptions and experiences of effective music theory teaching at MSM, it transpired that for some participants,** the function of music theory was to provide conceptual knowledge and skills and to support the work of the instrumental and vocal teacher. For others, it was to support aural training and analytical skills.

T.5: The main function of music theory should be to facilitate and help both the student and the performance teacher during his practice lesson.

T.1: The main function is knowledge of the basic rudiments of theory and how this is applied in aural training. We want our students to engage actively with the ideas in music and to work beneath its actual surface.

L.1: In my view, the function of the core curriculum in music theory should be that of equipping students with analytical skills which they can apply to a range of musical genres and styles across all musical traditions and cultures.

T.2: Knowing proper harmonic vocabulary and analysing scores together with the ability of composing and predicting traditional Western melodies including implied harmonic progressions underneath.

L.1: In my case students need to attain analytical skills and methods in order to scrutinize elements.... they need to express their analytical observations into a well-written report with relevant musical examples to illustrate their argumentation.

Such lack of consensus explains the lack of a standardised approach to focusing on honing specific students' skills, and to teaching music theory at MSM and other contexts within the Maltese Islands. It could also explain music theory teachers' weakness in convincing music learners that music theory is indeed significant for their music studies and musical careers. More experienced music theory teachers specifically insisted that the skills to be attained through music theory learning need to be varied and to include knowledge of music history and advanced musicianship.

T.1: The ability to fully comprehend chromatic harmony in depth. To understand how musical compositions were written throughout the historical period in their respective form, structure and harmony.

T.3: A musician must know how to interpret the structure of a twentieth-century piece of music both from the aesthetical and a theoretical point of view. Students must be encouraged to include twentieth-century music in their performances and understand the harmonic structure of the extracts.

L.1: Knowledge of melodic transformation, forms, textures, rhythm and its various forms including rhythmic cycles, tonality, melodic modes, harmonic progressions and development, world music relationships as well as conceptual knowledge concerning contrast, repetition and variation in music.

A discourse that emerged from discussions with the music theory teachers was connected as to whether they should teach a restricted repertoire of concepts and literature in detail or whether they should include many topics in the curriculum at the risk of superficiality. Teacher 3 argued that this depended on the level being taught.

T.3: This depends on the level being taught. I think that the students must go through the traditional core repertoire, but must also be equipped to embark on their own personal experience of repertoire and develop an individual perception.

Teacher 4 expressed the opinion that in higher grades she preferred exposure to a variety of concepts. She insisted that music is a powerful influence of human emotion and that it should be experienced with all the senses.

T.4: In higher grades, I prefer exposure to a diverse amount of concepts rather than venture for depth. We are not transmitting the soul of music learning to our students – the idea that music is sound and needs to be experienced with most senses. Students associate music with playing, writing, studying, difficult aural and solfeggio training and do not focus on the emotions of music, on the pleasure, and on personal and societal transformation through music.

Lastly, Teacher 2 acknowledged that time constraints influenced what is taught and what is left out of a music theory curriculum.

T.2: Essentially, one has to look at the bigger picture and we as individuals need to take decisions for ourselves. In an examination setting there is the grading system

with concentration on certain topics, getting more difficult by the level. At the same time, there is an increase in topics... analysing, historical concepts, harmony, repertoire, etc... making it more complicated to get to know a particular subject properly in a restricted amount of time. This is the point of the entire argument: should one completely ignore the concept of time, it would facilitate the learner into exploring multiple topics and all with a certain depth avoiding the so called surface learning approach for the sake of an exam. Thus as I stated before, I believe that at the end of the day it all depends on the individual.

To sum up, there seemed to be a lack of consensus amongst music theory teachers on the function of music theory in the general music education curriculum for the higher grades (VII and VIII), which could explain why music theory learners are not always sure about the usefulness of music theory on their music studies. Moreover, they expressed uncertainty as to whether they should focus on depth or width of concepts and literature covered, but they agreed that time constraints make teaching all the components of an effective music theory curriculum, and hence developing all the essential music theory skills, challenging.

5.2.2 Nurturing Aural Training Skills

The component of aural skills was discussed during one of the focus group interviews. Music theory teachers stressed that aural skills should be learnt through experiential activities. However, they recognised that they integrate theory and aural skills in their teaching and suggested that music theory and aural skills should be taught by the same teachers. The respondents also acknowledged that more emphasis should be placed on thinking in sound and they agreed that MSM students do not connect sound with the musical notation.

T.3: I always incorporate the aural aspect. As a pianist, I must put extra effort to project the distinction between an interval of a major third to a wider interval like that of a major seventh. One must make such a distance tangible as if one is playing a 'cello and undergoing skips to play wider intervallic patterns. It is also important to understand the tonal colour between playing C major chord and C minor chord: to be able to sing the melodic interval between the C and E and the C and E flat. Other theoretical aspects such as modulations and tonal sequences must be identified, as such changes create change of mood and colour to the piece.

T.5: I always try to integrate theory and aural together as much as possible. Theoretical aspects are reinforced in the aural sessions and vice-versa.

T.2: In every lesson, I like to dedicate some time to aural training and include some solfeggio exercises during short warming up excerpts. I like to refer to the piano whenever I am talking about fundamentals in theory.

T.1: I include every topic both during the theory lessons and in the aural training sessions.

Music theory teachers also suggested that the MSM music theory curriculum should develop students' error detection skills. This involves the skill of audiation, for error detection requires perceptual, cognitive and evaluative skills.

T.1: Intervals, rhythmic and melodic dictation, two-part melodic dictation, modulation, identification of modes, whole tone scale, pentatonic scale, seventh type chords and harmonic progression. As a school we should add error detection as well.

T.2: Intervals, triad types, seventh chord types, melodic dictation, harmonic dictation, rhythmic dictation and modulation.

Specifically, P.C. stated that aural transcription tasks are part of his curriculum design.

L.1: In my case, aural transcription tasks which are always assessed, are always accompanied by an analytical report which should refer to rhythm, melody, harmony, modulations etc., depending on the music in question.

With regard to the pedagogical resources used to teach aural skills, the music theory teachers mentioned a variety of material including the application Auralia books by examination boards, such as the ABRSM recordings, transcriptions and self-composed exercises.

T.1: There is a very good aural application called Auralia, which I utilize on a weekly basis.

L.1: Texts, recordings and personal material such as incomplete transcriptions as a way of introducing transcription techniques.

L.2: Personal materials together with ABRSM books, books suggested by colleagues and music excerpts from various books.

T.3: *Bona - Metodo Completo per la Divisione* is one of the texts I use to teach. However, I frequently use the repertoire the student will be studying as studying material for aural skills.

T.2: All ABRSM specimen aural test books, Trinity aural training books, personally customised exercises based on general repertoire: for example, using excerpts from a Beethoven piano sonata to train the student on cadence points, harmonic progression and melodic recall.

T.5: I like to use different materials to make aural sessions more effective. I have personal materials and resources which I gather over time: rhythmic cards, different

anthologies and a music software programme which helps to make the session more interactive.

Finally, it was acknowledged that aural training should be approached systematically and that music theory teachers should provide students with tools to use at home, such as inform them on how to employ singing.

T.4: There needs to be more emphasis on explaining why aural skills are important and the focus on sound. Also, interval recognition, both melodic and harmonic is still a weak component in aural skills. We need to put more emphasis on how interval recognition will help our students to recognize chords and progressions, how they will help our students to improvise and how interval recognition will help them to play by ear.

T.2: I would include the element of writing so that one knows the material not only by listening but also knows how to translate that sound into symbol....interval recognition, followed by writing the interval down on the music manuscript, first note given to start with.

T.5: Sometimes I feel that students do not have practical and easy tools to link aural training done at school with aural training done at home. I do find it challenging to help the young ones to provide these tools. I would try to explore new tools for the young ones to facilitate acquisition of new aural skills.

T.3: More singing: My students find difficulty in interval recognition when I present them in a downward fashion.

T.1: There needs to be a paradigm shift with the way our students perceive as aural skills. Students need to invest in aural applications and constantly drill on a daily

basis different aural exercises at home. Students lack discipline when it comes to aural training.

L.1: A more gradual and perhaps step-by-step approach – in a more systematic way to the making of aural transcription. I would emphasize the component of error detection which promotes perceptual listening and helps the student to evaluate a variety of musical characteristics.

According to the music theory teachers of this study, there is a wider variety of aural skills that should be nurtured as part of music theory instruction. These should be taught by the same tutor and through a variety of resources.

5.2.3 Nurturing Sight Singing Skills

Although sight singing could be considered as part of aural skills, because the music theory teachers talked extensively about it, this chapter includes their perspectives in a separate section as they had a lot to say about that. Music theory teachers concurred that sight singing should be included in the music theory curriculum. One core issue discussed was the use of solmization. In general terms, solmization was a contentious subject among music theory teachers. Some of these teachers favoured using the fixed do, others the moveable do, others scale degree numbers and others neutral syllables. Most music theory teachers found the moveable do approach helpful, because they argued that with this method the pitch of the intervals is identical irrespective of the key.

L.3: Moving do, although a number of students complain that they find it hard. However, I think that in the long term for pitching it is useful.

T.5: Moving do. I support my students during sight singing using the piano. I try not to overshadow my students' singing with my piano accompaniment.

L.1: The movable do. The lah-based minor.

Others used the fixed do method because they found this an effective pedagogical tool in strengthening the relationship between the notes in the context of a specific key.

T.1: I use the fixed do.

T.2: I use the fixed do, or letter names C, D, E etc. but I do not know why excerpts are always given in the treble clef.

Another music theory teacher remarked that giving the starting note and not overshadowing students with piano accompaniment is vital, and another observed that training in sight singing should feature not only the treble clef but also the bass clef, especially for male singers – tenors, baritones and basses. All in all, this section presented discussions on the different ways that sight singing could be nurtured.

5.2.4 Sources and Approaches for Developing Analytical Skills

Music theory teachers agreed that the music theory curriculum should include a variety of musical repertoire for analysis and performance. Popular, jazz and world music were proposed as musical genres that are worthwhile analysing as part of music theory training.

T.2: I believe that a good balance of repertoire would be the best option.

T.4: Popular music and sacred music.

T.5: I do sometimes use popular music and non-Western music. When I am teaching form I refer to musical examples from popular music for students to understand when teaching texture, I like to use non-Western music clips to get a better understanding of the word ‘heterophony’.

T.3: Shifting no – but tackle some works by Asian composers such Toru Takemitsu or Tan-Dun, yes. I think it is important for a musician to experience non-Western idiom in music.

T.2: Diatonic and chromatic harmony are necessary. Budding contemporary and jazz musicians would think on such knowledge, giving them access to many possibilities for their performance skills. For the more traditionally inclined classical musician, there would be the benefit of having a deeper understanding of a wide spectrum of genres in music from medieval to twenty-first century music.

Moreover, music theory teachers affirmed that teaching theory through stylistic analysis makes the cognitive aspects of theoretical concepts easier to develop and internalize. Also, a useful approach could be to contextualise the study of music within a broader framework through music analysis.

C.1: As much as possible theoretical knowledge is required to do music analysis properly. A knowledge of forms mainly in traditional analysis, the basics of Schenkerian analysis and set-theory analysis.

T.5: Even from a young age students are thought analytical skills through active listening sessions where I make them listen carefully and teach them to critically analyse different musical elements found in a piece of music.

T.2: The ability to have an inner hearing of what you are seeing – this might not necessarily be in the right pitch, but having a good sense of relative pitching would make analysing music much easier and more accurate.

T.1: Through the use of diverse music literature, analytical skills can be developed. This helps my students to understand the concept of form and structure. Also, diatonic and chromatic harmony can be explored by investigating different types of

scores ranging from piano music to string quartets and then progress to symphonic scores.

L.1: Since my field of teaching is ethnomusicology, I am mainly concerned with how different music cultures including the Western tradition think about their music and eventually transform that thinking into an organized musical structure. It is very important for students to learn how to bring together the study of ‘the music itself’ with theories from a range of disciplines such as anthropology, cultural studies and studies in the performing arts. The former inquiry implies the acquisition of analytical musical skills.

In summary, the music theory teachers explained that analytical skills could be developed through studying a variety of musical genres, through emphasising the significance of active listening, and through contextualising the study of music within a broader framework through music analysis.

5.2.5 Incorporating Keyboard Harmony, Improvisation, Composition and Performance

The responses regarding keyboard harmony and improvisation were quite revealing. The majority of teachers stated that they do not integrate keyboard harmony and improvisation during the music theory class. Senior teachers commented that this is so, because of time constraints. Others asserted that they were not trained to improvise. Furthermore, it appeared that many teachers who taught music theory had a very vague notion of what was expected of them in improvisation. Thoughts were also expressed as to how keyboard harmony and improvisation can be integrated in the theory curriculum.

L.1: Improvisation is encouraged in my classes by in-class imitation of improvised music from world music recordings. I only encourage keyboard players to

improvise at the keyboard. Students whose main instrument is not the keyboard, normally prefer to improvise on their major instrument.

T.5: In the level that I teach, when I am teaching scales or intervallic relationships, I always refer to the keyboard and encourage the students to do the same during class and when at home.

T.4: Unfortunately, I am not trained in improvisation, so this is a drawback. I ask the students to play, sing and clap back anything we compose.

T.2: The keyboard has the possibility of playing melody and harmony at the same time. Fundamental keyboard knowledge is essential, leading to a more comprehensive approach to theoretical studies.

Music theory teachers felt that there was much to gain from embracing and integrating composition, improvisation and performance in the theory class. These three components reportedly helped students to apply what they are learning in music theory directly to music that they are performing outside school premises, such as their village choirs and in their ‘festa’⁶ bands.

T.2: If an adequate amount of time is available all three elements can be related to one another in a particular task, for example, someone composes a set of chord progressions, then plays these chords after each other, after which a melody is improvised on top of these chords. If possible, a different student can try a different melody based on these chords.

⁶ Festa is a typical Maltese religious village feast, held in the honour of patron saints every year. It combines colourful lights, band music and fireworks displays. It is an annual event of noisy streets filled with food, drinks and fanfare.

The music theory teachers recognised the importance of integrating theory teaching with composition, improvisation and performance. It was argued that through composition, improvisation and performance, students become aware that the materials they are learning in music theory can be applied to musical performance. They also assented that an integration of the three skills is the most appropriate way to facilitate learning of concepts in music theory instruction and that they have a positive impact on students' theoretical knowledge and understanding.

L.1: I encourage composition through short pastiche compositions from different world music traditions. Improvisation through in-class imitation of improvised music from world music recordings and performance through in-class playing of the transcriptions produced by the students.

T.5: ...In my lower grades, students are asked to continue a two-bar rhythm, first they state their answer aurally through clapping and then they write the rhythm down.

While the responses of most music theory teachers affirmed the clear connection amongst these musical skills, there were music theory teachers who commented that practically it was not possible to achieve this connection due to time constraints.

T.3: Depends on the duration of the sessions and the amount of topics to be covered – however, giving tasks to students to compose a short piece, perform it in class and analyse it, is encouraged.

Connecting composition, improvisation and performance during music theory training was identified as a unique way to inspire the students as music becomes alive and more relevant inside and outside the music theory classroom. Nevertheless, there were two music theory teachers who disagreed with the idea of integrating composition,

improvisation and performance during their music theory lesson, as they felt that it did not seem to enthuse the students.

C.1: Unfortunately I do not do this enough. Keyboards were recently provided in the lecture room. However I did not manage to integrate their use within the coursework of advanced harmony in particular, and when I tried it the students were not particularly enthusiastic.

T.1: I do not integrate improvisation as it is still not well defined and articulated in the curriculum. Of course my students know what improvisation means. I focus mainly on composition and performance as I generally perform their compositions on the piano.

In conclusion, the music theory teachers recognised that improvisation and keyboard skills are important components of music theory teaching in the higher grades, but they acknowledged that they are not used as often as they should, because of lack of time and confidence on the part of the tutors teaching them. They also underscored that composition, improvisation and performance should work together in building music theory students' skills but again, due to time constraints and lack of enthusiasm and probably confidence on the part of the students, they are not integrated in music theory teaching and learning.

5.2.6 Combining Different Types of Notation and Counterpoint

With respect to the type of notation used for music writing, music theory teachers were asked to specify which type of notation they prefer to use for music writing – whether they use lead-sheet symbols, figured bass, Roman numerals or Schenkerian analysis. Respondents answered that this depended on the style and instrument of the individual.

For tonal-period harmony, they reported using figured bass and Roman numerals, whereas for jazz they used lead-sheet as the main notational style.

T.2: Since I am a pianist and a keyboardist, I use all types of notation depending on the situation. Knowing and understanding all of these notation styles is important and a helpful tool.

C.1: Normal notation: figured bass.

L.1: Western staff notation, which also includes jazz notation for jazz music classes. Students in ethnomusicology also attain very basic knowledge of the cipher notation system and world music notations such as the Chinese qin notation, the Japanese shakuhachi notation and the use of mnemonics in world music studies.

T.1: I use figured bass and roman numerals during the harmony lessons.

C.2: I expose my students to both figured bass and roman numerals notation.

What is more, music theory teachers stated that a historical – chronological approach to teaching music theory should be the most effective. For instance, lecturer 1. remarked that the study of stylistic harmony should be aligned with its historical and chronological context.

L.1: In my opinion the study of stylistic harmony should be taught in its historical and chronological context.

T.1: Core area in Higher Education should comprise seventh chords, secondary dominants, advanced modulation, diminished seventh chords, Neapolitan sixth chord, extensions of the ninths, eleven and thirteenths, chromatic harmony, borrowed chords, altered chords, augmented sixth chords. Concept of advanced harmony, especially during the Romantic and Twentieth-century music is both significant and essential in the core area written theory part.

Specifically, Lecturer 3, stated that harmonic progressions should be studied in the context of a piece of music not just as a theoretical exercise.

L.3: Diatonic and chromatic harmony should feature prominently in the core written part of the theory curriculum in Higher Education. Harmonic progressions should be studied in the context of a piece of music.

Possibly as a result of his many years of teaching experience, Lecturer 2, acknowledged that music theory notation training should include the basic rules of voice leading.

L.2: Core area written component should include the basic rules of voice-leading.

The music theory teachers discussed the relevance of practical counterpoint in the theory curriculum, its course design, the course's learning outcomes and the general pedagogical approach. They expressed the view that training in counterpoint is worthwhile because it provides the foundation for understanding compositions of contemporary music.

C.1: I think that there should be a good basic grounding in eighteenth-century counterpoint up to the basics of fugue, as well as a basic knowledge of counterpoint in the style of Palestrina.

T.2.: It gives learners an increased possibility of a more interesting compositional canvas. Counterpoint is a tool used in several contemporary musical works.

L.1: Theoretical and practical knowledge of counterpoint via species is mostly needed for students majoring in composition. Having said that, the direct approach strategy used for teaching counterpoint is also needed to support and compliment other areas of the curriculum such as history, orchestration and aesthetics.

Again, here the music theory teachers emphasized that this subject should preferably be presented in the chronological organization of its historical materials, thus allowing

students to experience the gradual development of contrapuntal practice, all along different eras in the history of music.

T.3: I think it is important to teach practical counterpoint using a combination of both approaches – the species method and the direct method. The thoroughbass method used for the direct approach is the most prominent pedagogical approach even if one presents the material from a historical point of view.

In closing, the music theory teachers talked about combining different types of notations, taking a historical – chronological approach and exploring counterpoint, as part of music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education.

5.3 EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO MUSIC THEORY TEACHING AND LEARNING

5.3.1 Using Technology to Enhance Music Theory Teaching and Learning

One of the greatest challenges in teaching music theory in Higher Education that music theory teachers within a Maltese context identified, was to identify the potential use and impact of creative digital technologies in music theory pedagogy. All music teachers highlighted that during their music theory classes they make use of different software programmes for notation, composition, aural skills, some of which were Sibelius, Noteflight, Muscore, Transcribe, Auralia and Meludia (see Appendix 6). They also mentioned that they use platforms and websites such as Spotify and YouTube to do class listening of excerpts which would then be used for discussion. One music theory teacher also talked about the importance of encouraging the students to reflect on their learning through the use of online journals.

C.1: I use my laptop, together with the monitor and speakers in the lecture room. Mostly I play video clips for the students.

L.1: *[I use...]* Recordings, online video clips, Sibelius music software programmes and a transcription software called Transcribe.

T.5: *[I use...]* The Smartboard, I use technological tools mostly for aural tests and to grade and keep a record of the students' progress. Additionally, students also use music apps.

C.3: *[I use...]* Websites found on the resource section of MSM website and the Smartboard.

T.3.: I encourage students to download three applications, namely Classic F.M., Spotify and Youtube.

C.3: *[I use...]* Digital Audio Workstation; notation software: Sibelius, Finale, Dorico and Musescore; Restorative Audio Software such as iZotope 5 and Adobe Audition; Samplers and sample libraries: Kontakt Players, Vienna Symphonic Library (VSL), SpitfireAudio, Albion V, CineBrass, CineWinds, CinePerc, CineStrings (see Appendix 6). These tools are mainly used to create sheet music scores and sound tracks from notated works to complete audio manipulation processes such as warping, shifting, EQing and phasing etc.

C.2: In the case of traditional music, Sibelius and Finale are definitely the standard tools. When dealing with experimental electronic sounds, sequences, synths and samplers along with audio recording and editing are definitely the most popular tools. These may include Reason, MAX, MSP, etc.

T.2: As to resources for composing and arranging, I use Sibelius. For music education I use worksheets etc., Noteflight and Musescore. For aural training I use Auralia, Meludia and websites which offer varied practice exercises such as musictheory. net

T.1: The present hand-written student's journal can be transformed into an online VLE journal. Regarding resources, I use the Smartboard of course. The other application that I use is for aural training exercises. Auralia is used mainly for drill and practice.

The music theory teachers interviewed promoted the integration of music technology as a new and useful tool in the music theory curriculum, for they argued that technology has become part of people's everyday life and therefore needs to be welcomed into music theory instruction and practice.

T.6.: Technology in composition is a new tool which helps the student to explore different routes. Technology is there to enhance learning.

C.3: It is time for us at MSM to emphasize a paradigm shift. I teach particular modules on writing music to film etc. These are highly technologically oriented and sometimes the students tend to feel a little overwhelmed by having all the different possible outcomes. One solution I found out is tackling technical aspects in conjunction with other traditionally oriented technical material in order to make sure that the student is not simply programming the machine to produce sounds, but to actually help the DAW create a sensible and emotional production.

Secondly, music theory teachers recognised that although programmes of music technology can enhance the process of experimentation in learning music theory, they might distract the learners from their original ideas or the pedagogical content.

C.2: I believe that we should not be allured by the popular trend towards technophilia in education. Technology can make it easier to preview a piece that is still under construction though. Any professional composer who has had experience with this sort of tool will say that very often, it causes a deviation from the original idea and intent. This could in itself be regarded as a positive attribute in the field of experimentation and experimental music. My point is that this possible deviation is a major factor of the process that should be kept in mind. If a composer wants to stay true to the original concept, technology might not be the right tool to use at that time...

Thirdly, and on a practical level, two music theory teachers talked about a lack of resources when it came to using music technology programmes during teaching.

T.6: The school needs to have one room with a number of computers in a set-up designed in such a way that it facilitates music learning through technology. There should be a studio, a laboratory with at least the basics, because this studio set-up is intended not only for composers.

T.6: As a school I feel that we should start promoting the idea of the flipped and the blended classroom.

On the whole, the music theory teachers were positive about the use of technology in music theory teaching in Higher Education, but they recognised that resources should be available. They also recognised that alternative approaches to engaging in composing should be utilised.

5.3.2 Connecting Theory With Practice

The music theory teachers also talked about the significance of connecting music theory instruction with its practical application on instrumental and vocal learning. They expressed the view that students regard theory as unimportant, for they do not realize that through music theory learning, they can become familiar with a wide variety of musical repertoire, which can enhance their performance skills.

T.1: Trying to make students aware of the analytical and historical context serves as an impetus for their musical prowess. On the other hand, students consider the study of music theory and analysis as a waste of time.

C.1: The major challenge is the way most students regard theory....as something either boring or not important – perhaps the result of the way it was taught to them previously. This places part of the burden on the lecturer who must strive to make it relevant and interesting to the student. Some students consider studying music as an easy ride and take long to realize that it has its challenging aspects like all other subjects. Or else, some of the performance students, especially those who specialize in more popular forms of music do not realize that theoretical knowledge properly grasped would enhance their performance.

T.2: The problem I feel nowadays is that many students do not take up music because they truly love to [learn music] and wish to learn everything that there is to know about it. Rather, they set their hearts on learning an instrument just for the sake of it only, without wanting to go through the entire process of learning music in its entirety.

C.3: I find it difficult to negotiate various genres that can be totally foreign to the student who most of the time is only interested in creating something similar to specific historical contextual stylistic material.

T.5: I find that students do not have enough time to dedicate fully themselves to the work related to their music theory. Music theory classes are still considered something that you do after school if there is time.

They also mentioned that today's music education is examination-driven, which makes music theory learners focus on passing examinations rather than enjoying learning music.

T.3: Students practise for the exam and lack to live and be part of music. One must appreciate every aspect of music and must live and become one with the art of music. Students must be equipped with the right tools to evaluate and expand their knowledge and introduced to research to develop their own personal experience in the art of music.

T.4: We need to keep showing our students why it is important to keep studying certain topics and their implications on the music they would be playing, plus keeping the focus on sounds and emotions.

Composer 2, remembered that the most enjoyable time for him teaching composition during music theory, was when the students who attend his classes did so, for the love of composing and not for getting an academic certificate.

C.2: The best experiences were definitely those enjoyed with students who were in it for the love of music. Although natural talent and speedy progress might not really be related to keenness that predisposition makes the teaching and learning experience more satisfying.

Music theory teachers underscored that as a study area, music theory can support instrumental and vocal students' development and they stressed that it is paramount for students to become actively engaged in the learning process, supporting what literature on Higher education would call an 'inquiry-based' approach to learning (Fry et al. 2009).

C.2: I think music theory is being given more and more importance. I had started music studies privately and I can safely say that I wasn't given any introduction to rationale, skills and approach of music theory in Higher Education in those years. I believe that many teachers of my generation have been taught the same way and since they might not have been trained in the discipline of music theory pedagogy, the idea of teaching it could possibly scare many off. However, along the years, both as a composer, performer and more so as a teacher, I discovered that music theory is an indispensable craft to all instrumental and vocal students especially those in Higher Education.

C.1: All students who take music as a major area of study should have adequate knowledge of music theory. In all fields of specialization, one would need particular analytical skills, which would not be possible without a good theoretical basis. For performance, theory is essential to understand the form and content of the pieces. Musicologists would find theory very helpful in analysis, editing and transcription. Composers need theoretical knowledge in order to compose. All this work should be possibly directed to work in parallel with the chronological, historical sequence of music theory.

T.3: Unfortunately students lack to link the theoretical part with the performative aspect of music. Most of the time the students become accustomed to practice without digesting the music.

Music theory teachers also acknowledged that all vocal and instrumental performers need a basic core of musical knowledge and skills, which should comprise theoretical written skills and an awareness of the main composers and compositions from a broad historical spectrum. They expressed the view that there should be a strong emphasis on active listening, on music reading, some form of keyboard proficiency and an element of creativity in music theory instruction at Higher Education.

T.3: I think that music theory is relevant for students who are majoring on an instrument. Understanding the theoretical and analytical aspects of a composition is vital.

T.2: There should be significant depth in content knowledge in music theory instruction... This should be more pronounced in higher grades. It has to be integrated with the performance as well. Theory teachers need to correlate with the performance teachers. This is something which is fused together, performance with theory, theory with performance... They cannot go separately.

Teacher 1 explained that there needs to be better collaboration between the theory teachers and the teachers who teach performance.

T.1: Theory teachers need to collaborate with the performance teachers – we need to have support; this has to be supported by our colleagues as well. I do feel that we are being left out on this issue. So there is a big lacuna between the performance teachers and the theory teachers. I do feel that they dump a lot of work on us theory teachers which is ridiculous and unfair... especially in Higher Education.

Teacher 5 commented that students who study percussion, guitar and voice are the ones more prone to neglecting learning music theory.

T.5: Overall, there is general consensus with the students that theory is relevant for their success in becoming better musicians. Sometimes I see negligence from students who study percussion, guitar and voice. I do not know if this is an issue with the school only.

Teacher 2 argued that unless students have a cohesive and structured knowledge of the theoretical aspects of music theory, they would find it difficult even to prepare their own programme notes for recitals.

T.2: In Higher Education in terms of diploma and degrees, with regards to performance, students need their programme notes. They should understand the development of harmony throughout the periods which is very important in terms of everything in musicality.

All in all, the music theory teachers highlighted that there is a disconnect between theory and practice in music theory tuition: many students desire to learn to play music rather than learn music as a subject, and some others focus on passing examinations rather than enjoying learning music. In addition, the teachers advocated for the study of music theory as a means to inform instrumental and vocal learning. Finally, they underscored that music theory should, besides incorporating the fundamentals and some form of keyboard proficiency, it should also feature an element of creativity, which should make the subject more appealing to music learners in Higher Education.

5.3.3 Pedagogies and Resources for Integrating Composition

The significance of using composition as a pedagogical tool to teach and learn music theory was a core theme that emerged from the analysis of the focus group and individual interviews. Few music theory teachers at MSM are composition specialists, so given that

they recognised the importance of incorporating composing in the music theory curriculum, the researcher wanted to delve deeply into the pedagogies, approaches and strategies that they use when using music theory to teach composition and vice versa.

With respect to a composer's skills and attributes, the music theory teachers identified different areas. Composer 2. commented that constructive self-criticism is an expected attribute of every composer, so that they can analyse and criticise their own ideas and works.

C.2: The ability to reflect and evaluate constructively on the composition in process even when it is not to his particular stylistic taste.

Composer 3 specified that having a good ear enables him to hear his own music accurately and be able to notate it, which is a valuable attribute. He added that having excellent solfeggio skills and a knowledge of conventional style of notation are also important.

C.3: [*The composer needs to have....*] The ability to transcribe correctly what one is able to hear internally, the ability to have an excellent command of solfeggio, especially the rhythmic elements that comprise today's contemporary scene and an acute sense of internalization of pitch – major, minor, chromatic, modal, quartal, quintal, etc. of Western scalar movements. The composer needs to have an excellent command of the different conventional styles of notation – classical, jazz, traditional and folk.

Teacher 2 underlined that knowledge of music theory helps her analyse new compositions.

T.2: I feel that teaching music theory in higher grades is particularly relevant not only to my students but also to me personally, as a piano teacher, performer and accompanist. I keep my own skills constantly updated... This helps me to be more

alert and quick at analysing new works, both as for solo and chamber accompaniment.

Lecturer 3 recognised that there is a close connection between composition and creativity and that it is highly rewarding for a teacher to see their students developing their own creative voice.

L.3: The most important ability for a composer is to be creative – creativity moulds the composer. Music composition is inherently valuable in its own right. When I discover that after hard toil the students have developed their own style, I feel lucky. All the years I have been teaching composition at the University of Malta and at MSM, all my students gave me lots of satisfaction in that they always ventured in new paths, both in Malta and abroad. There are students working in the compositional field outside Malta and this is indeed of great satisfaction.

Teacher 6 and composer 3 underscored that teaching composition as part of music theory is a difficult task because many different skills are required. Some personal skills include being encouraging, providing constructive criticism, praising good work and correcting poor work. Musical skills include excellent solfeggio skills and a knowledge of conventional style of notation are necessary.

C.2: Although I have had some opportunities to practice my compositional teaching skills, I must admit that it is a very difficult job...When teaching composition, encouragement, constructive criticism, praising good and correcting poor work and analyses of others' works are fundamental at all levels. However, these will vary very much according to the situation and upon the character skill level and age of the composition student. Thus, the composition teacher needs to have a strong sense

of empathy and communication skills over and above musical and compositional experience. Of course, the latter are easier to acquire formally than the former.

Additionally, teacher 6 and composer 3 acknowledged that after having exposed music theory students to various styles and having modelled different skills, the composition teacher's task is to step back and allow the students to find their own creative voice, resulting in an individual expression and personal voice. This echoes Green's (2008) approach to non-formal teaching discussed in Chapter 3.

T.6: The teacher gives the tools and ideas, but it is up to the student to explore, create and develop in compositional techniques.

C.3: My goal as a composition teacher is that of guiding the student in finding his own particular voice.

The researcher asked the music theory teachers who used composition as a salient element of their music theory teaching for advice on how music theory teachers who do not use composition, could develop skills and confidence in doing so. Their responses included the following: being aware of artistic calendar events that students could attend in order to listen to live music, "putting the compositional periods into context", identifying a variety of music works for analysis and discussion; and using their harmony and counterpoint skills.

C.3: When it comes to preparation I tend to do a lot of research in artistic calendar events, hence putting the compositional periods into context. I encourage students to reproduce musical styles of composition in their early stages of music compositional instruction. I also prepare meticulously different discussions on various elements that the composition at hand starts lending itself to. These discussions normally involve analysis of other works and pinpointing various

techniques of different composers for further development of the particular piece. *[Repertoire could include]*various forms from piano piece to band marches to overtures, minuets, sarabands etc. free composition and full symphonic movements.

T.6: Harmony and counterpoint is a must... One needs to start from the beginning of the history of music, investigating what happened, analysing past models and experimenting how tools were used; through researching about these tools, one strengthens one's knowledge. One can start feeling and experiencing what one needs to know as a composer.

C.2: With Higher Education students, it is more common to encounter individual inclination towards popular styles that the teacher might not necessarily feel comfortable with. Thus a certain amount of research and customisation with that style is often necessary since the compositional techniques required for that same style would vary accordingly. During *[music theory]* studies, many students encounter techniques, approaches and styles which they might have overlooked before. Essentially, I believe that the pivotal works and composers in Western music should all be made familiar to the students. These would comprise monophonic chant, Renaissance polyphony, Classical harmonic functions, Romantic orchestration, twentieth-century irregular rhythms and the atonal sound.

To sum up, the music theory teachers spoke about the importance of reflecting on and critiquing one's compositions, having a good ear, and knowing conventional notation as attributes that could assist the music theory teacher with integrating composition in music theory teaching. They also proposed analysing new compositions, finding ways to develop the students' creativity, being aware of artistic calendar events that students could attend in order to listen to live music, putting the compositional periods into context, identifying a variety of works for analysis and discussion, and using their harmony and

counterpoint skills as approaches to be adopted for promoting engagement in composing tasks by teachers who do not specialise in composition. Finally, they stressed that within Higher Education, all the above should occur within a learning environment that nurtures encouragement, and where learners receive constructive criticism on their work.

With reference to the role of music composition in music theory learning, the music theory teachers affirmed that for Grades VII and VIII composing is a pedagogical tool aimed at helping students to understand music, rather than to train them to become professional composers. Composing activities should be aimed at encouraging a rounded music education through integrating composition into music theory instruction.

C.2: Composing shouldn't be learnt only with the intention to produce music composers but rather to encourage a more holistic approach towards one's musical knowledge. Not every student will become a musician just like not every music student will become a composer, yet we believe that a curriculum with a wider scope improves the student's intellect and thinking skills.

Teacher 6 and composer 2 also talked extensively about the salience of adopting a trial-and-error approach to teaching composition during music theory classes. They argued that practising various compositional techniques through trial-and-error and experimentation should be actively promoted, for they support the students' creativity. A trial-and-error approach should always be paired with a more structured approach because the combination enhances collaborative learning and peer feedback, which greatly support students' learning.

C.2: I strongly encourage a balance of both – the pre-planned and the instinctive approach. I believe that while instinctive and improvisatory material sounds natural and fresh, it then needs to be worked out into a solid structure if it is to be called a

‘composition’. On a personal level I believe in collaborative learning when teaching composition and acknowledge that peer feedback is significant in the learning process.

T.6: I encourage both....the creative cannot be overlooked....you need to encourage the student to try even if he makes mistakes.... Even through making mistakes the person is learning....Yes, the rationale process is important, pre-planning is very important, encouragement is crucial....the intuitive process is strikingly important too.

C.3: I do encourage an active and practical approach irrespective of pre-planning and intuition. If one is working on a huge project such as opera or oratorio, one has to have a kind of plan where one needs this to develop. I have sometimes used deconstructional methods, thus reverse engineering the process and starting from the finale and deconstruct the movement from there. The trial-and-error stage should be part of the planning period. Working in the actual industry I have learnt that ninety nine per cent of all the material one has brainstormed at the preliminary stage of composition is useable. By keeping this in mind as a composer, I try to work my way through all the difficult obstacles by finding new creative ways to link and develop particular intricate details. When teaching composition, I prefer to give one-to-one instruction to help the student develop his/her own individual voice.

Specifically, composer 3. who besides teaching theory at the school, has already established himself as a composer, highlighted the importance of placing the composition activity within a wider context so that music theory students find some relevance in engaging with it.

C.3: I like to integrate theoretical, aural and written skills in the process of composition lessons. When teaching composition I always ask my students to think about the context of the composition in process – be it anthropological, historical, aesthetic and cultural. Unfortunately in Malta, since most of the people exposed to music composition had been privately trained, most of it had been exam oriented. Lending compositions tends to be bland, tasteless and leaves so much to be desired.

Mixed-age composition lessons where collaborative learning and student interaction are encouraged were identified as effective pedagogical contexts.

C.2: For many adult novice composers, whose creativity and talent might not be so natural, encouragement and step-by-step guidance would be the most important factor just as they would be for the young. In this mixed-age class it is the quality of instruction which is fundamental. Additionally, this class needs careful planning and additional tasks. I do encourage collaborative learning irrespective of the mixed-age classroom.

Furthermore, it was acknowledged that at MSM teachers are accustomed to working with mixed-age classes, flexibility and differentiation of skills are key components to effective teaching as they motivate the students to learn; and that older students need more fostering in confidence when they engage in composition tasks during music theory classes than younger students (a student-centred approach to teaching and learning).

T.6: As a school we are accustomed to working with mixed-age classes from children to adults. The way we teach and communicate with children is different to the way we communicate with adults. As a teacher-composer I need to be flexible

and adjust my pedagogical strategies according to the persons in front of me. Keeping students motivated and enthused is challenging but a high priority factor.

C.3: Different strategies need to be adopted regarding mixed-age composition classes but experience has shown me that older students need more fostering in confidence.

Composer 3, teacher 6 and composer 2 indicated that music composition is an attractive component that motivates both male and female students to engage in creative and experimental related activities and learning. They reported finding no differences in teaching composition to male or female students, although they observed that male students are more willing to use music technology tools for composition in class, compared to female students.

C.3: I find differences in teaching genres not different genders. I encourage all my students to perform their finished products to the general public on visitors' day.

T.6: No specific differences....but boys do tend to experiment more with technology than girls. Girls do tend to be more cautious, but again I had students from both genders who are continuing their studies in compositional techniques outside our country.

C.2: Not really....there are preconceptions though which could offer serious challenges towards self-evaluation, standard of quality and expectations from the part of the student. I am careful to use a gender-inclusive language.

In relation to the researcher's inquiry concerning which instructional textbooks are used during the composition class, music theory teachers cited various books and explained that often the choice of textbooks depends on the student.

C.3: Some basic tools for me are non-negotiable, Adler: *Orchestration*; Korsakoff: *Principles of Orchestration Book II*; Harmony: Walter Piston; Freeman: *Sixteenth Century and Eighteenth Century Counterpoint*. If focusing on band music, I will suggest; *Studii di Instrumentazione per Banda* by Alessandro Vessella; *Orchestration* by Berlioz and *Treatise on the Military Band* by Adkin.

C.2: That depends very much on the student. Every student comes with a baggage of knowledge, interests and aspirations. I feel it is wise to stimulate that baggage further sometimes by contrasting it to other stylistically conflicting styles of music and respective readings to finally come to the realization that music is not about music but about us.

In summary, the music theory teachers stressed that there are certain pedagogies that facilitate effective teaching of composition as part of music theory instruction. Firstly, they emphasised that the aim of teaching composition is to promote a rounded music education. Secondly, they identified that a combination of informal (trial-and-error) and formal learning is most effective. They also talked about connecting composition with anthropological, historical, aesthetic and cultural parameters, so that it is more appealing to the learners. Furthermore, they argued that mixed-age groups need differentiation and flexibility in the teaching approach, but they provide fertile ground for collaborative learning. Finally, they agreed that using a variety of resources in terms of instructional textbooks is an effective approach as it can be tailored to the needs of the different learners (a student-centred approach to teaching and learning).

5.3.4 Assessing Music Theory learning in Higher Education

There was a general agreement amongst the music theory teachers interviewed that assessment plays an important role in helping music theory students understand what

areas they need to develop further so that they develop as musicians. Music theory teachers stressed that students who come to the MSM to study music theory, come from a wide range of musical backgrounds, which suggests that the teachers should explore different ways of responding to the needs of these students through assessing them aurally and through written work.

T.4: As theory teachers we need to be very consistent as to which skills we are going to assess during the scholastic year. Are we going to assess solfeggio, aural tests, active listening and the written theory component during the year and then have the final summative exam at the end of the scholastic year?

The music theory teachers stressed the need for different assignment formats. Besides the written formal assignments in melodic writing, figured and unfigured bass harmonization, analytic written work, counterpoint and composition, students' participation in class activities, their contribution to discussions and their questioning of the concepts explored, should also be assessed.

T.2: I work through the standard workbooks which provide a standardized and steady curricular topics. I include training exercises which incorporate the written knowledge together with their aural and performing skills. I can gauge where and when he needs more focus and I can address the problem better by changing, not the exercise but the way it is transmitted.

T.4: [I assess...] through take home assignments, active listening and tests during aural and solfeggio.

C.1: I offer feedback to students' assignments, [I assess...] their progress following my remarks on their assignments and from participation during lectures.

L.1: I assess mainly through discussion, questioning and portfolio of composed works.

Moreover, teacher 5: commented that music response assessment can take place using a blog, in which students and teachers participate in a journal which is accessed online. Computer based assessment can also be used as it is useful to easily generate response statistics. Questions related to historical topics can take place through an aural examination, in order to encourage the importance of clear musical communication. The same music theory teacher remarked that different modes of assessment could be adopted.

T.5: Mostly from the assessed work I give them to do in class and at home. The student's journal can be transformed into a blog. Historical topics can be done through an aural examination. Modes of assessment can be computer-based and include essays, reports, fieldwork, seminars, commentaries, creative projects, exercises, tests, examinations, group and individual presentations, personal and reflective diaries and portfolios.

One of the areas that was identified as difficult to assess was composition. On the topic of assessing students' compositions, the discussion revolved around the challenges of assessing creativity. Composer 3 recognised different aspects to creativity and argued that he tries to assess each one differently when music theory students submit their compositions to them. Composer 3, composer 2 and teacher 6 recognised that assessing creative work is challenging because there is an amount of subjectivity in the process. Besides, assessment itself can impact on creativity.

C.3: Creativity is present in three different aspects in a particular project. The first appearance of creativity is within the materials chosen for development. The second appearance of creativity in a project happens when one starts developing the initial

ideas. Finally the third appearance happens in the final product....How well is the work presented? Context? Concept? Effectiveness? Further development? I personally find that creativity is in itself a process of continuous development that manifests itself in particular stages along the course of work. Thus evaluation should reflect all the different stages and all the different elements.

C.2: I gauge creativity on the ability to analyze a concept, a motive, an idea or a theme objectively and through a process of analysis in relationship to other art forms, come up with fresh ways to make that concept evolve into a product that is recognizably individual – easily attributable to an individual artist through recognizable traits...Regarding composition's summative assessment, when it comes to evaluating the product, it becomes as difficult as evaluating music itself. Generally, I try to focus on the balance between freedom and cohesiveness in structure and on 'where is the music going'.

T.6: Assessing creative work is challenging. There is an amount of subjectivity in the process. Assessment can impact on creativity. I encourage my students to discuss their composition in a musical language, starting from the idea to the final product and I believe that this is an essential feature in assessment.

To sum up, the music theory teachers talked about the importance of using different assignment formats, different modes and about how music theory should be assessed aurally and through written work. They also discussed the challenges arising from assessing the creative component of music compositions.

5.3.5 Summary

To sum up, the sub-themes under approaches to teaching composition focused on how technology could enhance music theory teaching, how through music theory learning the students can see the relevance of the study for their musical development as performers, musicologists or composers; what pedagogies and resources could facilitate music theory learning through engaging in composing, and ways of assessing music theory learning in Higher Education.

5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

To conclude, it emerged through focus group and one to one interviews with teacher – composers, music lecturers and music teachers that the music theory curriculum should aim to develop a variety of listening, performing, thinking and creating skills in the music theory learners. The music theory teachers expressed the belief that an effective music theory curriculum in Higher Education needs to integrate aural, sight singing, keyboard harmony, improvisation, composition and instrumental/vocal performance skills. Particular emphasis was placed on the contribution of composition as an area of study to complement music theory learning. Additionally, it was also emphasised that a variety of music repertoire should be used in order for music theory concepts to be understood and applied, including popular music, non-Western music and world music. Finally, the participants expressed different preferences on the use of notational approaches when teaching music theory concepts. As regards the pedagogical approaches that could be adopted to reinforce learning of music theory, the music theory teachers interviewed, stressed the significance of integrating technology, connecting theory with practice through composition and performance, and considering different ways of assessment to reflect the varied musical backgrounds of the students. **On the whole, it could be argued**

that diverse visions of attitudes, values and practices prevail amongst the music theory teachers at MSM with regard to the music theory curriculum in higher grades. This diversity, or lack of consensus, might explain the lack of a standardised approach to focusing on honing specific students' skills, and to teaching music theory at MSM and other contexts within the Maltese Islands. Acknowledging the inherent lack of consensus on the function of the music curriculum could also explain music theory teachers' possible weakness in convincing music learners that music theory is indeed significant for their music studies and musical careers.

The next chapter explores the students' perspectives on the relevance of music theory in Higher Education and their perceptions of the pedagogical approaches that are most appropriate in learning music theory in Higher Education.

CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES FROM MUSIC THEORY STUDENTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the analysis of the students' focus group interviews. These students were present for music theory classes at MSM during the academic year 2018-19. The music theory course design described in Chapter Four is offered to all instrumental and vocal students at the MSM. Typically, instrumental and vocal students receive an individual lesson and a group music theory class on a weekly basis, together with vocal or instrumental ensemble experiences. Students at the MSM come from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Due to the fact that the author was teaching the students interviewed, it was considered appropriate not to ask the students about their experiences of music theory teaching and learning at MSM in general, because there was a danger of providing biased responses in order to please the researcher. On the contrary, it was considered appropriate to ask them their views on the study guides that were in the process of being developed. In that way, the students could contribute to the improvement of the study guides and indirectly the researcher could gauge their views on effective music theory teaching and learning (including perceived essential skills and approaches to develop them) at the MSM. The students were therefore provided with six questions, which were used as prompts for the focus group discussions. These were:

1. What features of the chapter of the study guide did you like and why?
2. What features would you improve?
3. Was there any concept which you think could have been more explicit or that you did not understand?

4. What are your impressions about the general layout of the chapter?
5. Did you enjoy the way the topic was presented, discussed and analysed?
6. Would the presentation of the topic persuade you to include it in your compositions?

Four separate focus group sessions took place each one lasting one hour. The total time of the focus group interviews undertaken was four hours. The predominant language used during the students' focus group was English, although some students expressed themselves in Maltese. This is understandable given that the participants at MSM are bilingual: English and Maltese. Four distinct themes emerged; these were: (1) Connecting theory with practice; (2) Nurturing singing and aural discrimination skills; (3) Studying historical contexts and popular music; and (4) Feedback on the study guides.

6.2 CONNECTING THEORY WITH PRACTICE

The first theme to emerge from the discussions with the students revolved around connecting theory with practice when exploring different music theory concepts. Overall, the students explicitly acknowledged the importance of understanding the concept of the topic being explored in the study guides through explanation, repetition and actual music making. .

Rachel: The concept was very well explained through repetition, which helped us remember it and easily recall it when working the exercises. With regards to working out exercises, the explanation is very clear on how and where specific chords should be used. Then, through your explanation and guidelines we proceed to work out examples together.

Many students agreed that all new concepts were explained well, which gave them the confidence and motivation to express themselves and to communicate through a creative and imaginative approach by immersing themselves in composing, utilizing learnt material (inquiry-based learning). It was fascinating to hear students' opinions on how some concepts could be developed in their compositions (see below). An overwhelming majority of participants reported that understanding a concept and its function was important but applying it into practice was equally important. Quintin's composition, 'Everything Happens for a Reason' reflects his use of parallel modality. The initial key of this ballade is c minor, but then in the chorus, Quinton shifts the key onto Cmajor. Additionally, Rachel inserted a diminished seventh chord in bar three, in her composition 'Tantum Ergo'. Again in bar five, Rachel inserts a secondary dominant (V of ii). This shows that the student had perceived the concept of tonicisation versus modulation and made use of this specific 'harmonic colour' in the composition. In 'Nostalgia' Nathan demonstrated that he had understood the principle and effect of modulation. The initial key is A flat major, but after six bars, Nathan modulates to c minor. In the extract 'Uncertainty' by Curtis, it is likely that Curtis wished to introduce the flattened subdominant (Modal Mixture) in bar twelve, before modulating to Cmajor in bar thirteen. Furthermore, it is significant to note, that Brenda inserted a diminished seventh chord in bar twenty-four in her composition, 'Ave Maria', even though her harmonic structure is based on simple harmonic progressions. This shows evidence that Quinton, Rachel, Nathan, Curtis and Brenda were putting to practice concepts which were explored and discussed during the lessons. It is worth specifying, that these students were 'thinking' of their instrument when they were composing. This means that Rachel was thinking of her church organ, when she composed the 'Tantum Ergo', Brenda was imagining her soprano voice, Curtis was reflecting on his saxophone, Nathan on his keyboard and Matthew on his violin.

Jenny: I understood the concept. Yes, but I have not got it at the tips of my fingers. I would need to revise and revise so that I can probe deeper into the importance, usefulness and musical beauty which the colour of these chords can express, so that the concept becomes part of my knowledge rather than having to refer to notes each time I need to make use of it. The sequence of sevenths in three-part and four-part part-writing seems fascinating as a concept. Playing the examples is excellently helpful.

Brenda: Through lessons I feel that I was able to understand all concepts and was able to add my own notes to the explanations of the study guide.

Michela: Yes, I understood the concept of the diminished seventh chords. I realize that it is frequently used in many different genres of music. I now know that this chord can be used to create a more dramatic sound. Also, I know how to construct it and I know also that it can be referred to as a rootless minor ninth chord or an incomplete dominant minor ninth chord.

Rachel: Homework assigned on the chapter is also very helpful and through class correction we reinforce what we have learnt and it becomes more evident whether we have understood or not. I find that the method used in your teaching is very well planned, very effective and helps us grip the concept well.

Matthew, who is a diploma student in both piano and violin, highlighted that he likes to apply concepts he learnt, both when composing for keyboard and even when composing for solo violin. Figure 6.1 shows Matthew's violin music 'Melancholy', (see Appendix:7) which was composed as part of a music theory class on the topic Modal Borrowing and Augmented Sixth Chords. For example, in bar five of the composed extract it is likely

that the implied harmony which Matthew wished to insert in his melodic composition was the German sixth chord on the flattened supertonic in the key of d minor.

Matthew: Yes, I think that the presentation of the topic of modal borrowing encourages me to use it in my compositions, as borrowed and altered chords create a very beautiful and enticing musical flavour and spark interest in my works. In my opinion, I really like using these chords in accompanied works, not in works for solo violin. The use of cluster chords produce a very nice flavour than single line melodies written for solo violin. ...Both the texture and the colour of these chords give them a mystical element and thus encourages the incorporation of such chords in my composition. One of the features that I liked in this chapter was the resolution of the borrowed chords, because upon learning how to resolve such chords, I learnt how I can use these chords in a sensible manner in both my compositions and in my improvisation and how I can resolve them to create very interesting sounds.

Melancholy

Piece for solo violin

Matthew Zammit

The image shows a musical score for a solo violin piece titled 'Melancholy' by Matthew Zammit. The score is written in 3/4 time and begins with the tempo marking 'Adagio'. The first staff, labeled 'Violin', contains measures 1 through 9. It starts with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano), followed by *mp* (mezzo-piano), and then *p* again. A crescendo marking 'cresc.' is placed at the end of the first staff. The second staff, labeled 'Vln.', contains measures 10 through 15. It features a dynamic marking of *p* and ends with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte). The third staff, labeled 'Vln.', contains measures 16 through 17 and ends with a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo). The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 3/4 time signature.

Figure 6.1: Matthew's Violin music 'Melancholy'

Also, Darren's narrative provides an insightful perspective on the concept of parallel tonality.

Darren: I liked mostly the concept of parallel tonality especially the iv and \flat VI of the parallel key. This, in my opinion, gives the music such a unique taste that it will grab the attention of the listeners. This is used for modulations and this fact helps me when I am composing a piece. I use these musical tools so that it leaves a 'punch' on anyone who is listening.

Brandon: Since they were well explained and I feel very comfortable using them, yes, I would use some borrowed chords in my composition.

Curtis: Yes, the topic was presented clearly and I would like to include these chords in my compositions.

Jenny: It is exciting and creative to realize the concept and potential of the seventh chords rather than simple chords I, IV and V. Yes, I will include them to make my compositions sound richer and fuller overall.

In general terms, the students spoke about how engagement with music theory learning encouraged them to connect theory and practice through integrating a variety of skills such as listening, composing and keyboard playing whilst exploring new concepts. This reportedly generated enthusiasm for new learning and ongoing engagement.

Brandon: I think that the way it was presented and even how these chords sound on the piano and in extracts, would entice me to include them in my compositions. The fact that there were many extract examples showed me which composers like to use these chords. Then I could easily look up these extracts on YouTube to get a more comfortable feeling of the chord when I use it in my compositions. The topic of extended chords encourages me to use them in my compositions in order to add to the overall style of the piece.

Maria: Yes, for me it made me see that there are more ways of how to make a composition more interesting and unique. After I learn the topic, I am greatly stimulated to make use of these extension chords in my compositions.

Audrey: I would include the extension of chords in my compositions since it enhances and enriches certain chords when needed.

To sum up, the students emphasised that music theory concepts can only be understood and ‘digested’ when they are connected with practice, through extensive listening, performance and composition.

6.3 NURTURING SINGING AND AURAL DISCRIMINATION SKILLS

The students remarked that ability to sing what one is learning during music theory classes was an important skill that needs to be nurtured during every music theory session. They argued that theoretical principles cannot be internalized just by being studied on paper. Instead, they need to be reinforced through singing.

Rachel:composing/understanding/analysing music cannot be done just through sight. Listening to the music is needed, and this has become very apparent at grade VII level. I discovered that the diminished seventh chord is a striking chord but one which needs to be used very carefully, and definitely not at random. Hearing the tone and colour of this chord on its own and in a piece of music helps me to get used to it and helps me build it easier. You, Miss, went one step further – the fact that you always split the class in four voices, the fact that you found SATB extracts which include the diminished sevenths and the fact that you made us sing the diminished seventh chord in context, helped me to listen to how the chord really sounds.....but I must say lessons are fun and enjoyable when we sing in SATB, putting what we learnt in context.

Anne: I liked it when we sang the four-part harmony together – the C major seventh, the C minor seventh, the C diminished seventh, the C half-diminished seventh and the C seventh. Singing in four-part harmony as a class made sense, because I felt that I understood the differences between these seventh chords better in this way.

Brenda:I found it useful when we sang the chords as we were able to see the descriptions of the chords and the notes while we sang. I, personally, as a classical singer, this helped me to connect sight with sound.

All student responses stressed that singing, performing and listening were utilised in every single class, which helped them internalize the concepts studied in a more direct and tangible way. This practical application of theoretical knowledge enabled them to make the link between sound and symbol. By the end of the music theory sessions the students were not only able to write down different chords and chord progressions, but also to recognise them aurally. Once a concept was explored through discussion, listening to examples of this concept, enticed active learning. This was very much appreciated by the participants.

Audrey: I like the fact that the chords were played at the piano with and without extensions and therefore not only do I know how to build these chords but also I know how these extensions sound.

Jenny: Spelling and stacking of chords is rather slow on my part.....I still need to work out intervals to identify if a chord is a diminished seventh or a dominant seventh. However, when they are played in extracts, I can distinguish them.....so yes, connecting sight with sound is fundamental.

Melissa: What I particularly liked were the played examples from well-known music; this helped me to bridge the gap between sight and sound.

Brandon: The fact that there were auditory elements also helps. When we discuss in class these chords and hear them on the piano, I not only learn the construction and function of this chord but also how to identify it just by listening to it.

Nathan: The auditory component has proven to be very beneficial, as due to the connection between the musically noted notes and their sounds, I now know what

this musical vocabulary sounds like, allowing me to use them more efficiently and spot them more easily.

Mellissa: The particular sound of the diminished seventh chord showed me how it can affect the mood of the piece.....for example it can highlight a dark mood. The fact that the sound was played and illustrated with musical excerpts showed me why the diminished seventh chord has such a striking and distinguished sound. The sound of the two interlocking tritones highlighted this. Of particular interest to me was how a diminished seventh chord can act as a substitute to a dominant seventh chord and the difference in sound of the two different resolutions.

Jurgen:music is a way of language and applying sound with sight helped me to develop this language. Personally, I think that this may help the cognitive part to develop the communication and connection between language and music.

Michela:the fact that I had the opportunity to hear how it sounds on its own or in an extract, helped me to develop the skill of not only knowing how to write it, but also how to recognize it when I'm playing the harp.

From an overview of the students' focus group a consensus emerged. Students were not previously trained to think in music and they were not used to playing and singing their assignments. All the students highlighted that they found problems knowing what the music sounds like. Most of the students did not know the sound of consecutive fifths and consecutive eights, the sound of the augmented intervals in two-part imitative counterpoint. The students agreed that a variety of practical approaches to addressing the conceptual knowledge would reinforce their learning, for instance through singing and playing different SATB extracts which were annotated. As a group, students claimed that

musical excerpts that were played, provided a concrete experience both from the aural and visual perspective.

6.4 STUDYING HISTORICAL CONTEXTS AND POPULAR MUSIC

The third theme addressed the issue of the historical perspective and the use of popular music as a means for discovery. The participants highlighted the importance of incorporating historical contexts and popular music in the chapters to facilitate learning. The students discovered that concepts could be enhanced by referring to their historical contexts as much as possible. Without this context, material learnt often appeared as meaningless.

Rachel:as with everything, music needs contexts. A better understanding of music's roots leads one to perform better as well as composing and understanding music better. You, used the historical context to increase our knowledge and understanding.....and the fact that you chose well-known pieces for us to listen to, made learning easier still.

Melissa:examples shown for facts mentioned in Baroque and Classical eras were well documented via examples. Examples highlighted how composers used them in their works.

Michela: I enjoyed listening to the diminished seventh chord in the extracts taken from the Baroque period. I realized that this chord had a tremendous potential to create a sense of anger, passion and mystery. The chord helped me to emphasize these elements to heighten the mood.

Additionally, students commented that learning concepts and part-writing through studying different musical genres makes it easier to develop intuition. For example,

connections of how secondary sevenths resolved in their appropriate contextual periods facilitated understanding.

Jenny: I found references to historical contexts useful and interesting. They outlined the development of the use of the chords in different eras. The manner of resolution and their enharmonic use is amazingly interesting.

Melissa: From the beginning of the chapter, the diminished seventh chord was presented in the light of its historical context. Apart from the different examples in the chapter which showed the use of the chord in different compositions, an entire section was devoted to how the diminished seventh chord was used in different eras – highlighting its increased popularity in the Romantic period. Examples from popular music helped to bridge the historical gap. My personal opinion is that usually examples from historical eras can leave an alienating feeling. Popular music gives me motivation to use this chord in my compositions.

The students commented that they started making connections between what they studied in the music theory class and the music they played as soloists, in chamber groups and in the school orchestra (a student-centred approach to learning). On performance day, 30th March 2019, one particular student, Quintin, demonstrated significant creativity in relating theoretical concepts to a pop-ballade which he composed for the occasion. Interestingly, participants reiterated that common-practice literature needs to be integrated with contemporary repertoire. Students liked the inclusion of musical examples from popular and traditional music in the chapters of the study guides. Connections to music familiar to the students enticed them and made them realize that they could still study music theory through performing such familiar repertoire (a student-centred

approach to learning). Students proposed that popular music should be more integrated into the traditional music theory curriculum.

Brandon: I mostly liked the part where after learning the basis of how to build a chord and where to use it, we learnt how it is used in popular music. I find this as a great way to combine history with harmony. I also liked how there were real composers' extracts to show examples of the chord.

Matthew: I was impressed that there were several examples of Maltese popular songs that involved these chords. This thought gave a strengthened sense of identity and also made me remember them better.

Specifically, students spoke favourably of the harmonic progressions that encompass popular music perspectives, for example, the diminished seventh chord in 'My Sweet Lord' by George Harrison. The majority of the students strongly agreed that the musical works with excerpts from music literature for each chapter, demonstrated how fundamental concepts relate to musical compositions.

Nathan: The fact that during the scholastic year, the concepts covered were connected to real musical pieces made a big impact on me. Exposure to all sorts of music allowed me to formulate a clear idea of when, how and why to use such chords.

Alexia: I like the idea of hearing familiar songs. It was fun to realize that George Harrison makes use of the diminished seventh chord in 'My Sweet Lord' and John Williams inserted a Neapolitan sixth in the 'Raiders March' in 'Raiders of the Lost Ark'.

Overall, participants noted that making connections with a wide range of repertoire placed within its historical context, including popular music which students already knew,

brought along with its pedagogical advantages. Firstly, the students could concentrate more on the theoretical aspect rather than on the sound itself. Secondly, listening to popular songs on the keyboard directed students' concentration to its harmonic function. Engaging the students in the analytical process of popular songs made the theoretical framework appear relevant because that is the music which students experience on a daily basis (a student-centred approach to learning).

6.5 FEEDBACK ON THE STUDY GUIDES

The findings from the data analysis of theme four revolve around the study guides as a resource for learning music theory. The feedback offered suggests that the study guides introduced new topics in a logical, systematic and cohesive manner, focused on integrating a variety of musical material, promoted experiential and inquiry-based learning and emphasised on organised presentation of the material. These ingredients were effective in motivating students to engage in music theory learning at Grades VII and VIII. Overall, two major sub-themes emerged under this theme: 1. Clarity in presentation and explanation, and 2. More assignments were required especially in chromatic harmony.

6.5.1 Clarity in Presentation and Explanation

Overall, the learners found the text straightforward with clear explanations. They reported that the basic material was clearly explained, providing background information with an overview of chords, part-writing and harmonization of common-practice period harmony at the centre of the theoretical study. They also acknowledged that the study guides reflect the development of tonal harmony during the common-practice period (1600-1900) approximately. Participants pointed out that the chapters were designed in such a way that

harmonic concepts were approached systematically. In general terms, the majority of the students commented that the sections of the chapters were carefully and comprehensively organised.

Brandon: I think that the concept was explained well enough and there was nothing in particular I didn't understand.

Brenda:the fact the each chapter is split into several small parts so that each chord type can be focused on independently, was remarkable. I like the table showing all the secondary sevenths. This served as a useful guide. It was also very useful to study for visual learners like me.

Nathan: Until now I have explored and understood the concept of secondary sevenths, the diminished seventh chord and the Neapolitan sixth chord. I did explore all the concepts in detail.... the fact that we discussed their sounds, uses and how to prepare/resolve them adequately, enhanced my learning.

Matthew: I think that all the concepts in the topic were demonstrated very clearly and professionally both verbally and graphically. I found that the conceptual knowledge of the course was given with passion and a deep understanding of said knowledge.

The participants noted that the chapters did not proceed chronologically but by topic. They also appreciated the visual format of the pages: concepts, explanations and examples were combined with assignments.

Rachel:the layout of the chapters are well thought out and keeps us all awake as well as interested and also managing to fit every part of the lesson in the limited time available.

Melissa:the layout of the chapter establishes ‘the building blocks’, the chord’s use and function, highlighting its features throughout different musical periods. The sections are presented in a logical manner, with every section building on material discussed in the previous section.

One student in particular stated that the language used in the chapters was occasionally dense, and that she needed to go over it several times to really internalize what was written.

Jenny:the language is occasionally dense so even as an adult, I have to read it a couple of times to assimilate it. With your explanation I can understand what is written, but if I have to read it on my own, it’s like starting from the beginning; so I read it and re-read it. I have to write additional notes, write names of notes on stave, as I am a slow reader. Also, the bass clef is my forte because I play ’cello. I need to work out intervals and inversions. If the verbal explanation is clear and simple, I would appreciate if the language used in the text would be simple as well.....

The rules and basic progressions found in fact boxes were favoured by the participants in that they provided indicative images of the complete structure of functional harmony in part-writing. Fact boxes used in chapters, reportedly provided students with a glance view of relevant text in a quick and convenient way.

Brandon: I liked how there are many visual elements in the notes and not just having an explanation with text. This made me understand more how borrowed chords are used and built. Fact boxes are not too long and straight to the point, while the illustrations explain visually the points mentioned. This is a great way

to remember what is important and what might be less important and is very helpful especially during exams.

Matthew:the fact boxes and illustrations were very informative and cleared up some misconceptions quite nicely. The quantity of these fact boxes was quite adequate. The illustrations also gave a very good picture of where and how the borrowed chords were used in music literature. I really liked the fact that these illustrations were taken from several genres of music, not just one.

Michela: The fact boxes made the whole layout appear more appealing ... the layout of the information helped me to distinguish between the most important facts of this topic. The border lines and tables helped me to sort out the chord's different possibilities.

Melissa: Fact boxes and illustrations made the overall chapter look more spaced out and organized rather than having a big chunk of text that tires out your eyes while reading.

Students commented that these fact boxes helped them determine what was important in the text. Furthermore, the fact boxes helped to expand on ideas of the function of the main topics of the chapter.

Darren:the fact that the fact boxes and illustrations were played by you, helped us to digest the sound and get in love with these beautiful tools. These are like colours in painting. The compositions would be poor if these tools learnt are not used. Fact boxes were very helpful for me in that I could visualize what you were saying.

Jurgen: Fact boxes are done in an understandable way. The illustrations are pictorial examples that helped me to understand the theory and put it into practice. They demonstrated the point that they were trying to convey with utmost clarity and precision.

As emerged from the students' responses, the use of language in explaining music concepts was an area that required further attention on my part as the author of the study guides. This feedback will be taken into consideration as I prepare the final version of these study guides.

6.5.2 More Written Assignments Needed

In general terms, the participants found that the variety of written theoretical materials of short assignments and composition activities were useful, but some remarked that additional written theoretical assignments were needed especially on the topics of Modal Mixture and Chord Extensions.

Matthew: I felt that there wasn't enough practice when it came to resolve the dominant thirteenth chords. I need more practice here. This will help me to recognize it immediately when I need to resolve the dominant thirteenth in a Bach chorale. In my opinion, more exercises are required on borrowed chords especially the half-diminished supertonic seventh and the sub-dominant borrowed chord. Modal interchange required more written theoretical work.

Another student indicated that chromatic harmony needed to be complemented with better designed assignments.

Darren: I think that the German Sixth, the Italian Sixth and the French Sixth should have been complemented with more written theoretical work.

More importantly, students confirmed that using familiar figured and unfigured bass was appropriate and adequate, but one particular student identified the need for all inversions of the figured bass nomenclature to be included in the assignments.

Melissa:maybe a little bit more variety in certain exercises.....that is at present the exercise to identify and label the figured bass of the secondary sevenths has no second and third inversion chords, and in the subsequent exercises only first inversion and root seventh chords are given.

These are areas for improvement of the study guides that need to be carefully considered as I prepare the final versions of the material.

6.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Overall, the analysis of the MSM students' responses from the four focus group interviews, similarly to the responses from music theory teachers in the previous chapter, underlined the importance of connecting music theory with practical application of the theoretical knowledge acquired. The learners highlighted that understanding of concepts happens through repetition, through exploration, and through extensive listening, performance, but primarily through composing. The learners also stressed that singing plays a significant role in nurturing aural discrimination skills and in promoting understanding of music theory concepts. The learners also acknowledged the significance of studying historical contexts whilst learning music theory concepts. Furthermore, the use of a variety of music repertoire including popular and traditional music alongside western classical music was identified as important in contributing to students' motivation to learn music theory.

With reference to the sample chapters that the author had been developing during the academic year 2018-2019, and which the students had experienced as part of their curriculum, it was indicated that the material was well organised and that visual information presented in Fact Boxes and Tables was very useful. Areas that call for further improvement were the density of the writing in some sections that made face-to-face explanation necessary and the inclusion of more written assignments in the topics of Modal Mixture, Extensions, and chromatic harmony. The chapter that follows discusses the findings presented in Chapters Five and Six in light of the scholarship on music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education explored in Chapter Two and Three. The theoretical framework that emerged from the review of music education and music theory literatures (see Chapter Four) provided a structure for the presentation of Chapter Seven. A refined theoretical framework is proposed at the end of Chapter Seven, with the aim to guide the design of future music theory curricula within Higher Education. Additionally, this refined theoretical framework wishes to support music theory teachers at the MSM, the Maltese Islands, and internationally in considering effective and engaging ways of teaching music theory to twenty-first century learners.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the findings that emerged from the analysis of individual and focus group interviews conducted with music theory teachers at MSM and other Higher Education institutions in the Maltese Islands, and students at MSM, in light of the existing literature on music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education. This discussion addresses the three research questions that have instigated this study, which were the following:

1. How do music theory teachers in the Maltese Islands perceive and relate to effective music theory teaching in Higher Education?
2. How do music theory students at MSM perceive and experience music theory teaching and learning?
3. How do effective music theory curricula in Higher Education which respond to the needs of twenty-first century music students and teachers look like?

A case study methodology was deemed appropriate for answering the research questions for a number of reasons. Firstly, a case study enabled the researcher to gather empirical data on music theory teaching and learning within the specific context of the MSM. This is the organisation that employs the researcher, so the researcher had an insight understanding of the state of affairs within the organisation. This was deemed important because, on the one hand, access to participants was granted and, on the other hand, the researcher could explore the research questions with awareness of the institution's dynamics and challenges in mind. Secondly, the MSM had asked the researcher to devise

study guides for Music Theory at Grades VII and VIII to be used not only at the MSM but also by other Higher Education institutions in the Maltese Islands. Therefore, exploring the perceptions, strategies and experiences on music theory teaching and learning primarily from people who work at the MSM, as well as people who do not work at the MSM, could help the researcher create a music theory resource for higher grades that is not only relevant to the needs of the MSM students but also to learners at other educational institutions in the Maltese Islands.

In the process of critically reviewing scholarly work on music theory teaching and learning with a particular focus on Higher Education, a theoretical framework on effective music theory teaching and learning emerged. This was described in Chapter Four. This framework provided the structure for the analyses of the data in Chapters Five and Six, namely separate sections on skills and on approaches to music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education. According to the proposed framework, effective music theory pedagogy in Higher Education should aim to foster four groups of skills:

1. Listening skills, which include aural skills and sight singing.
2. Thinking skills, which include analytical skills.
3. Creating skills, which include part-writing and composition.
4. Performing skills, which include keyboard harmony and improvisation.

At a second level, the framework highlights that most music theory scholars believe that these skills can be developed through:

- Employing a variety of music repertoire.
- Connecting theory with practice.
- Using creative digital technologies.
- Assessing through a portfolio.
- Promoting student-centred and inquiry-based learning.

In addition, the framework connected specific groups of skills with music education philosophers' perspectives on the purpose of music education. The current chapter maps the response from MSM students and music theory teachers on this framework. Firstly, I discuss the perceptions, strategies and experiences of the teachers alongside those of the students at MSM in light of each of the four skills (Listening, Thinking, Creating and Performing). Then I identify common threads in the music theory teachers' and students' responses with regard to effective approaches to nurturing music theory skills in Higher Education. Lastly, I propose a refined theoretical framework synthesising skills and approaches of effective music theory pedagogy in Higher Education, which I feel could help Higher Education institutions that place western classical music theory at the core of music learning, structure effective music theory teaching and learning programmes. I claim this to be this study's contribution to the field of music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education.

7.2 MUSIC THEORY AREA 1: ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

As it emerged in Chapter Five, there seemed to be a predominant perception amongst teachers that the listening component should encompass both aural skills and active listening. According to the teachers, there is a wider variety of aural skills that should be nurtured as part of music theory instruction, such as error detection skills, intervals, rhythmic and melodic dictation, two-part melodic dictation, modulation, identification of modes, whole tone scale, pentatonic scale, seventh-type chords and harmonic progression. These should be taught by the same tutor, in a systematic way, and through a variety of resources.

The teachers recognised, however, that the way aural skills are taught at a practical level do not necessarily nurture active listening. For example, teacher 2 reiterated that

didactic dictation exercises on their own do not really encourage critical listening skills in a true musical environment, which the students will be using in their career as musicians. Teacher 2 insisted that listening skills need to be contextualized and this can be delivered through the implementation of active listening. Another teacher, teacher 3 stated that he promoted active listening by frequently using the repertoire that the student was practising for performance in the music theory class. Teacher 6 specified that students should be shown the specific instructional processes which will help them acquire effective listening strategies. Finally, teacher 1 remarked that error detection work should be integrated in the programme as this particular component requires perceptive, cognitive and evaluative skills. In summary, active listening refers to contextualising the listening activities by using repertoire that the students are familiar with, either through practice or through listening, and by integrating activities that focus on error detection work through written and aural discussion and evaluation.

The significance of active listening as part of music theory training has been recognised by existing research on effective music theory teaching and learning, as well. Firstly, Karpinsky (2000) and Gawboy (2017) both argued that listening attentively, understanding and notating what students hear, should be integrated into music theory curricula. Additionally, Durham (2007) suggests that students can develop active listening skills by studying music scores as part of music theory instruction. Finally, for Reitan (2009) active listening implied nurturing a collection of aural, practical and written skills that will be transferable to music practice beyond music studies.

The participant students identified in the study guides that I piloted with them, a route into how active listening could be achieved, by connecting sight with sound. Students' responses revealed that seeing and hearing different music theory concepts helped them to develop fluency in applying these concepts to their compositions, thus rendering the music theory course more effective and relevant. Furthermore, the learners'

responses revealed that at present music theory pedagogy at MSM does not support their musical understanding of concepts through listening, despite the fact that their teachers would have focused on developing the students' aural skills since the preliminary grade. Overall, the students expressed a strong agreement that theoretical principles cannot be internalized if they are left on paper, without reinforcement as an auditory experience, such as through sight singing in groups. This finding confirms White and Lake's (2002) belief who posit that every music concept should be understood from the perspective of sound itself, and Durham's (2007) view specifying that when teaching aural skills, the teacher should encourage the students to connect the sounds of their imagination to what they perceive aurally, visually and kinesthetically.

Music education philosophers such as Reimer (1997) and Gordon (2007) emphasised that the listening aspect of music theory pedagogy is pivotal in supporting the development of aural perception, part-writing and voice-leading, contrapuntal writing and analysis, and that music theory students in Higher Education need to develop active listening skills. This echoes Marvin (2012), Durham (2007) and Fleming and Taylor (2019) who have advocated for the benefits of integrating aural skills in the music theory class arguing that music theory instruction is learnt through listening. Gordon (2007) emphasised that audiation should be part of the toolkit of every music educator. However, traditionally, aural training has remained static by concentrating on pitch and rhythm (Klonoski, 2000) to the exclusion of timbre, dynamics, structure, articulation and texture. Music theory teachers, therefore, could benefit from widening the areas that are included in aural training. This seems to be changing at the MSM thanks to the material that I have been developing and consolidating as according to the MSM students themselves, active listening is nurtured by helping them connect sound with symbol in a variety of activities, such as sight singing in groups, in and beyond the music theory class (Reitan, 2009).

Participant teachers teacher 2 and teacher 1 reiterated that melodic and harmonic dictation, and modulation are regular features in their aural class. Clendinning (2008) attests that the basic strategy to enhance musical memory skills is to practise listening and to seize musical sounds in memory. Students should be observant to harmonic progressions and how they relate to keys of the extract. It is, therefore, crucial for the theory teacher to pinpoint the harmonic rhythm and its relationship to the structure of the musical work through practical demonstrations. This approach could enhance the students' confidence in the active listening component of the music theory class (Clendinning, 2008). Lastly, although music theory teachers acknowledged the possible uses of digital technologies in the creation and performance of the students' compositions, they underscored that it is still advisable that while students are using these tools adequately (See section 7.6.3 for details), they keep on developing their ear.

7.2.1 Promoting Active Listening Through Varied Repertoire

Most music theory teachers at the MSM have been trained in western classical music, therefore, western classical repertoire is mainly used during music theory teaching at MSM. However, the responses from the students revealed that the curriculum should incorporate popular, world and jazz musics because students can connect better with these genres and can identify with this repertoire (Green, 2002; 2008)) (student-centred learning). Griffiths (2008) supported that questioning, listening and responding within small groups are particularly effective approaches that promote active learning within Higher Education contexts. The use of vernacular repertoire and approaches in the aural skills class echoes Dewey's (2018) 'progressive' philosophy, which connotes that learning should be relevant to students' experiences outside the school premises. This study suggests that within Higher Education, popular music can be advantageously

applied towards aural recognition of harmonic concepts and it can act as a motivator for students to engage in aural training as this repertoire is perceived familiar and enjoyable. Green (2002) found that through learning in informal ways, popular musicians experience high levels of enjoyment and motivation and can develop advanced musicianship that fosters aural, improvisatory, and creative aspects. Green (2002) also found that copying recordings by ear could successfully bring informal learning approaches into formal music education contexts. In addition, Varvarigou (2017) contends that group playing by ear from recordings in Higher Education contexts, enables music learners to experiment with a variety of musical material, including popular music, and develop listening skills, repertoire appreciation, improvisation and harmonisation skills. Participant student Matthew remarked that he was surprised to realise that the chords and progressions heard in the aural skills class were actually used in Maltese popular songs. Also, Alexia liked the idea that the diminished seventh chord is used in 'My Sweet Lord' by George Harrison and the Neapolitan sixth chord is used in John Williams' 'Raider's March' in *Raider's of the Lost Ark*. It is evident, therefore, that listening to popular songs directed students' concentration to harmonic function. Consequently, it is fundamental that real music from a variety of musical genres is used in music theory teaching. This repertoire apart from enhancing the learners' enjoyment could also enhance rhythmic, melodic and harmonic aural skills discrimination.

7.2.2 Group Sight Singing for Fun and a Better Aural Understanding

The responses from music theory teachers indicated that sight singing should be included in the music theory curriculum. Regarding the approach to sight singing, it emerged that at MSM sight singing is delivered through different systems of practice decided at the discretion of the teacher. Some teachers preferred the fixed do approach, others the scale-

degree numbers, others the moveable do and the lah-based minor. Quite a lot of music theory literature seems to be favouring the movable do approach (see Nelson, 2002; Demorest, 2001; Kraus, 2008; McClung, 2001; Paney & Buonviri, 2017; Rapa, 2019), for it emphasises scale degree function which reportedly helps the students to contextualize aural information.

The MSM students enjoyed sight singing in groups in the theory class. The responses from participant students indicated that sight singing is an effective teaching activity because through its multifaceted nature, they are engaged cognitively, aurally, visually and kinesthetically – a fulfilling active listening experience. This reflects Elliot's (1995) 'praxial' music education wherein all musical skills are interconnected and developed in parallel as 'musicians' engage in active music making. Rachel commented that putting what is being learned in context through sight singing of songs in SATB was fun. In-class sight singing and performing in SATB, helped students to internalise concepts and sounds in a more direct way than just through mere written assignments. Anne specified that sight singing in four-part harmony made her understand the different types of seventh chords.

In addition, students argued that sight singing helped them to 'think' in music. The participants agreed that through the interactive approach of sight singing part-writing, they could better visualise and memorise harmonic progressions known to work in specific functional contexts. For instance, Brenda expressed the view that sight singing helped her to see clearly the description of each chord. Students' responses revealed that seeing, thinking and sight singing the subject matter, helped them develop fluency in composing matters, thus rendering the music theory course more relevant and effective.

Music educators Regelski (2002; 2009) and Elliot (1995) purport that music education should strive to turn musical practices into participatory practices that lead students to share active music making. Elliot (1995), in particular, advocated that

'procedural knowledge' is developed by immersion in real classroom practice. Within the context of Higher Education, Ray (2004) argued that the learning process in Higher Education occurs when students are actively engaged, have opportunities to interact with others, are presented with challenging scenarios and are surrounded by a nurturing learning environment. Through the skill of group sight singing in the theory class, the MSM students reported that they did not only perform, but also audiated sound from sight. This group's sight singing approach promoted enjoyment alongside the development of aural skills, which are necessary ingredients of effective music theory curricula in Higher Education.

7.3 MUSIC THEORY AREA 2: CREATING SKILLS THROUGH COMPOSITION

During the interviews with music theory teachers it emerged that for some, composition had become an integral part of the music theory curriculum, for it promoted a rounded music education and it supported creativity. Teacher 6 and composer 3 recognised that seeing their students develop their own creative voice was highly rewarding, and they felt that as composition teachers they had to expose their students to various musical styles and then let them discover their own creative voice. Specifically, teacher 6 insisted that once a teacher presents his students with the essential tools and ideas, it is then the students that need to continue exploring, creating and developing such compositional techniques. These thoughts are echoed by Rogers (2004) who asserted that creative compositions as part of music theory teaching, be it a minuet or a popular song, could be a meaningful way of engaging students with some elusive elements of musical style. In addition, it is interesting to note that Gauldin (2009) considered the students' direct involvement in harmonising melodies or bass lines as a creative process in itself. He

argued that this approach could help students to look at music from the composer's perspective.

Music teachers agreed that composing has been used as part of the music theory curriculum in higher grades (i.e. VII and VIII) in the Maltese Islands more than improvising. This could be attributed to the seminal work of Keith Swanwick and John Paynter, who underlined that composition should be an integral component of music learning. Swanwick (1994) promoted the idea that new concepts should be introduced to the learners through their own compositions. Similarly, Paynter and Aston (1970) and Paynter (2002) promoted musical exploration through 'making up music' as an effective approach to learning music concepts. Emphasis on developing creativity in the music theory class featured on the *Music Manifesto* (2016), which stated that the core music theory curriculum should aim at fostering richness in creativity.

Kaschub and Smith (2013) stressed that approaches to composing are influenced by the teachers' perspectives. The music theory teachers of this study stressed that there are certain pedagogies that could facilitate effective teaching of composition as part of music theory instruction. These included analysing new compositions, encouraging students to attend live music events, putting the compositional periods into context, identifying a variety of music works for analysis and discussion, and combining harmony and counterpoint skills. Music theory teachers composer 2, teacher 6 and composer 3 also identified the combination of informal (trial and error) and formal learning (analysis of music scores through the guidance of the teacher) as most effective strategies. They argued that music theory teaching should be flexible and at times provide for instances where the lesson is unstructured. Green (2008) stressed that after listening, discussing, offering feedback and guidance in the creative process, the teachers should step back and allow students to find their creative voice, their identity and self-expression. Green termed this as non-formal teaching. Through informal learning and non-formal teaching, music

theory students have more opportunities for self-expression, collaboration and independent thinking. Feichas' (2010) and Fautley and Murphy's (2013) work is in line with Green's (2008) work. These authors argue that all music learners, but especially learners in Higher Education, should experience theoretical and practical knowledge through informal learning and non-formal teaching.

The music theory teachers of this study emphasised that although mixed-age groups need differentiation and flexibility in the teaching approach, they provide fertile ground for collaborative learning during music theory teaching. Teacher 6 commented that teachers at MSM are accustomed to working with mixed-age classes. Mixed-age composition lessons where collaborative learning and student interaction is encouraged, were identified as effective pedagogical environments. Composer 2, teacher 5 and composer 3 reiterated that during composing activities they encourage collaborative learning and acknowledge that peer feedback is significant in the learning process. This is in agreement with Morton (2008) who asserts that feedback from students and colleagues enhances one's practice. Also, research on collaborative learning by Esteves, Matias and Pereira (2018) provides evidence that collaborative learning is one of the most important ways to promote problem solving in Higher Education (also Varvarigou, 2017). Within the specific context of music theory learning, Searby (2017) suggested that whilst the pedagogic approach to teaching composition should have its roots in practice, students should be asked to listen and analyse extracts (inquiry-based learning) and to respond collaboratively to their peers' works in progress. Similarly, Morris (2000) insisted that music theory students need to be given opportunities to submit their compositions to other performer peers, who could provide them with valuable comments. Collaborative learning within a mixed-age music theory class in Higher Education, could therefore keep the students motivated and enthused.

With reference to gender, the music theory teachers commented on how composition emerges as an attractive component that motivates both male and female students. Three music teachers affirmed that there are no significant differences regarding the pedagogical practices of lesson structure, content, teaching methodology and teacher-student relationship in teaching males and females students. However, these teachers observed that male students were more willing to use music technology tools for composition in class, compared to female students. Shibazaki and Marshall (2013) found that female students tended to be more vigilant than male students in the use of digital technologies in the composition class. Findings from this research suggest that the way in which digital technologies are used within a music lesson can impact on the way in which male and female learners use, judge and relate to music technology. Grant (2013) confirmed that digital technologies have opened up possibilities, which can transform Higher Education for the better for the twenty-first century music theory student and he contended that this necessitates a radical pedagogical shift. Music theory teachers in Higher Education should be comfortable with using composition programmes that encourage student engagement with music technology. However, they should also make the activities inclusive, accessible and of interest to both male and female learners. Wise, Greenwood and Davis (2011) explored the opportunities that music technology offers to composing and stressed that digital contexts could provide accessible platforms for expression through composition to all learners regardless of gender or ability.

To conclude, music theory teachers of the twenty-first century should incorporate composing activities into their teaching for the development of a rounded musician and for supporting their learners' creative voice. This could be achieved by pedagogical approaches such as analysing new compositions, encouraging students to attend live music events, putting the compositional periods into context, identifying a variety of music works for analysis and discussion, and combining harmony and counterpoint skills.

These approaches within Higher Education should, nonetheless, be grounded in principles of collaborative learning amongst mixed-age learners, and in recognition and appreciation of the different ways that male and female students engage in the different tasks and the use of music technologies (student-centred learning). Music theory teachers of the twenty-first century both at MSM, and in general, need to adjust to both new technologies and emerging forms of music and to integrate them in the curricula (Gouzouasis & Bakan, 2011) to allow their students to create and explore their own individual musical voice.

7.4 MUSIC THEORY AREA 3: THINKING SKILLS THROUGH VARIED REPERTOIRE AND CHRONOLOGY VS. FAMILIARITY

The music theory teachers of this study highlighted the importance of thinking skills in enabling music learners to analyse and evaluate music. For example, A.P. argued that knowledge of different musical forms, the basics of Schenkerian analysis and set theory analysis⁷ are fundamental. Existing literature in music theory instruction confirms that developing strong analytical skills is of considerable importance to all students. Fournier (2009) posits that analytical skills support performers, composers and musicologists alike, and that music theory teachers have a responsibility to demonstrate to music learners how having analytical skills can benefit their practice. Two issues dominated the discussion with music theory teachers on the importance of thinking skills: the use of repertoire and contextualising the study of music within a broader framework.

The interview data revealed that the area connected to developing thinking skills which had all participants talking about, was the selection and analysis of music repertoire. Participants commented that this should include a variety of musical genres

⁷ Set theory is a technique which facilitates the study of non-tonal music using the principles of mathematical set theory. This strategy yields a means for the comprehension of pitch combinations. The techniques of set theory facilitates the analytical skills in determining the differences and similarities of pitch content, within groups of notes which are called 'sets'.

and featuring popular, jazz, world music and Asian music. Through exposure to music such as ‘Seven Little Pieces after Folk songs from Inner Mongolia’ by Shang, ‘Suite of Zhuang People’s Village’ by Ni Hongjin and ‘Thunder in Drought Season’ by Chen Peixun, students in the theory class can become familiar to music outside our western culture. Teacher 2 believes that a good balance of repertoire was essential. She suggested that analytical skills in diatonic and chromatic harmony are salient for all musicians, including contemporary, jazz and classically trained musicians. Interestingly, both teacher 4 and teacher 5 included analysis of popular music in the music theory classroom, whilst teacher 5 explained that she uses non-western musical examples for a better understanding of heterophony⁸. This echoes Searby (2017) who suggested that students should listen to contemporary and twentieth-century approaches as well as be familiar with Schenker’s analytical approach of tonal music. Lastly, with reference to repertoire familiarity, music theory teachers acknowledged that thinking skills in music theory can be fostered not only by engaging learners in analysis of varied repertoire, but also by encouraging students to attend concerts and by commissioning them to write analysis of the repertoire that they had listened to. Salazar and Randles (2015) acknowledged that the inclusion of popular music in the curriculum instigates music education to focus on the complex aural and creative processes. However, Marvin (2012) noted that musical works should be analysed as soon as the student has some basic understanding of musical form.

Regarding the approach to exploring musical literature, the issue of the chronological order of historical context was debated in depth. Some music theory teachers suggested that the theoretical processes should follow a historical pattern, beginning with the Renaissance period and ending with the late Romantic period. For

⁸ Heterophony is common in non-western music. It occurs when there are two or more versions of the same melody happening at the same time. The main melody is played simultaneously with variants of it, either in a different rhythm or tempo or with various decorations.

instance, lecturer 1 remarked that the study of stylistic harmony should be aligned with its historical and chronological context. This is also argued by Marvin (1994) who encouraged music teachers to adopt a systematic, accurate and foregrounded analytical approach with elements of historical and stylistic studies channelled at promoting in-class performance and discussion. However, other music theory teachers, affirmed that the harmonic and melodic language of the nineteenth century is at times more accessible than repertoire from other periods so probably repertoire from this era should be the starting point of music theory teaching in the higher grades. This view is supported by Stevens (2015) who emphasised that it is pedagogically advisable to present students with music that is within their analytical grasp. By integrating analysis, Stevens (2015) argues that students not only learn that making music is one of the most effective means of understanding music, but they also learn to explore and document the horizons of possibility within which music operates. In other works, both Stevens (2015) and some music theory teachers argued that teaching theory through stylistic analysis makes theoretical concepts easier to develop and internalize once these are contextualised within a broader framework that does not necessarily follow a historical pattern.

Although there was no consensus on whether to take a chronological approach to teaching music theory or to start from contemporary repertoire that the students are more familiar with, there was a unanimous agreement by teachers and learners that providing opportunities to engage students in thinking analytically whilst connecting to contextualised periods, facilitate the understanding of music theory in practice. As reported by the learners in this study, thinking analytically was explicitly connected to repertoire that they practised as part of their instrumental and vocal tuition, and theoretical concepts were put into practice by small assignments such as their own compositions (see Matthews' 'Melancholy' composition in Chapter Six). Philpott (2001) argued that only by engaging with actual music in context, can one hope to develop real musical

understanding. Philpott (2001, p. 84) stresses that ‘it is possible to pick out certain concepts and *immerse* pupils in them through listening, composing and performing’. Rachel, Jenny and Michela also remarked (see Chapter Six) that understanding musical concepts requires repetition, explanation and application, so using these approaches in combination fostered their analytical skills. Furthermore, Rachel, Melissa and Michela underlined that the context gives meaning to musical material echoing the teachers’ perspectives that contextualising musical examples enhances music theory understanding and students’ interest. Lively (2017) strongly argued that learners should be given the opportunity to see several examples of each musical concept as they learn about a specific concept. Similarly to the tutors, the students favoured greater integration of popular music, as familiarity appeared to boost motivation and understanding (also a finding of Green, 2002; 2008).

All things considered, this study underlined that pedagogical benefits are maximized when educators use familiar extracts of music to introduce, clarify or reinforce new concepts. Helping students to connect the unfamiliar with the familiar has been identified as a successful strategy for facilitating learning in the music theory class (Jimenez, 2016). Therefore, although music theory teachers need to foster the skills necessary for the exploration and understanding of the main musical structures used in instrumental and vocal repertoire, they can do that either from their historical perspective or from repertoire that is more familiar to the students as this invigorates enthusiasm and motivation for learning.

7.5 MUSIC THEORY AREA 4: PERFORMING ON A KEYBOARD AND THROUGH IMPROVISING

7.5.1 Incorporating Keyboard Harmony

The majority of music theory teachers stated that although keyboard harmony is a significant factor especially in Higher Education, it is not integrated in the music theory curriculum. Teacher 2 affirmed that fundamental keyboard harmony is essential, in that it offers possibilities to a more comprehensive approach to theoretical studies. Teacher 2 argued that keyboard harmony can be integrated with composition and performance through composing a set of chord progressions, playing these chords and improvising on top of these progressions. This echoes Palmer (2014), Engelsdorfer (2018) and Callahan (2015) who stressed that keyboard harmony is a useful pedagogical tool in the music theory classroom. The keyboard allows teachers to demonstrate, highlight, investigate, explain in sound, and accompany (Callahan, 2015). However, music theory teachers reported that time constraints do not always permit keyboard harmony to be integrated in the curriculum. What is more, it emerged that music theory teachers whose main achievement is in performance, musicology and composition had unclear ideas as to what is expected of them regarding subject content or had limited training in keyboard harmony. Specifically, teacher 4 affirmed that improvisation over keyboard harmony was never part of her training. In addition, composer 1 remarked that when he tried to integrate keyboard harmony within the course of advanced harmony, the students were not particularly enthusiastic. Similarly, teacher 1 highlighted that she does not integrate keyboard harmony in her teaching as the issue of addressing keyboard harmony at MSM is not well-defined and articulated in the music theory curriculum.

On the other hand, learners appeared to appreciate the importance of keyboard harmony in understanding music theory concepts. Jenny commented that engaging with keyboard harmony encouraged her to connect theory with practice. Audrey was delighted to listen to the chords played at the keyboard with and without extensions and expressed

that not only does she know how to build these chords but she also knows how these extensions sound. Matthew expressed the view that improvising new concepts through keyboard harmony generated enthusiasm for new learning and ongoing engagement with ‘interesting sounds’. The learners reported that analysing popular music on the keyboard was both effective and enjoyable. Overall, it is encouraging to observe that students at MSM acknowledged the importance of connecting the concepts learnt in music theory with practical applications on the keyboard.

Despite the wealth of literature on the benefits of incorporating keyboard harmony in music theory teaching as a tool for supporting thinking skills combined with aural perception (Wagner, 1992; Nelson, 2002; Palmer, 2014; Engelsdorfer, 2018; Callahan, 2015) and audiation (Gordon, 2007), more needs to be done to encourage music theory teachers at MSM to use it as part of their teaching. This is an area where music technology could support learning and teaching (See 7.6.3). Callahan (2015) recommended the software programme *SmartMusic*. He explained that *SmartMusic* has significant pedagogical advantages: it offers an instructor designed transposable guidance, provides students with a set of practice tools, and has an easy-to-use recording platform. *SmartMusic* can be used even in relatively large classes, and it guides the learner on developing keyboard harmony skills even in the absence of the teacher. According to Callahan (2015) using *SmartMusic* had a positive impact on the students’ learning.

7.5.2 Performing Through Improvisation: An Area For Development

Improvisation refers to on-the-spot performance, which Stevens (2019) claims engages musicians in music learning, listening and making. Improvisation according to Chess (2005) gives new insights, invigorates the learning process and instigates the music theory student to be creative. The responses by music theory teachers regarding the use of

improvisation in music theory learning were quite revealing. The majority of teachers stated that they did not integrate improvisation during theory teaching. This echoes the survey conducted by Snodgrass (2016) in response to the *Music Manifesto* (2016), which highlighted that improvisation is not taught frequently as part of music theory curricula. For example, composer 1 commented that he did not manage to integrate improvisation within the coursework of advanced harmony and when he tried it, students were not particularly enthusiastic. Another teacher remarked that she does not integrate improvisation in her theory classes, as it is still not well- defined and articulated in the curriculum. However, lecturer 1 encouraged improvisation in his classes by in-class imitation of improvised music from world music recordings, and through in-class performance of the transcriptions produced by the students. The music theory teachers generally felt that there was much to gain from embracing improvisation in the theory class, but some commented that they did not use it because of lack of time, and lack of training on how to improvise and how to teach improvisation. It appeared that many teachers who taught music theory had a very vague notion of what is expected of them in improvisation. This echoes Hopkins (2013) who stressed that classroom music theory teachers feel incompetent in teaching composing. It could be argued that this attitude could also apply to improvising.

It is also striking that during the focus group interview with the students there was minimal mention to improvisation as part of music theory learning. Only Matthew, who was also interested in composition, mentioned improvisation in relation to music theory teaching and learning. Although the learners expressed strong agreement that theoretical principles cannot be internalized if they are given limited time and if they are left on paper, they did not appear to recognise improvisation as a musical activity that could support music theory teaching and learning. On the contrary, there is a wealth of academic literature underscoring the benefits from engaging music learners in improvising. For

example, Palmer (2014) and Engelsdorfer (2018) stress that improvisation allows students to engage in practical work which could facilitate understanding of theoretical concepts. Engelsdorfer (2018), in particular, argues that improvisation can be a valuable pedagogical tool in the music theory classroom in Higher Education because through improvisation activities students could acquire a thorough understanding of theoretical concepts. Furthermore, Marvin (2012) is of the opinion that improvisation should be used to expand the creative experiences of the learners within a systematic framework and through embracing different genres. Different scholars propose different models for structured or 'free' improvisation. Whilst Chess (2005) proposes improvisation at the keyboard, Lovell (2019) contends that vocal improvisation using rhythmic and tonal pitch patterns in different modes, offers the possibility to students to improvise vocally. Lastly, Chess (2005) believes that improvisation in the theory class could include keyboard tasks such as play-along, echoing, sing-and-play, transposition, fill-in the blanks, figured bass amongst others. It is discouraging that some teachers and most learners at MSM did not seem to share these views. Music theory teachers and learners seemed to be using the lack of time and training on how to improvise as the main reasons for not even attempting improvising in music theory classes probably ignoring recent studies (Callahan, 2015; and Varvarigou, 2017), which show that improvisation can add an exciting dimension to traditional pedagogy and that the skills gained from improvisation can be applicable to musical practice across the lifecourse.

In conclusion, neither keyboard harmony, nor improvisation were utilised by the teachers and learners of this study during the learning and teaching of music theory. The reasons offered by the teachers for avoiding using keyboard harmony were the lack of time, and for improvisation the lack of confidence and knowledge in teaching it. Despite extensive research into the benefits of using both keyboard harmony (Callahan, 2015; Mayfield, 2012; Nelson, 2002; Oksanen, 2012; Spranswick, 2014; Wagner, 1992) and

improvisation (Callahan, 2015; Engelsdorfer, 2018; Palmer, 2014; Sarath, Myers & Campbell, 2017; and Varvarigou, 2017) as part of music learners training in Higher Education, more needs to be done at the level of policy and practice in order for both keyboard harmony and improvisation to feature prominently and confidently in the music theory curricula of the future for all the benefits that it can offer to musicianship and collaborative learning.

7.6 EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO NURTURING MUSIC THEORY SKILLS

This section discusses effective approaches to nurturing music theory skills in Higher Education. Although, the data have come from responses of music theory teachers and music learners from the MSM and other music institutions in the Maltese Islands, current discussions in academic literature on effective music theory teaching and learning indicate that these themes are not unique to the Maltese Islands. On the contrary, one could argue that studying music theory teaching and learning at the MSM offered an opportunity to revisiting salient issues pertaining to twenty-first century music theory teaching in Higher Education. The approaches proposed by this study as salient in transforming music theory pedagogy in Higher Education are the following: (1) including a wider variety of music repertoire that is familiar and relevant to the students alongside western classical repertoire that traditionally forms the core of the music theory curriculum. (2) making direct links between theory and practice; (3) promoting wider inclusion of creative digital technologies and (4) adopting a portfolio for assessment of music theory learning.

7.6.1 Proposed Approach 1: Including a Variety of Music Repertoire, Especially Popular Music

All music theory teachers who participated in this study agreed that vocal and instrumental performers need a basic core of musical knowledge and skills. Such skills should comprise an awareness of the main composers and compositions from a broad historical spectrum. They also stressed that the students need to connect their theoretical knowledge with diverse music literature. Although different teachers had different suggestions as to which content of repertoire should be taught, there was consensus in that a wide variety of music repertoire needed to be included. For instance, teacher 4 and teacher 5 argued that popular, non-western and sacred music should be included. Additionally, teacher 3 stated that he liked to connect his students with the non-western idiom by introducing them to Asian composers, and teacher 2 stressed that students need to immerse themselves into a deep understanding of a wide spectrum of genres in music from the medieval to the twenty-first century music. Specifically, lecturer 1 affirmed that the development of analytical skills should emerge from a range of music genres and styles across all musical traditions and cultures. This perspective is in agreement with Jorgensen (1997), who claimed that comprehensive musicianship can be achieved when music education draws on multiple influences. In addition, the *Manifesto (2016)* underscored that the inclusion of a variety of musics from different cultures, times and social contexts within music theory pedagogy is essential. This perspective is finally promoted by Kenyon and Schwitzgebel (2019), and Clendinning (2017) who stressed that through the use of familiar music as opposed to acontextual exercises when delivering theoretical concepts, music theory learners can build analytical skills useful for listening to and creating music.

What is more, both the music theory teachers and the students highlighted that teaching music theory using stylistic analysis of diverse music literature makes the cognitive aspects of theoretical concepts easier to develop and internalise. The music theory students argued that incorporating historical contexts and popular music in the

chapters of the study guides to facilitate learning, was effective. Students liked the inclusion of diverse music repertoire during lesson time. They reported that discovering concepts could be enhanced by referring to their historical contexts as much as possible. Without this context, material learnt often appeared as meaningless. Finally, the students commented that, due to the inclusion of a variety of repertoire, they started making connections between what they studied in the music theory class and the music they played as soloists, in chamber groups and in the school orchestra.

Fournier (2009) affirmed that students enjoy sharing music with their peers and are excited to discover concrete examples of abstract theoretical concepts in the repertoire which they perform. Identifying a variety of music works for analysis, composition and discussion was considered as an effective attitude on the part of the music theory teachers. Teacher 6 and composer 3 acknowledged that music composition students need to be exposed to various styles. Similarly, composer 2's views showed that many students encounter techniques, approaches and styles that they might have overlooked before. Teacher 6 concluded that listening to a variety of repertoire, analysing past models and experimenting how tools were used, strengthens one's overall musical knowledge.

When looking closely at the various studies of the use of repertoire in music theory instruction, alongside the study being reported here, similar concerns and limitations have been identified. Myers (2016) expressed concerns that lessons in music theory focus on the common-practice period, rarely integrating non-western musics and repertoire from the twentieth-century in the music classroom. He claimed that theory of non-western music should form part of a cohesive approach. Contemporary musical worlds should comprise both music of western european culture and world music. Notably, at the same time, Marvin (2012) revealed that in the U.S.A there is a general pedagogical trend towards a more direct engagement with repertoire and less accentuation on part-writing. Negotiating with students to compose in a new idiom can be introduced by making

students familiar with new material in informal music contexts. Students can become acquainted and familiar with new genres by assimilating such constructive practices which will enable them to engage and develop their musical knowledge. Green (2002), Moore (2019) and Salazar and Randles (2015) found that learning to compose in such contexts promoted motivation, enjoyment, besides nurturing and developing advanced aural, improvisatory, and creative musicianship skills.

The potential of connecting familiar music to the students' learning has been positively argued here. Familiar music enticed the music students and made them realize that they could still study music theory through performing such familiar repertoire. Since students were familiar with popular songs, they could concentrate more on the theoretical aspect rather than on the sound itself. For instance, Alexia spoke favourably of the harmonic progressions that encompass popular music perspectives. As an example, she commented on the use of diminished seventh chord in 'My Sweet Lord' by George Harrison. Through the concept of familiarity in the music theory class in Higher Education, the learners are immersed into the musical environment in a hands-on fashion. Referring specifically to repertoire, Ponick (2000) and Springer and Gooding (2013) advocated for the inclusion of popular music in the theory classroom and Väkevä (2009, p. 10) contends that popular music can offer 'a gateway to further knowledge of music, music literacy and theoretical concepts'. Green (2002) and Woody (2007) highlighted that popular music can improve students' aural, creative and improvisatory musicianship. Subsequently, Allsup (2003) affirmed that through popular music students have the opportunities to enhance their creativity. Salazar and Randles (2015) argued that through the inclusion of familiar music students focus on more complex processes such as the aural and creative sections. Furthermore, through studying a variety of musical genres and contextualising them in active listening, analytical skills can be nurtured and developed. For example, Varvarigou (2014; 2017) found that through learning and playing music 'by

ear' from recordings, Higher Education students engaged in creative exploration that led to creating their own improvisations and compositions.

A discourse that emerged from the interviews was connected as to whether teachers at MSM should teach a restrictive repertoire of literature or whether they should include many topics at the risk of superficiality. The participants expressed uncertainty as to whether they should focus on depth and width of literature covered, but they agreed that time constraints make teaching all the components of an effective music curriculum, challenging. This was also argued by Duinker and Léveillé Gauvin (2017), and by Marvin (2012, p. 256) who expressed the view that the traditional curriculum sequence 'prioritizes depth of knowledge over breadth of coverage'. Wennerstorm (2013) made specific reference to Brittner-Stull's *Anthology of Chronological Compositions*⁹. He explained that these are purposely designed to feature a wide range of vocal and instrumental music, specifically designed for analytical work. Although there is no simple answer as to how diversity and unity are best balanced, diversity will bring other genres such as popular, jazz and world music into increased focus in the music theory classroom and, according to the participants of this study, this was significant.

Overall, participants noted that making connections with a wide range of repertoire placed within its historical context, including popular music which students already knew, brought along with it pedagogical advantages. Firstly, the students could concentrate more on the theoretical aspect rather than on the sound itself. Secondly, engaging the pupils in the analytical process of popular songs made the theoretical framework appear relevant because that is the music which students relate with and experience on a daily basis.

⁹ Matthew Brittner-Stull compiled the anthology 'Anthology for Analysis and Performance', for use in the theory classroom. The anthology includes instrumental and vocal music for various types of genre and medium, amongst which string quartets, piano, instrumental music and lieder. This anthology was published in 2014 (OUP), specifically aimed to facilitate analytical and performance insights.

7.6.2 Proposed Approach 2: Making Direct Links Between Theory and Practice

Connecting theory with practice has implications on two fronts. Firstly, from the music theory teachers' perspectives, although this juxtaposition can be inspiring, the pedagogical implications deserve consideration. As the teachers highlighted, there is a disconnect between theory and practice in music theory tuition at the MSM: many students desire to learn to play music rather than learn music as a subject and some other students focus on passing examinations rather than enjoying learning music. This is also contended by Boyle (2019) who found that instrumental music learners want to learn specific repertoire rather than how to play their instrument. Teacher 3 and composer 1 explained that students fail to see the link between the theoretical part with the performative aspect of music and some performance students do not realise that theoretical knowledge can enhance their performance skills.

Bribitzer-Strull (2003) addressed the practical values of putting into practice material learnt during theory lessons, specifically, the component of analysis, and acknowledged that recorded performances can be used as text material to initiate and instigate discussion of theoretical concepts. Fournier (2009) is of the opinion that motivation can be fostered in the music theory class if students analyse the actual repertoire being practised by the students outside music theory. Fournier (2009, p.143) explains that real performances of the repertoire by the students 'forge a tangible link between music theory and performance'. Marvin (1994) suggested using musical examples which connect the musical theoretical concepts to interpretive decisions in performance and acknowledged that theory classes should nurture students' skills and motivation through 'practical applications of harmony study in the analysis of music literature, in "stylistic" composition projects, and (perhaps most importantly) in performance' (Marvin, 1994, p.49). Presently at MSM, performance studies need to be

more connected with the theoretical studies. Karafillidis (2011) stresses that by knowing the historical and stylistic context of an excerpt that a student is practising, the student can engage in a faithful and artistic interpretation of this excerpt. Finally, Cherlin (2000) emphasized that music theory teachers need to realise that the leading challenge in music theory pedagogy is to determine how relevant and impactful music theory is to practical music making.

Secondly, from the music theory learners' part, understanding of concepts through a personal, active and creative engagement via listening, performing (singing and on musical instruments) and composing plays a significant role in nurturing an understanding of music theory concepts. Swanwick's (1988) philosophy of practical music making reinforces this position. The students emphasised that music theory concepts can only be understood when they are connected with practice – through listening, analysis, performance and composition. Having Dewey's philosophy of an integrated curriculum as a guiding principle, the sample chapters presented, encouraged students not only to practise a variety of skills, but also to engage in learning collaboratively through singing and performing together. Raina (2015) similarly to Dewey (2018) affirmed that the 'learned-centred' paradigm of Higher Education provides opportunities for students to assume responsibilities for their learning – i.e. the students are given support to be reflective and attentive learners, learning from themselves and their peers.

The learners reported that the sample chapters of the material provided, increased engagement with music theory learning as they encouraged them to combine listening, analysing, composing and keyboard playing. Rachel, Brandon, Nathan and Melissa commented that through repetitive listening, they could identify a diminished seventh chord. Anna, Rachel and Brenda commented that singing new harmonic concepts as an SATB group in context, facilitated the listening of the different chord sevenths, chord

spelling and modulation. The MSM music theory students remarked that analysing and discussing sheet music were both effective and insightful, proving that connecting theory with practice can work in synergy to nurture the students' musical skills. In other words, resources that are developed having the needs of the student in mind and that interconnect the musical skills, support students' learning and enjoyment of music theory. In addition, a strong feature of the sample chapters is repetition of music theory concepts. By including Fact Boxes and Tables, the sample chapters succeeded, according to the learners, to reinforce learning through repetition and to make connections between theoretical concepts and their practical application accessible via real-life musical examples.

In conclusion, the findings regarding connecting theory with practice demonstrate that MSM teachers and students recognised that this connection is vital in music theory instruction not only for understanding but also for motivation and enjoyment of music learning. In particular, findings indicate that to make the subject relevant a connection between music theory programmes and real-world music practice needs to be established (Davidson & Lupton, 2016). The responses of the learners emphasised that music theory concepts can only be understood and 'digested' when they are connected with practice – through extensive listening, analysis, performance and composition. The learners highlighted that understanding of concepts happens through repetition and through exploration within a collaborative context.

7.6.3 Proposed Approach 3: Wider Inclusion of Creative Digital Technologies – Emerging Issues

Digital technologies have changed the manner by which students in Higher Education learn. Brenton (2008) argues that the advances of technology provide new opportunities, possibilities and challenges for tutors teaching in Higher Education. For successful e-

learning to take place, the role of the tutor should be to guide and be present just as it is in the lecture hall. Cain (2004) argued that technology has transformed the way teachers approach traditional music activities and that new hardware and software should be adopted in the twenty-first century music theory classroom. Paterson (2000) also stated that creating music layer by layer, editing and playing it back at any tempo, makes it possible for the learners to compose music which they cannot play physically. This study identified keyboard skills and improvisation as key components of the music theory curriculum, however there was a recognition from the music theory teachers that some of them lack the time and training in using the keyboard and improvisation as tools for teaching. Similarly, not all learners can be expected to be proficient in using the keyboard. Therefore, it was argued that music technologies such as *SmartMusic* (Callahan, 2015) could be adopted to enhance music theory learning through offering alternative ways to improvise using the keyboard. Ellis (1997) and Hodges (2001) contend that innovative technologies provide better access to music learning. Specifically, Hodges claims that through the use of effective digital technologies students are engaged in investigation, discovery and new information.

Nevertheless, there are limitations for the use of digital technologies in the music theory classroom. Composer 2 commented that although programmes of music technology can enhance the process of experimentation in the learning music theory, these might distract learners from their original ideas or their pedagogical content. Hodges (2001) argued that sampling, sequencing and editing software make it difficult to evaluate and assess students' works; verifying if the works composed are students' own works can be problematic.

In addition, music theory teachers must be knowledgeable about range and content of digital tools meaning that they require continuous professional development in this

transformative digital world. The National Education Association¹⁰ (2008) remarked that teachers' lack of confidence in the use of classroom technology, is probably due to perpetual changes in technology. Specifically, regarding music theory instruction, recent studies have focused on the issue of the challenges involved in bringing the traditional music composition and technology together. Dammers' (2012) findings show that composition classes using software Garage Band (see Appendix 6) are generally teacher-driven and are normally taken by non traditional music students. Bauer, Reese and McAllister (2003) found that effectiveness of teachers' use of technology in the classroom depended on teacher's knowledge, teacher's comfort and frequency of teacher's use of technology. Dorfman (2008) stated that teachers need professional development in music technology, specifying ways as to how to integrate technology successfully into the music classroom and to have students actively engaged in the use of technology for music learning. As identified by the current study, music theory teachers must continually learn new skills and familiarise themselves with new ways of interacting and communicating with students on and off campus, employing technologies and pedagogies suited to the context and student cohort. This was also an important finding in the research by Benson and Samarawickrema (2009). In addition to this, Aljuzayri, Binmubarak, Pleasants and Horovitz (2017) remarked that it is an essentiality to maintain professional development for teachers when new technologies are presented in educational institutions.

What is more, there are challenges related to access and familiarity with different digital platforms by students and teachers from non-affluent families or backgrounds. For instance, some music schools might not be equipped with interactive whiteboards and data projectors (Purcell, Buchanan & Friedrich, 2013). On top of that, buying digital

¹⁰ The National Education Association (NEA) is a union in the U.S. representing public school teachers, support staff, faculty and tutors at colleges and universities, retired educators and college students preparing to become teachers.

technologies for modernising the music classroom can be expensive. Cuts of funds for music programmes and availability of necessary equipment are known interferences in integrating technology successfully in the music classroom. This can lead to lack of motivation on the teacher's part to implement a technology-enhanced music lesson (Sugar, Crawley & Fine, 2004). Burnard (2007) argued that there is little evidence that teachers know how to apply technology to their practice. And it is often the case that teachers learn from their students, who usually are more technology-savvy than their teachers. Bauer and Kenton (2005), nonetheless, showed that the teachers using technology were quite skilled, but it was the resources that were available to the teachers in the classroom that limited opportunities for an integration of technology in classroom learning experiences.

Russell-Bowie (2009) questioned whether music theory teachers are given adequate resources by the institutions to cater for the use of technology in their classroom. This worry was also confirmed by the MSM teachers in relation to lack of physical environment, equipment and teaching materials, adequate computers and recording laboratories that could facilitate theory and composition lessons. Specifically, the responses of music theory teachers teacher 6 and composer 2 revealed that although composing is an integral part of music theory Grades VII and VIII and composition at diploma level, the MSM does not provide the physical digital environment to facilitate teaching and learning. Although teachers reported a most favourable attitude towards integrating digital technologies in their lessons, the bottom line was that tools and digital programmes are limited at MSM. Collectively, findings from the current study reveal that teachers remarked that students within Higher Education should not be deprived of essential resources that offer new opportunities and creative ideas. Teachers should collaborate with students and develop curricula which incorporate the use of mobile devices (Peluso, 2012).

Finally, the music theory teachers emphasised that no amount of technology can replace the face-to-face interactions between teacher and student in the theory class. M.F. made special reference to DAW (see Appendix 6), but he argued that the students should not simply programme the machine to produce sounds. Instead, they should use DAW to create a sensible and emotional composition.

Collaborative learning has been reported as one of the most effective ways to support learning and personal growth, such as skills in problem solving, autonomy and agency (Falchikov, 2001; Griffiths, 2008; Esteves, Matias and Pereira, 2018; Klein, Vosgerau, & Sant' Anna, 2018). New technologies could promote collaborative learning in the music theory class as students could work in pairs in composition or aural learning tasks (Cain, 2004). What is more, Seddon (2006) attests that through the use of technology students can share their work with their peers. Lastly, Savage and Challis (2002) believe that a creative 'digital arts' curriculum can be facilitated by creating the right environment where students can express their creativity collaboratively.

7.6.3.1 Music Technologies: Pedagogical Tools

It was rather surprising that despite the prompts that I offered during the focus group interviews with the students at MSM on what activities could motivate them during lesson time, the students did not discuss the use of creative digital technologies, other than mentioning some programmes in passing. This could be because the students mostly experience a traditional approach to teaching music theory, which does not seem to reflect the real world outside the classroom. So, the students failed to make the connection between musical experiences at the MSM and their everyday lives. Most institutions in Higher Education moved to virtual learning due to the pandemic Covid-19. Music theory teachers across the MSM had to re-create experiences through online platforms.

Reflecting on my experiences before and during the pandemic and my transition to educational tools, I realised how these unprecedented times helped to transform the way I teach theory in a virtual environment. Below is a summary of technologies that could be adopted by music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education. These suggestions come from personal experience, from MSM teachers' and students' suggestions, and from literature on effective music theory teaching.

- **Smartboards:** The Smartboard is my best resource available. It is designed to encourage learners to be purposely and actively engaged in their learning by setting them real intellectual and practical challenges. MSM music theory teachers use Smartboard to deliver lessons in aural training, theory, history, analysis and form. In Higher Education, and specifically in my classes, it has proven to be a powerful conduit to learning in that content can be prepared beforehand. Additionally, teachers can download music scores from public domains, can access multiple pages of content, and work done in class can be saved for future reference. From the learners' responses it emerged that Smartboard connects learning. Smartboards have been used according to the students' reports to present lessons and display web content. According to Wood and Ashfield (2008) SmartBoard in the music classroom is a particularly versatile tool, for it renders classroom experience more lively and interactive. Changes from a print society to a digital society are reflected in today's music theory classroom through the Smartboard. For example, instead of making fifteen copies of a trio sonata on a copy-machine, the music theory teacher can now scan the document and present it on a Smartboard. Baker (2007) maintains that through the Smartboard students can create Power Point or Prezi presentations, embed video and audio clips in the presentation and share it with the class. Marvin (2012) asserts that these presentations can be embedded with sound files, score excerpts and

animations. This is significantly relevant to this study, in that a four-part chorale can be discussed, 'saved', and followed up the subsequent week. What is more, compositional techniques, such as modulations and chord progressions are discussed and 'saved' into a file for later use.

- **Tablet computers and iPads:** Tablet computers and iPads have received significant reviews for attributes such as portability and design (Waters 2010). Riley (2016) argues that creativity and performing music on iPads can be a valuable alternative especially in cases where limited budget is prevalent for the upkeep of traditional musical instruments. Williams (2014) states that the iPad offers possibilities for both ensemble playing and music learning. Both components have emerged as significant during music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education. For instance, using the iPad as a keyboard is also a resource for class activity (Green 2014) and can help the teachers and learners with limited keyboard skills in actually 'performing' musical examples that have been analysed as part of the class. Playing at the iPad as keyboard and pausing prior to exploring, enlivens class discussion and enriches students' abilities to discovering new features (inquiry-based learning). The iPad, could facilitate keyboard-using experiences for music theory teachers and learners alike. In addition, Riley (2016) recommends a variety of apps and provides instructions for using iPads as a music creation tool. He stated that the many dynamic and vibrant apps available make iPads an available and interesting option for music composition and performance. Apps such as Spotify, Notate Me, Ensemble Composer Pro, Chordbot, Garage Band, Cubasis, Notion and Symphony Pro (See Appendix 6), could make music theory teaching and learning fun and interactive.
- **Online platforms:** Institutions in Higher Education have adopted course management platforms, where all material related to course can be streamed, thus providing unlimited access to all course materials. MusicFirst Classroom is a learning

management system platform for the music theory class. This learning management system works with integrated software to help the music theory teacher monitor students' progress and to create the assignments. Specifically, the package for music theory includes access to the following software programmes: Focus on Sound, O-Generator, Noteflight Learn, Musition and Auralia (see Appendix 6). These are designed to facilitate students' learning in aural skills, music theory concepts and composition. Additionally, educational blogs help students to develop a virtual community of practice and share resources (Fitzpatrick, 2014). Moreover, platforms such as *Wikispaces Classroom* offer opportunities for initiating projects of work which can be carried out outside the classroom (Dutica, 2018).

- **Music Theory Software:**
- **Auralia:** At MSM, teachers use Auralia for ear training. It is a most comprehensive software. The topics of the software focus on ear training drills, music fundamentals, harmony and voice-leading, form and contextual listening amongst others. This online ear training platform and the music theory software Musition are continually updated.
- **Meludia** Meludia is another ear training software mostly used by MSM students. Through the intervention of our 'arts ambassador', the renowned tenor Joseph Calleja, every resident of Malta has unlimited and free access to Meludia. This software allows the student to master the fundamentals of music at his own pace. It is an effective, inclusive and interactive tool which shows the learner that music should be taught as we learnt our own language through listening and imitating. The objective of this tool is to facilitate the processing of music in one's mind and to learn to hear internally. Its graduated and systematic structure is a particular non-intimidating challenge for the twenty- first century music theory student.

- **Focus on Sound:** Focus on Sound is a music theory education digital encyclopedia which develops students' general musical knowledge, listening and composing skills. Focus on Sound embraces two multimedia software products: Instruments and Sound Words. Whilst Instruments introduces students to instruments and groups pertaining to classical, jazz, rock, folk and world music instruments, Sound Words covers topics on rhythm, pitch, harmony, form, instrumental techniques, technology and music reading.
- **Musition:** Musition is an educational theory software designed to improve students' theoretical knowledge and musicianship. It offers topics such as Fundamentals, Harmony and Voice Leading at a graduated learning pace.
- **O-Generator:** O-Generator is an engaging music software programme which enables students to learn to compose using popular and world music styles. Students can create their own loops, record them as audio files or use loops from the loop library. Lessons focus on core music principles of rhythm, melody, harmony and song writing in popular and world music styles.
- **Noteflight** is an online application that allows users to compose, view and share music notation from any web browser. It also allows the user to edit, print and playback written music from any connected device.
- **Flat for Education:** This is a cloud-based collaborative software programme designed to help students create their own musical compositions and their music education activities. Flat for Education facilitates and promotes collaborative practice in that students can work in real-time on the same sheet whether working in the classroom or working from home.
- **Artusi:** On a personal level, Artusi is the interactive music theory platform which I consider as an excellent resource for use in Higher Education. This programme led

me towards a crucial change in the approach towards music theory teaching in Higher Education. This digital tool covers a variety of musical topics which I adopted for my teaching. I have used this programme exhaustively to introduce my students to part-writing, voice-leading and counterpoint. This programme addresses the ever growing needs of students. It has helped them to gain skills, knowledge and to think creatively in diatonic and chromatic harmony, and in counterpoint. This tool has been instrumental in transforming the way I teach presently.

- **Web-resources:** There are many web resources that could be used in the music theory classroom to support teaching and learning in Higher Education. For example, *Choraleguide.com* is a web resource designed by Tom Pankhurst aimed at teaching the composition of four-part harmony in the style of J.S. Bach. *Schenkerguide.com* is a site featuring online resources, worksheets and bibliography focusing on Schenkerian analysis. Furthermore, *My Music Theory* by Victoria Williams is an online music theory course covering the ABRSM syllabus from Grade I to Grade VIII. Each lesson is followed by interactive exercises to test student's understanding of concepts quickly and effectively.

7.6.3.2 Music Technologies: Modes of Learning

Blended, flipped and fully online learning offer great potential benefits to both educators and students (McCandless, Stephan-Robinson, 2014). Blended learning using audio podcasting for the specific context of assessment is particularly useful in music theory instruction (Miyake, 2013). Audio recordings provide pedagogical advantages especially when students submit theory homework. Blended learning has allowed more time on learning outside of the music room setting. Students could submit their work from home or other environment outside the classroom. Care for each student is direct, teacher can sing or play and podcasts take little time to record and export. Additionally, file sizes are

smaller than video files and can be shared via e-mail. Moreover, using these podcasts allows the teacher to dedicate more meaningful time to synchronous classroom time (Miyake, 2013). Stephan-Robinson (2013) remarked on the use of enhanced podcasts for both blended and flipped learning in the music theory class in Higher Education. She emphasized that they can be specifically useful in part-writing in diatonic and chromatic harmony, when the teacher needs to support her teaching with appropriate links, images and score excerpts all aimed at enhancing learning. Miyake (2013) focused on the use of Google Docs within the Google Drive suite¹¹. Finally, setting up a classroom website is ideal in that students can access both inside and outside school. This website could post information relevant to students in the music class such as dates of concerts, dates of rehearsals, homework assignments and links to digital resources.

Flipped classes move lectures out of the lecture rooms transforming them into podcasts, videos, and other instructional materials to be used by students prior to each live lecture. Discussions and group work are then finalized with the lecturer present in the classroom. Flipped classes are engaging and prepare the students adequately for synchronous lecture room activities. Rifkin (2013) illustrated how screencasts and instructional videos can be used in the blended or flipped theory classroom. These solutions involve free software allowing the music theory teacher to focus on music theory content and not the technology. Rifkin (2013) finally explained the annotation functionality within YouTube in the advanced theory class. This provides the facility of optimising videos by making them more explanatory and interactive.

To conclude, the application of digital technologies in the music theory class in Higher Education improves the educational quality and instruction personalisation. The

¹¹ This is a web based platform that allows teachers to set blog pages for each class, add content and homework. The platform offers possibilities to the teacher to have a digital on-line dialogue with students about course content or joint projects which the students might be working on.

benefits of digital technologies are numerous and they have fundamentally changed music theory teaching, learning and sharing. Music theory teachers in Higher Education must be current with emerging trends to stay relevant for the twenty-first century music theory student. By embedding digital technologies in the music theory classroom, the teaching and learning environment can be upgraded to a more avant-garde setting which caters for the students' and educators' needs. Finally, research cited above has shown that on-line learning – blended, flipped or fully on-line – could enhance students' knowledge retention, encourage students' participation, promote motivation, inquiry-based and student-centred approaches to teaching and learning (see also Sajid et al, 2016).

7.6.4 Proposed Approach 4: Assessing Music Theory in Higher Education – Portfolio Assessment as a Way Forward

The responses from participant music theory teachers indicated that assessment plays an important role in helping music theory students understand what areas they need to develop further. Music theory teachers agreed that students who come to the MSM to study music theory, come from different musical backgrounds. This suggests that they have different needs and interests. Teachers also concurred that the never ending problem in the music theory department was what skills and knowledge the MSM should assess throughout the year and what skills should be assessed at the end of the scholastic year. Teacher 4 questioned whether sections of the curriculum were going to pursue the formative assessment, to be followed and evaluated at the end of the scholastic year with a summative assessment. Teacher 4 queried whether the curriculum would consolidate formative assessment as well as summative assessment at the end of the scholastic year. Teachers remarked that the MSM music theory department should address the nature and problems of continuous assessment and the various grading systems to maximize useful feedback that best meets the particular learning needs of each student during the scholastic

year. Whilst teacher 2 and teacher 5 proposed standardized workbooks, assignments, regular tests in aural skills and sight singing, teacher 5 acknowledged that questions related to historical topics can take place through an oral examination because this mode of examination assesses students' knowledge rather than their written communication skills. Specifically, teacher 5 remarked that digital technologies are rapidly transforming the landscape of how music theory instruction can be assessed and how new assessment ways and tools can be fully integrated in emerging musical practices. She underlined that music theory assessment can be computer- based through the use of blogs or online journals. As it emerged from the responses of composer 3, composer 2 and teacher 6 one of the areas that was identified as difficult to assess was composition. Whilst composer 1. claimed that composition is a continuously developing process and assessment should reflect all the different stages of the final product, composer 2 stressed the significance of finding a balance between freedom and cohesiveness of structure. Finally, teacher 6 asserted that there is a degree of subjectivity in the process of assessing composition and this in itself can be challenging.

Teachers contended that besides the written formal assignments, students' participation in the class, participatory activities and students' contribution to discussions could also be part of the assessment. According to Belair (1999) assessment should be a means of monitoring students' progress, it should stimulate students' involvement, it should ensure objectivity and neutrality from the teacher's part and it should develop the students' self-esteem, particularly because institutions in Higher Education are often expected to prepare students to embark in successful professional lives (Smilde, 2008). Before starting to assess, music teachers need to discern the targeted expectations, the criteria to be used, the assessment tools, the follow-up assessment together with the necessary actions to be taken to improve the didactic process. Music theory teaching and learning includes aural, oral and written components, therefore, teachers should explore

different ways of assessing their students within Higher Education contexts (Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall, 2009). When devising the assessment, tutors should carefully check that learning outcomes and assessment methods are constructively aligned (Biggs, 1996).

Composer 1 proposed that besides assessing progress, learners should receive formative feedback. Hewitt (2009) argued that assessment can be an active agent in the learning process – but this depends on how students perceive the task. Appropriate feedback should be robust, sincere, impartial and fair. Morton (2008) argued that offering feedback which reflects the practices to improve students' learning, is significant. Lebler (2012) also maintains that because digital technologies have fundamentally changed music teaching and learning, students can upload work in progress and receive feedback from teachers and peers at any time during the semester at their convenience and from wherever they wish, promoting their ability to act as self-directed learners.

Only two music theory teachers, lecturer1 and teacher 5 talked about using portfolio assessment in music theory. No music learners made any mention to assessment, grades, or examinations in our focus group discussions. This is rather surprising considering the wealth of literature on assessment, especially within Higher Education contexts, and anecdotal claims that students are only interested in passing grades. At MSM, as this study was in progress, it was agreed that from scholastic year 2020-21, students at Grades VII and VIII at MSM would be requested to create the learning portfolio as part of their coursework. In general terms, a portfolio used as a pedagogical tool and as a developmental skill, has the ability to engage students in their own learning, through artifacts of their best completed works, the evidence of their work in progress and the reflection of the work submitted (Draves, 2009). Specifically, the music portfolio can be a valuable pedagogical tool to supplement the core theory curriculum as it offers

a valuable source of information for monitoring, assessing and displaying learning (Thornton, Ferris, Johnson, Kidwai & Ching 2011; Ferenc, 2011).

The study proposes that portfolio assessment at MSM, and in music theory Higher Education contexts in general, could support both the learning and the assessment process. Portfolio assessment might be the most suitable for music theory in Higher Education because through compiling it, students are encouraged to include assignments and projects alongside writing, and ongoing reflection on learning (Silveira, 2013). A sense of self-awareness can be fostered through the experience of collecting and reflecting on artifacts created throughout the academic year. Adding the reflective component could transform the musical artifacts of the portfolio into evidence of achievement. The portfolio can feature any number of assignments or tasks the students will complete in and outside the theory class. For example, a portfolio could include concert reviews, short essays on historical topics, seminar summaries, composition or listening commentaries. It can also be composed of creative projects, such as, drafts of students' compositions and/or audio and video recordings of performances of students' compositions, aural tests, group and individual presentations, and personal or group reflective diaries (also see Duțica, 2018). Specifically, in music theory instruction, professional accomplishments should be reflected both through written and oral communication skills. The criteria that define and construct the requirements for each artifact in the form of assignments or projects needs to be clearly established. Detailed instructions are an essential component for each task. Each musical artifact can be assessed by rubric which evaluates categories derived from expectations from each task. Whilst the hard copy documents portfolio is still viable, the digital portfolio would be a preferable mode of submission as the student could easily modify the content and share it with other students in class, promoting again the idea of collaborative learning and collaborative assessment (Norton, 2009).

Denis (2018) claims that through diverse assessment approaches and materials, the students can be assessed in a more holistic and meaningful way. To this intent, the portfolio assessment where diverse musical and text artifacts related to music can be incorporated, could give a holistic picture of students' music theory understanding and development. Silveira (2013) also proposed that the portfolio assessment in the music theory contexts allows space for the students to document their skills, attitudes, abilities, growth and development. The students could also use the portfolio to showcase their talents and musical strengths in listening, performing, creating and thinking in music (Ferenc, 2011) in a meaningful way (Draves, 2009; Silveira, 2013) to future employers or submit this work for further studies. Similarly, the music theory teachers could use the portfolio to reflect on and adjust content delivery and instructional approach.

7.7 A FRAMEWORK ON EFFECTIVE MUSIC THEORY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION – CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter discussed the findings that emerged from the data analyses of Chapters Five and Six in relation to the research questions enquiring into the challenges, perceptions and instructional strategies of music theory teaching in Higher Education. **Collectively, it thus appears that the lack of consensus amongst music theory teachers on the function of the curriculum is a factor that might be contributing to why music theory learners are not always convinced about the effectiveness and the practicality of music theory in their studies. This lack of consensus situated at MSM, seems to be based on teachers' different notions and interpretations of the function of the curriculum in their practice.** The theoretical framework on effective music theory teaching and learning presented in Chapter Four facilitated a detailed discussion of emerging issues articulated by music theory teachers and students at MSM in relation to their perceptions and experiences of music theory teaching and learning and assisted in answering the first and second research

questions. This framework identified Active Listening which encompasses the consolidation of activities through written and aural discussion, evaluation and sight singing in groups. The framework also identified Creating through engaging in composition, music Analysis through using a variety of music repertoire (not only western classical music), and by combining a historical approach with repertoire that is familiar to the learners. Additionally, the effective practice of performing, using a keyboard and improvising on one's principle study musical instrument, including voice, was also identified in the framework. These practices were acknowledged as core skills that should be developed as part of music theory in Higher Education. These skills can be implemented in practice primarily through five approaches. Firstly, including a variety of repertoire and specifically popular music emerged as salient for motivation and engagement. Secondly, making direct links between music theory and its application in practice, encourages learners to realise that through an understanding of music theory they can become better performers, composers, musicologists and ultimately music listeners. Thirdly, integrating digital technologies could facilitate effective delivery, content understanding, student interaction and assessment. Fourthly, this study proposes the portfolio assessment as the most suitable, reliable and useful way of assessing music theory learning. Fifthly, all approaches need to consider the importance on promoting student-directed and inquiry-based learning. The following chapter summarises the findings and puts forward some implications for music theory teaching and learning in Higher education in the Maltese Islands and internationally. Further research in the field of music theory teaching is also proposed.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter provides a summary of the research, beginning with the key findings in relation to the research questions and then listing the contribution made to the field of music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education in the Maltese Islands. This study set to explore firstly, the perceptions and experiences of music theory teachers in the Maltese Islands with reference to effective music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education. Secondly, this study explored the perceptions and experiences of music theory from students at Grade VII and VIII at the MSM as they used the original material of the study guides for Grades VII and VIII created by the author of this thesis. The study guides were being written alongside this research therefore not all chapters of the guides were used with the students. The specific chapters used with the students were: The Secondary (or diatonic) Seventh Chords, The Diminished Seventh Chords, The Neapolitan Sixth Chord, Altered Chords, Modal Borrowing, and The Augmented Sixth Chords. These have been included as separate material of this portfolio submission. Thirdly, the study explored the implications that emerged from music theory teachers' and learners' perceptions and experiences of music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education for designing effective music theory curricula in Higher music Education. The three research questions that guided the study were:

1. How do music theory teachers in the Maltese Islands perceive and relate to effective music theory teaching in Higher Education?
2. How do music theory students at MSM perceive and experience music theory teaching and learning?

3. How do effective music theory curricula in Higher education which respond to the needs of twenty-first century music students and teachers look like?

The participants who contributed to this research were composer-teachers and lecturers from the University of Malta, music theory teachers from the Malta School of Music, and two cohorts of students who attended the Grade VII and Grade VIII music theory classes at the Malta School of Music (MSM) during the academic year 2018-2019. The MSM forms part of the Mikiel Anton Vassalli College, which is the National College for Further Education in Visual and Performing Arts. **The current research identified and highlighted differing views amongst music theory teachers on the function of music theory in the general music education curriculum for the higher grades (VII and VIII). More specifically, these diverse views appeared to explain why music theory learners are indecisive and unconvinced about the necessity of music theory in their music studies. It is worthwhile to further highlight at this point that the more experienced the music theory teacher, the more likely were to recognise that the theoretical skills to be attained through music theory learning, needed to be comprehensive and varied.** The case study methodology allowed the researcher to investigate and understand music theory teaching and learning at Grade VII and Grade VIII levels at MSM. Data have been collected through in-depth interviews with individual composer-teachers, focus group interviews with three full-time music lecturers at the University of Malta, focus group interviews with music theory teachers and students, a workshop, a Professional Development session, the feedback from the study guides and music compositions of students attending Grade VII and Grade VIII in the music theory class during the academic year 2018-2019.

A theoretical framework on effective teaching and learning of music theory in Higher Education emerged from a systematic review of extant literature on music theory teaching and learning (Chapters Two and Three). The theoretical framework was refined

in light of the analysis of the data collected as part of this study (Chapter Seven). The academic literature explored was mainly based on studies from the USA, where the teaching of music theory in Higher Education appears to be very systematic and structured. This theoretical framework supported the analysis (Chapter Five and Six) and discussion (Chapter Seven) of the data. This framework is a major contribution of this study to the field of music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education. To date, there has been no other study to synthesise scholarly work on music theory teaching and learning with a particular focus in Higher Education with the aim to identify key skills and effective approaches to nurturing these skills in response to the needs and interests of the twenty-first century teachers and learners. This study is filling in this gap of knowledge. The proposed framework is grounded in music education philosophies and informed by effective music theory practice and could act as a guide for the development of effective music theory curricula for twenty-first century teachers and learners.

To begin with, four groups of fundamental music theory skills have been identified in extant music theory scholarship. These are: Listening, Creating, Thinking and Performing, and they are placed at the heart of the framework (level 1). At a second level, the framework proposes specific approaches that foster the development of these music theory skills within the specific context of Higher Education. These are: connecting theory with practice, the inclusion of a variety of music repertoire, the inclusion of a variety of creative digital technologies, promoting portfolio assessment and fostering student-centred and inquiry-based learning. At a third level, the proposed framework illustrates how music education philosophy can inform the design of effective music curricula that respond to the needs of twenty-first century music theory teachers and learners. Seven philosophical perspectives have been identified as influencing the design of twenty-first century music theory curricula in Higher Education. Reimer, Elliot, Swanwick, Paynter, Gordon, Jorgensen, and Green all have unique philosophies, each

contributing a distinctive perspective to effective music theory teaching in Higher Education. Whilst Elliot accentuated the praxial element of making music, Reimer and Gordon engaged in mindful listening and audiation, respectively. Additionally, whilst Swanwick and Jorgensen stressed the significance of theorising and comprehending music, Paynter favoured ‘making up’ music. Finally, Green highlighted the importance of informal learning and non-formal teaching.

The section below highlights eight important contributions of this thesis to scholarship on music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education. These have emerged from the analysis of the data collected and discussed in this study in light of the current literature and have helped the researcher refine the theoretical framework on effective music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education proposed by this study.

8.2 UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS THESIS TO EFFECTIVE MUSIC THEORY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

8.2.1 Active Listening Skills Not Just Listening Skills

Firstly, this study highlighted that it is not enough to support the development of Listening skills as part of music theory teaching in Higher Education. Instead, Active Listening has been identified as core skill for all music theory learners in Higher Education contexts. Active Listening encourages the students to connect the sounds of their imagination to what they perceive aurally, visually and kinesthetically. It is significant to note that the students’ responses revealed that through contextualising listening activities using repertoire that they are familiar with, the internalisation of theoretical concepts was better facilitated. More importantly, Active Listening promoted an inquiry-based approach to learning and enabled the students to interact with one another during group singing tasks. These experiences led to student enjoyment and motivation – the students not only had

fun performing but also audiated sound from sight (Gordon,1995). In summary, exploration of familiar material and group sight singing supported student-centred and inquiry-based learning utilising the body, the mind and a collaborative learning spirit necessary for teaching and learning with Higher Education students.

8.2.2 Performing on a Keyboard and Through Improvising

Secondly, this study underscored the importance of including keyboard harmony and improvisation activities in the teaching and learning of music theory in Higher Education. To date, both keyboard harmony and improvisation are not fully integrated in many music theory curricula, due to time constraints and lack of confidence on the part of both teachers and learners, as it emerged in this study. It is noteworthy to specify that despite the salience of using improvisation for music theory learning underscored by extant academic literature, many of the MSM students did not appear to recognise improvisation as a musical activity that could support music theory learning. Keyboard harmony in combination with improvising on one's principal study musical instrument, including voice, nonetheless, could support connecting music theory with practice and making music theory teaching and learning more engaging and relevant to twenty-first century learners.

8.2.3 Skills in music analysis through a Chronology or Familiarity approach

Thirdly, this study highlights the importance of thinking skills in enabling music students to analyse and evaluate music. Through a good grasp of music analysis, the students can become better interpreters of music. The findings from this study suggest that music theory teachers need to cultivate music analysis skills using varied music repertoire: an awareness of the main composers and compositions from a broad historical spectrum was

highlighted. Both teachers and students acknowledged that using stylistic analysis of diverse music literature makes the cognitive aspects of theoretical concepts easier to develop and internalise. This can be delivered either from the historical perspective or by helping students to connect unfamiliar music material with the familiar (Jimenez, 2016). Unsurprisingly, it emerged that the benefits are maximized when teachers use familiar extracts of music to introduce, clarify or reinforce new concepts.

8.2.4 Including a Variety of Music Repertoire, Especially Popular Music

Fourthly, this study builds on current discourses in music education regarding the importance of using popular music material and its processes for authentic and in-depth learning (Green, 2008; Moore, 2019; Salazar and Randles, 2015). The participants of this study noted that making connections with a wide range of repertoire placed within its historical context, including popular music brought along with it, pedagogical advantages. On the one hand, the students could concentrate more on the theoretical aspect rather than the sound itself. On the other hand, engaging the pupils in the analytical process of popular songs made the theoretical concepts appear relevant. Specifically, the students remarked that discovering theoretical concepts in popular music helped them to connect what they studied in the music theory class and the music they listened to, and/or the music that they played as soloists, in chamber groups and in the school orchestra.

8.2.5 Making Direct Links Between Theory and Practice

Fifthly, this study demonstrated that connecting theory with practice is vital in music theory instruction. Teachers and learners noted that to make the subject relevant a connection between music theory programmes and real-world music practice, needs to be established (Davidson & Lupton, 2016). Teachers realised that the material which is

explored during the theory lesson should provide students with opportunities to transfer knowledge onto their respective instrumental or vocal learning processes. Consistently, learners specified that strategies to address the concepts in music theory, need to be explored through the practical involvement of listening, analysing, composing and keyboard playing. The learners highlighted that understanding of concepts happens through repetition and through self-directed and inquiry-based learning within a collaborative context.

8.2.6 Creating Skills Through Composition

Sixthly, a strong theme emerging from this research was the development of the student's creative voice through music composition in music theory instruction. Effective teaching approaches could include combining harmony and counterpoint skills, identifying and analysing new compositions, putting the compositional periods into context, and encouraging students to attend live music events. These approaches to composition within Higher Education should be grounded on the principles of collaborative learning and in recognition of the different ways that male and female students engage in the different tasks and the use of music technologies (student-centred learning). This study revealed that music theory students embrace opportunities to submit their compositions to other performer peers, who could provide them with valuable feedback. More importantly, if music teachers want to remain relevant, they need to include and integrate emerging trends of music into the music theory curricula (Gouzouasis & Bakan, 2011).

8.2.7 Wider Inclusion of Creative Digital Technologies

Participants' perspectives suggested that technology has become part of people's everyday life and therefore needs to be welcomed into music theory instruction and practice. Integrating digital technologies could facilitate effective delivery, content

understanding, student interaction and assessment. This study recognised that digital technologies have fundamentally changed the ways that music is taught and learnt. Music theory teachers in Higher Education must be current with emerging trends both in terms of digital tools and in modes of learning, to stay relevant with the twenty-first century music theory student. Music theory teachers need to reconsider and expand the curriculum and pedagogies to include digital media. By embedding digital technologies in the music theory classroom, the teaching and learning environment could better cater for the students' and educators' needs. Given the ubiquitous accessible nature of on-line learning – blended, flipped or fully on-line – it is imperative that teachers embrace these technologies as these could enhance students' knowledge retention, encourage students' participation, promote motivation, inquiry-based and student-centred approaches to teaching and learning (see also Sajid et al, 2016).

8.2.8 Assessing Music Theory in Higher Education: The Portfolio Assessment

Finally, this study underscores the need for a systematic tool that demonstrates and documents students' efforts, progress and achievements in all four areas (Thinking, Performing, Creating and Listening) of an effective music theory curriculum in Higher Education. This study confirms the rationale for the organization and development of a music portfolio. The study proposes that portfolio assessment at MSM, and in music theory Higher Education contexts in general, could support both the learning and the assessment process and considers it to be the most suitable, reliable and useful way of assessing music theory learning. A portfolio can be a valuable source of information for monitoring, assessing and displaying students' learning. Students are encouraged to include assignments and projects alongside writing an ongoing reflection on learning

assignments and projects alongside writing an ongoing reflection on learning (Silveira, 2013).

8.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

There are a number of implications that can be drawn from the present findings. Implications and recommendations arising from the study are directed to policy-makers, academics on music theory courses, the Board of studies at MSM, music theory teachers, and music theory learners in Higher Education. This exploratory study has helped to start painting a picture of music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education in the Maltese Islands, with the aim of bringing a positive change in music theory teaching and learning.

8.3.1 Implications for Policy-Makers

Implications for policy-makers point towards the need for the Ministry of Education, the Arts Council of Malta, the Institute of Education and administration at the University of Malta towards the need to create music pedagogy courses for music theory teachers at MSM and studio teachers, teaching theory courses across the Maltese Islands. It is being proposed that the music theory pedagogy course embraces the eight components of effective music theory teaching and learning at their core. Also, music theory teachers need pedagogical training, in the form of professional development, indicating strategic approaches as to how to integrate formal and informal approaches to teaching and learning, how to integrate new technologies and how to guide the students in developing their portfolios for assessment.

8.3.2 Implications for academics

Snodgrass (2017) argued that music theory pedagogy should be treated as a separate discipline within Higher Education music education. This study revealed that music theory pedagogy in Higher Education in the Maltese context, as well as internationally (considering that there is currently no theoretical frameworks providing guidance to academics in Higher Education as to how to teach music theory to twenty-first century students), has remained relatively overlooked. With a focus on the Maltese context, the study proposes that music theory teaching should form part of the postgraduate degree, a Master's in Learning and Teaching, at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta. This programme should promote the professional development of existing music theory teachers and act as a training course for future music theory teachers. This music theory programme at postgraduate level should be a comprehensive programme in addition to, and not replacing, general music, instrumental and choral/vocal music pedagogy. The pedagogy course should aim at training novice theory and composition teachers on the pedagogical and technological skills in music theory instruction. The course design in pedagogy of music theory should also direct aspiring music teachers outside higher education, such as in school and community contexts, at how to teach music theory fundamentals, aural skills, sight singing, harmony, counterpoint, keyboard harmony and improvisation, form, history and analysis, and composition in an analytical, creative, critical and reflective way. In addition to this, orchestration, arranging, composition technology, composition recitals (actual performances of the pieces composed) and instruction in composition for mixed media should form part of the pedagogy curriculum in Higher Education as well as other levels of education such as secondary or even primary education.

8.3.3 Implications for the MSM Board of Studies

The theoretical framework proposed in this study could provide guidelines for effective planning of curricular content for music theory teaching and learning in Higher Education at MSM. The music theory curriculum needs to align more with the state of today's music world. The curriculum needs to make connections with a new generations of learners in Higher Education, currently identified as 'Generation Z', who are 'digital natives' (O'Neil, 2019) and construe ways with which young people might respond and relate to music. In particular, O'Neil (2019, p. 89) explains that the students of Generation Z,

- '...are more collaborative in their view of relationships and in their approach to working with authority figures;
- tend to see a career as being focused to solving problems,
- view technology as something you "live" rather than something you "employ"
- they are actively engaged in solving problems for the future'

Translating this into music theory teaching and learning, the Board of Studies at MSM should offer students more opportunities to work collaboratively and to have agency over their learning, to promote learning that celebrates problem solving, to encourage the use of technology as a natural part of the learning process of music theory, and to offer the students opportunities to see themselves as music theory learners who use music theory to successfully navigate future careers in music as well as lifelong enjoyment in music making.

Furthermore, the Board of Studies at MSM should promote music theory teachers' professional development courses. The strengths of teacher-centred professional development cannot be underestimated. Such initiatives would ensure that the teachers adopt musical, pedagogical, technological and content practices that are relevant,

innovative and contemporary to the twenty-first century music student. Teachers need ongoing support to share ideas and good practice. Professional Development courses will keep music theory teachers well-informed about different effective pedagogies that construct knowledge: the aim is to focus on student-centred learning through inquiry, collaboration, sharing, presentations, class-based activities and constructive and fruitful resources.

Additionally, it is recommended that the Board of Studies designs and develops a curriculum specifically for the areas of improvisation and keyboard harmony, as these have been identified as areas that music theory teachers feel that they lack the skills in. Improvisational and keyboard harmony techniques should be active, practical and collaborative through exploration and experimentation. The school should start by introducing content and pedagogy in improvisation for all teachers. This training should give musicologists, composers and performers (non-theory teachers) motivation to prepare adequate content material in improvisation relevant to theory instruction for all students at all levels. Specifically, in improvisation, although the school invested in keyboards, the school lacks online materials, resources and textbooks pertaining to this area.

With regards to music technologies, it is time for the Board of Studies to accentuate a paradigm shift in music theory teaching and learning. The Board of Studies needs to respond to the challenges to facilitate positive and meaningful music theory and composition classes by investing in adequate digital technologies and environment. The Board of Studies needs to welcome this technology-driven style of living in the music theory classroom. The school should be thinking in terms of selecting digital technologies, programmes and equipment and incorporate them in music theory and online experiences in content matter. MSM, as an institution lacks the physical environment, equipment and teaching materials, adequate computers and recording

laboratory to facilitate theory and composition lessons and because of this, digital tools and programmes are not well integrated within the teaching and learning framework. A gamut of digital tools for notation, composing and experimenting with electronic sounds, creation of sheet music scores and sound tracks should be available.

What is more, online educational resources should also be promoted. Being the only school on the island, it is being suggested that instructional modes of learning such as blended and flipped learning should be encouraged as the driving force aimed at pedagogical change.

8.3.4 Implications Music Theory Teachers

This research served as a valuable mirror through which music theory teachers can reflect on pedagogical content knowledge, their teaching practices and their role as future music educators. Music theory teachers are encouraged to employ inquiry-based and student-centred teaching strategies and adapt to using current digital technologies. There also needs to be better communication amongst theory teachers. Collaboration with colleagues is crucial in that real-life knowledge acquired during such experiences can positively influence students' achievements. The researcher therefore, proposes that an informal network group – music theory pedagogy society – should be set up. Through conferences, journals, research, materials and ideas, good practice is encouraged. By questioning teaching approaches and strategies, music theory teachers could keep developing effective music theory instruction, challenging and engaging students, and also making positive use of innovative digital technologies. This echoes Snodgrass, who reiterates that it is up to us as music educators to continue striving in this direction, to explore the motivations behind pedagogical practice and to reflect on ways through which we can 'integrate deep learning in both our classrooms and scholarship' (Snodgrass, 2017, p. 4).

8.3.5 Implications for Music Theory Students

This study advocates that students can become catalysts in the process of music theory teaching by providing music theory teachers with regular feedback regarding effective practices in music theory instruction. Moreover, since software programmes provide opportunities for home practice, students should be encouraged to make use of digital tools to expand their creativity, performing skills, understanding of music analysis and listening. What is more, O’Neil (2019) has identified three main characteristics that higher music educators should cultivate in their Generation Z students, which could be directly applicable to music theory students in Higher Education in Malta and internationally. These are:

- *Sense of connectedness* – through music theory learning in Higher education music students should be facilitated to make connections ‘within and between the places and spaces where their diverse music activities [such as home, school, local and online communities] take place’ (p. 94). For example, this could be achieved by sharing their aesthetic and cultural musical experiences, such as through sharing, analysing and performing music repertoire that they identify with (Green, 2002) as well as listening or/ and performing it virtual or physical spaces at the MSM or in other musical or arts venues in Malta.
- *Social Innovation* – music theory educators can create opportunities for projects where students can engage in music-related activities that benefit others. For instance, music theory students could perform their compositions created as part of music theory learning in schools or other community settings, or shared online for other people to appreciate.

- *Leadership for a sustainable future* – as it happened in this research study, music theory learners should be given opportunities to co-construct the curriculum, to be actively involved in decision making, and in the planning strategies for implementing new initiative, such as the creation of an online music theory group, and the planning of a performance linked with music theory learning, to mention a couple of examples.

8.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Overall, this thesis provides useful information for music theory organisations and teachers as well as lays a foundation for future research on trends in pedagogy of music theory in Higher Education in the Maltese Islands and internationally. The findings suggest a number of issues worth considering in any future research on music theory pedagogy in Higher Education. They also indicate areas where further research is crucial to substantiate this study's conclusions and propositions, as well as provide a more accurate and detailed vision of the various issues of music theory pedagogy in Higher Education.

- Firstly, future research might focus on music theory pedagogy in the lower grades of music theory education. Future research might explore similar topics from the perspectives of music theory teaching in the lower grades. These important perspectives can offer valuable insights into how music theory pedagogy in the lower grades can be perceived and experienced by MSM students and teachers.
- Secondly, future studies could include students from the Visual and Performing Arts schools in Malta and Gozo and students from University of Malta as this study was confined solely to students and teachers at MSM. Future studies that

build on the results presented in this study are suggested preferably with a larger sample.

- Thirdly, further studies might examine music theory pedagogy in Higher Education longitudinally, in order to construct case studies specific to studio theory instruction interspersed all over Malta. Descriptive case studies can potentially identify specific contextual features in music theory pedagogy in Higher Education that lead to success, besides identifying students' concerns and teachers' roles in the studio's setting.
- Fourthly, limited technological resources require further study to determine what impact this might have on MSM's teachers' decision making with comparable and interrelated practices. Additionally, research is necessary to fully apprehend the complexities of technology-driven innovations and their effects on students' and teachers' practices.
- Fifthly, future research in the area of popular music pedagogy and how it could be included in music theory teaching is essential.
- Finally, future research should explore how the delivery of music theory teaching in Higher Education can be made more relevant for the students by combining performance of works, composition, counterpoint and the creative uses of technology. This blend of activities could potentially be facilitated effectively through the use of music repertoire that is greatly diverse. Such material might include popular, world, film and jazz musics which would also introduce the students to, or reinforce their already acquired knowledge of new sounds and new ways of music making. The inclusion of a vernacular repertoire would also provide greater opportunities to familiarise students with the music of composers from diverse ethnic communities, the use of different instrumentation and new sounds. Finally, the work of composers, songwriters

and improvisers from different ethnicities, and of diverse genders (such as LGBTQ artists) and abilities (including disabled artists) need to be included in 21st century music theory curricula not only to encourage music theory learning and understanding, but also to inspire music learners in lifelong engagement with music making.

8.5 CONCLUSION

The present research study offered an insight into the various paths of pedagogies and approaches used at present in the music theory classroom at MSM. As this study demonstrates, this research will impact on the way music theory lessons are delivered in Higher Education at MSM. When all findings from the present study are interpreted as a whole, it is seen that music theory pedagogy at MSM needs to be upgraded to meet current developments in music theory education. Music theory teachers can be, and I believe should be responsible for a music theory lesson that is not strictly limited to ‘assignments’, but for one that takes a more holistic understanding of those musical processes that makes the music theory more enriching, exciting and fruitful.

Based on the outcomes of this study, a re-invention and re-design of the curriculum is being proposed which aims to integrate the multitude of skills and approaches of music theory teaching in a systematic and effective way. As illustrated in this study, the participants’ perceptions, and experiences were a possible way to bridge the gap in this perspective, in that they provided invaluable evidence, for the planning and the designing of the study guides for the researcher and which Maltese students in Higher Education will start using as from the academic year October, 2021. The fact that the researcher was conducting research *in situ* meant that she was able to reach conclusions that had a direct and immediate effect on her own teaching. For whilst as ‘a

researcher' the researcher has chosen to prioritise knowledge over action, as 'a teacher' the researcher will continue to be greatly immersed in the educative potential of her work.

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APPENDIX 1: Waltz in A minor, Op.12 No.2

Allegro moderato **Grieg Waltz in A minor, Op.12 No.2**

The musical score is written for piano in 3/4 time and A minor. It consists of two systems of music. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system continues the piece, with the right hand playing a more active melodic line and the left hand maintaining the accompaniment. The piece concludes with a triplet flourish in the right hand.

First system of musical notation. The right hand features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a 'v' and '3'. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment. Dynamics include *f ritard.* and *p*.

Second system of musical notation. The right hand has a melodic line starting with a *p* dynamic. The left hand continues with a steady accompaniment.

Third system of musical notation. The right hand has a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a 'v' and '3'. The left hand continues with a steady accompaniment.

Fourth system of musical notation. The right hand features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a 'v' and '3'. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment. Dynamics include *f ritard.* and *p*.

Fifth system of musical notation. The right hand has a melodic line with a *p* dynamic. The left hand continues with a steady accompaniment. A *ritard.* marking is present at the end of the system.

Sixth system of musical notation. The right hand has a melodic line. The left hand continues with a steady accompaniment. A *a tempo* marking is present.

APPENDIX 2: Interview Guide – Music Composer -Teachers

Music Composer-Teachers’ Interview Questions:

I would like to start by asking some questions regarding your experiences, training in and teaching of composition:

1. Have you received training in teaching composition?

2. Are you an active composer? If not, have you ever worked as a composer/songwriter?
3. How significant is composition as a subject in the music curriculum?
4. What are the most important skills that a composer should have?
5. What are the most important skills that composition teachers should have?
6. What training do you feel is necessary for someone to teach composition?
7. Do you feel capable of teaching composition?
8. What difference in the teaching approach do you find you have to adopt when teaching a particular topic to different ages of students?
9. What are the best experiences in teaching composition with your present and past music students?
10. What preparation do you find yourself doing to facilitate opportunities for composition with students in Higher Education?
11. What types of music have you focused on with your students when working on compositional techniques?
12. What type of learning do you promote in your composition class? Do you promote the rational process involving pre-planning or do you encourage the intuitive process which encourages trial and error and other exploratory means of composing?
13. Why is composing in learning context so crucial and relevant in the field of music education in the Maltese curriculum? What are the main issues of interest?
14. What challenges are discerned when teaching composition in Higher Education?
15. What is the function of music technology in composition learning settings? How do you incorporate it?

16. What technological tools do you use for teaching composition to your students in Higher Education? How do you use these tools?
17. How do you evaluate process and product of students' learning in the composition class?
18. What does creativity mean to you? How do you evaluate creativity in students' composition work?
19. Do you find differences in teaching composition related to gender?
20. How do you choose your composition textbooks and resources?

APPENDIX 3: Workshop – June 2018

A close-up photograph of a musical score with a pencil resting on it. The score is slightly out of focus, showing staves with musical notation. The pencil is in the foreground, pointing towards the right. The background is a warm, golden-brown color.

Music Knowledge and Understanding

Defining Music Knowledge and Understanding

Crucial Goal:

Theoretical concepts are
directly reinforced by aural skills

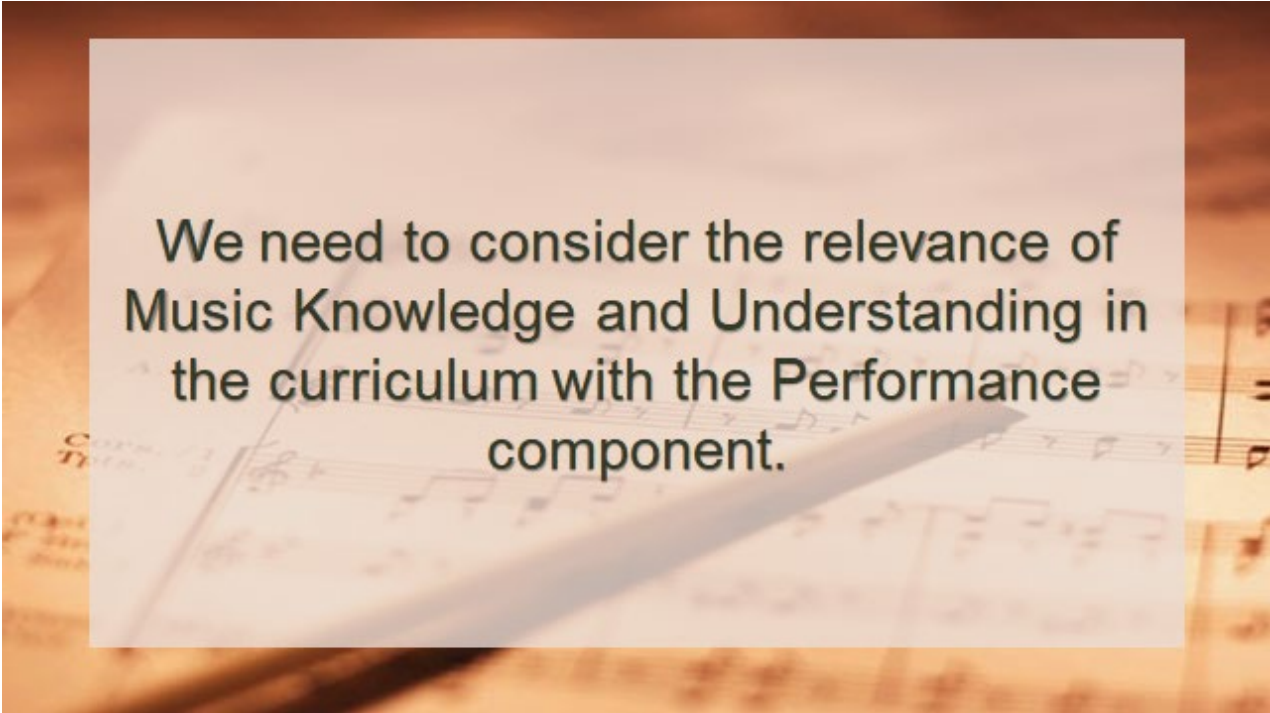
Written theory and aural skills should be correlated

Objective of Music Knowledge & Understanding GRADES 7 & 8

Advanced students are either:

1. Promoted from Grade 6
- or
2. Apply for the MSM course on the basis of their performance and theoretical background

Most students who apply directly for grade 7 and 8 at the MSM are overwhelmed by the challenges presented in the rigorous programme of Music Knowledge and Understanding.



We need to consider the relevance of Music Knowledge and Understanding in the curriculum with the Performance component.

Components of the Programme

In Music Knowledge and Understanding we have to consider:

- Aural Skills and Solfeggio
- Harmony
- Counterpoint
- Aural Perception
- Form and Analysis
- History

Constraints of the Programme

1. Lack of emphasis on keyboard harmony.
2. Class size for Grade 7 and 8;
A high degree of in-class student-teacher interaction is necessary.
3. Students' limited knowledge of musical literature.

The Inclusion of Counterpoint

THREE MAIN ISSUES

- Chronological problem: when to introduce counterpoint.
- Content: Which material to include.
- Relevance: How is counterpoint relevant to contemporary musical tradition.

Targets for Discussion

- Impact of technology and software currently used in Music Knowledge and Understanding.
- Students' curricular exposure to 20th Century theories and music.
- How can innovative approaches to Music Knowledge and Understanding be reconciled with established traditional ones?

Discussion Targets (cont.)

- Structure of Assignments: types of assignments given.
and
- Are our students doing mostly drill exercises? Do they have the opportunity to practise and apply the concepts learnt?

Thank you



APPENDIX 4: Interview Guide – Music Lecturers

Music Lecturers' Focus Group Questions

1. Why do you teach music theory to students specializing in performance, composition and musicology?
2. What are the theory skills students really need for their progress as musicians, composers and musicologists?
3. Do your students consider music theory as relevant?
4. What is the function of the core curriculum in music theory?
5. What fundamental core knowledge should all undergraduate aspiring musicians, composers and musicologists acquire?
6. Do you integrate theory and aural skills in your teaching? Which of the following topics form part of your formative assessments: intervals, triads, seventh chord types, melodic, rhythmic, harmonic dictation, error detection, modes, atonal dictation and modulation?
7. What types of materials do you use for your aural skills programme: texts, anthologies or your personal materials?
8. Would you propose any changes in your aural skills programme?
9. What are the key components of the harmony course at university for undergraduates?
10. How do you encourage composition, improvisation and performance in the theory class?
11. Do your students participate in open-ended analytical student-led discussions?
12. Does your department encourage the inclusion of non-western, film, jazz and popular music as content in the conceptual framework of the theoretical material?

13. Can you elaborate on the type of music notation which is practiced in your department?
14. What type of solmization is used for sight singing?
15. Do you encourage your students to improvise at the keyboard?
16. What are your perspectives on the inclusion of the teaching of counterpoint in the undergraduate curriculum?
17. What types of learning do you promote when you are teaching analytical skills?
18. What technological tools do you use for teaching music theory?
19. How do you evaluate process and product of students' learning in the music theory class?
20. What are the major issues and challenges in music theory teaching in higher education?

APPENDIX 5: Interview Guide – Music Teachers

Music Teachers' Focus Group Questions

1. Why do you teach music theory in higher education?
2. What are the theory skills students really need for their progress as musicians?
What fundamental core knowledge should all grade VII and grade VIII music theory students acquire?
3. Do students consider music theory as relevant?
4. What is the function of the core curriculum in music theory?
5. Do you integrate theory and aural skill in your teaching? Which of the following topics form part of your formative tests: intervals, triad types, seventh chord types, melodic dictation, harmonic dictation, rhythmic dictation and modulation.
6. What types of materials do you use for aural skills teaching? – texts/anthologies or personal materials?
7. What changes can you propose for aural skills?
8. What are your perspectives on the core area in the written theory part? Should the following form part of the programme? – seventh chords, secondary dominants, advanced modulations, diminished sevenths, neapolitan sixth chord, extensions of ninths, elevenths and thirteenth, chromatic harmony including borrowed and altered chords and augmented sixth..
9. Should we teach a restricted repertoire of concepts and literature in great detail or should we cover many topics at the risk of superficiality?
10. Does composition feature in your classes?
11. How can you integrate composition, improvisation and performance in the theory class?

12. Have you considered a shifting content paradigm and include non-western film, jazz, and popular music in the curriculum?
13. What type of notation do you use for music writing? Lead-sheet symbols, figured bass, roman numerals or schenkerian analysis?
14. What type of solmization is used for sight-singing? – fixed do, moving do-based minor, moving do, lah-based minor, numbers or letter names?
15. Do you urge your students to apply theoretical concepts on the keyboard? How can you incorporate keyboard harmony with improvisation? Do your students find improvisation difficult?
16. What are your perspectives on the inclusion of the teaching of counterpoint in the curriculum?
17. What type of learning do you promote when you are teaching analytical skills?
18. What technological tools do you use for teaching music theory? Are they used for aural tests, software drill and practice, testing, composing and arranging or for grading homeworks?
19. How do you evaluate process and product of students' learning in the music theory class?
20. What are the major issues and challenges in music theory teaching in higher education?

APPENDIX 6: Music Technologies

Music Technologies

Music Technologies: Application and Pedagogical Implications

Ableton Live: Ableton Live is a digital audio workstation (DAW), designed to be an instrument for live performances, as well as a tool for composing, recording, arranging, mixing and mastering.

Adobe Audition is a digital audio workstation featuring multitrack, waveform and spectral display for creating, mixing, editing and restoring audio content. It is designed to accelerate video production workflows and audio finishing.

Albion is a renowned orchestral- sample library that provides the composer to make film music. Albion is a 109-piece orchestra, accompanied by a dynamic percussion section recorded at AIR studios in London.

Artusi is an interactive music theory and ear training programme featuring a suite of digital tools which helps in the teaching and learning of music theory. It is a customizable system that automatically creates and grades music theory assignments, whilst allowing and supporting students with infinite practice by providing sound and real-time feedback.

Auralia is a most comprehensive software used for ear-training. The topics of the software are divided into seven groups: rhythm, intervals, scales, chords, harmony, form, pitch and melody, repertoire and musical elements.

Chordbot is a music application that lets one create and play complex chord progressions quickly and easily. It can be used to experiment with advanced chord progressions without instruments or finger charts. It can create customisable backing tracks for instrument practice sessions. It can rearrange new or existing songs with different instruments and compiling patterns. It has the facility to allow the user to experiment with music theory without having to master an instrument first.

CineBrass Pro is a unique library featuring new orchestral brass sample content, using musicians at the MGM Scoring Stage at Sony pictures studio in Los Angeles, It covers the essentials of the orchestral brass section and functions as a solid foundation for composing templates.

CineWinds PRO features orchestral woodwind sample content. It contains the standard orchestral woodwind instruments, namely the piccolo, the flute, the oboe, the clarinet and the bassoon and other exceptional instruments such as the alto flute and the contrabassoon as well as a selection of ethnic woodwind instruments.

CinePerc is the Composer- Friendly Percussion Library recorded at MGM Scoring Stage at Sony pictures in Los Angeles.

CineStrings is a deeply sampled SOLO strings virtual instrument recorded at MGM Scoring Stage at Sony pictures in Los Angeles.

Cubasis is a quick mobile music creation for IOS and Android. The user's ideas can be turned into professional- sounding songs with Cubasis. The user can record, mix share and

perform his music in no time wherever he is . It is one of the fastest, intuitive and complete audio and MIDI DAWs available for mobile devices.

Digital Audio Workstation is an electronic device or an application software used for recording, editing and producing audio files.

Dorico is a music notation software which incorporates the power and flexibility of a sequencer. It allows the user to produce sounding virtual performances by allowing the user to exportMP3 files to share online.

Ensemble Composer Pro is a music notation editing software for Android devices.It can Import/Export in the industry-popular MusicXML file format, allowing for exchanging sheet music with other software programmes.

Flat for Education: This is a cloud-based collaborative software programme designedto help students create their own musical compositions and their music education activities. Flat for Education facilitates and promotes collaborative practice in that students can work in real-time on the same sheet whether working in the classroom or working from home.

Focus on Sound: Focus on Sound is a music theory education digital encyclopedia which develops students' general musical knowledge, listening and composing skills. Focus on Sound embraces two multimedia software products: Instruments and Sound Words. Whilst Instruments introduces students to instruments and groups pertaining to classical, jazz, rock, folk and world music instruments, Sound Words covers topics on rhythm, pitch, harmony, form, instrumental techniques, technology and music reading.

Finale is a type of software programme used by song-writers, composers and arrangers for creating sheet music, including the score for individual or group ensembles. It can create a score in a unique and imaginative way. It can support the user to create from a simple lead sheet to preparing a film score. With Finale the user has the orchestra at his fingertips.

Garage band is a software application that allows users to create music or podcasts. Its features include audio recording, virtual software, instruments, MIDI editing and music lessons.

iTunes is an audio playback programme developed by Apple. One can use iTunes to import songs from CDs as well as other audio files from one's hard drive. The programme can also download songs from the iTunes Music store.

iZotope 5 is an audio professional software for audio recording, mixing, broadcast, sound design and mastering which can be used in wide range of Digital Audio Workstation programmes.

Kontakt Player is a free application that runs on all Kontakt instruments, as well as a large number of instruments from other established companies. It is a sampler by Native Instruments and allows the user to create digital instruments by using audio the user would have recorded inside the DAW as an Instrument Plug-In.

Logic Pro is a digital audio workstation (DAW) and MIDI sequencer software application. Users can view MIDI regions in software instrument tracks as music notation in the Score Editor. Notes are displayed as standard notation, along with common symbols such as time and key signature, bar lines and clef signs. The user can edit notes, add sustain pedal markings and other symbols.

MacGamut is a software programme which provides a graded ear-training and fundamentals learning environment. It is a based-drill and practice programme in Aural Skills for the practice of scales, intervals, chords, and rhythmic, melodic and harmonic dictation.

MAX/ MSP is a visual programming language for music. This computer environment provides the realisation of live electronic music, combining building blocks configurations useful for real-time computer music performance.

Meludia is an ear-training software which allows the student to master the fundamentals of music at his own pace. It is an effective, inclusive and interactive tool which shows the learner that music should be taught as we learnt our own language through listening and imitating. The objective of this tool is to facilitate the processing of music in one's mind and to learn to hear internally. Its graduated and systematic structure is a particular non-intimidating challenge for the twenty- first century music theory student.

MuseScore is the software used to create and notate music scores. It is the leading free and open-source software for writing music with a user-friendly interface, with features to create, edit, view, print and play music scores directly from one's browser.

MusicFirst Classroom is a comprehensive learning management system (LMS) for the music theory classroom. This LMS works seamlessly with powerful music theory integrated software such as Focus on Sound, O- Generator, Auralia, Noteflight Learn, Musition to help the theory teachers monitor the students' progress, make lesson plans, and create assignments.

Musition: Musition is an educational theory software designed to improve students' theoretical knowledge and musicianship. It offers topics such as Fundamentals, Harmony and Voice Leading at a graduated learning pace.

NotateMe is a music composition and music notation software, which can convert handwritten notation to digital notation. This application can accurately and quickly enter music notation with one's finger or stylus, on a tablet or smartphone. It is similar to writing with pen and paper, but it can provide instant feedback, editing and a printable score at the end. NotateMe allows the user to export information that one has created into another music notation app.

Noteflight is an online application that allows users to compose, view and share music notation from any web browser. It also allows the user to edit, print and playback written music from any connected device.

Notion is a music education application which provides a mobile music composition lab in any classroom. It requires familiarity with the piano keyboard. In terms of education, Notion will require familiarity with the piano keyboard. Notion for iPad brings a functioning notation with sounds and a variety of diacritical markings.

O-Generator: O-Generator is an engaging music software programme which enables students to learn to compose using popular and world music styles. Students can create their own loops, record them as audio files or use loops from the loop library. Lessons focus on core music principles of rhythm, melody, harmony and song writing in popular and world music styles.

Pratica Musica is a complete music theory and ear-training programme, containing activities both for the beginning and advanced students. The programme targets several organised courses. Amongst which Steps to Reading Music, AP preparation course and Exploring Theory. Its learning activities are organised into topic columns. This interactive programme offers possibilities for the mastery of the materials of music, notation, melody construction, part-writing, voice leading and harmonisation. The composition section provides the tools to write a melody, a chorale and a duet. The student will be able to hear what he wrote, print it, save it and export it as a MIDI file. The software is supported with a keyboard.

Reason is a sound design environment that can be used as a plugin with any other music production software. It is also a production software wherein the user can record and edit.

Sibelius is a music notation software programme which helps the user to create, edit and print music scores, besides playing the music back using sampled or synthesised sounds. The printed scores can also be published via the w.w.w. for others to access.

SmartBoard in the music classroom is a particularly versatile tool, for it renders classroom experience more lively and interactive. The Smart Board is designed to

encourage learners to be purposely and actively engaged in their learning by setting them real intellectual and practical challenges. It has proven to be a powerful conduit to learning in that content can be prepared beforehand. Additionally, in music education teachers can download music scores from public domains, can access multiple pages of content, and work done in class can be saved for future reference. Changes from a print society to a digital society are reflected in today's music theory classroom through the SmartBoard. Through the SmartBoard students can create Power Point or Prezi presentations, embed video and audio clips in the presentation and share it with the class. *Smartmusic* is a web-based programme used in music education, which supports individual practice. SmartMusic software guides the learner on developing keyboard harmony skills even in the absence of the teacher. It offers an instructor-designed transposable guidance, by providing students with a set of practice tools. and it has an easy-to-use recording platform. This programme offers notated and aural guidance and a recording platform. Students play, sing, listen, echo, self-accompany and improvise using the keyboard. This material could then be sent to the instructor who in turn sends feedback on each assignment to the students. SmartMusic can be used even in relatively large classes.

SoundCloud is an online audio streaming and distribution platform that allows users to upload, stream, promote and share music and podcasts.

SpitfireAudio is a British music technology company specialising in sounds and features sample libraries, virtual instruments and other useful software devices.

Soundtrap is an online music recordingstudio of DAW (Digital Audio Workstation). Music and podcasts can be recordedin the classroom. Scores can be imported in

Soundtrap and compositions created in this software can be exported as scores, simplifying the learning process.

Spotify is a popular audio streaming service which lets the user to listen to tunes from major labels on the web or via one of the many official Spotify applications. It also functions as a tool for consuming podcasts.

Streaming refers to any media content, live or recorded, delivered to computers and mobile devices via the internet and played back in real time. Podcasts, webcasts, movies, TV shows and music videos are common forms of streaming content.

SymphonyPro is a complete application for writing music notation on iPad. It allows the user to compose music for any size ensemble, from piano, symphonies, band, lead sheets, chord charts, guitar tabs and more.

The Vienna Synchronic Library is a research-driven software and sample library developer based in Vienna, Austria. It offers a wide range of virtual instruments as well as numerous software innovations, sonic excellence and easy to use for producers and composers when creating orchestral arrangements on the computer.

Transcribe is a software that helps users transcribe recorded music. It acts as an assistant for users who would like to work out a piece of music from a recording to play it themselves or to write it out.

YouTube is an online video-sharing platform which allows users to upload, view, share, add to playlists, report, comment on videos and subscribe to other users. The available

content features video clips, TV show clips, music videos, short and documentary films, audio recordings, film trailers, live streams, video blogging, short original videos and educational videos.

APPENDIX 7: Students' Compositions

Everything happens for a reason

Music and Lyrics by Quentin S. Lawson

Lively

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). It consists of a single melodic line in the treble clef with a piano accompaniment of eighth notes. The lyrics are as follows:

We have met... on
 5 that warm Sum-mer night, and my life was in tur-moil; We met a gain... we had the
 9 lounge of the cof-fee shop all to our-selves and wecould-n't stop talk-ing; We
 13 par- ted... you crossed the o - cean, Oh! we par-ted and I went my own
 18 way, but wecould-n't stay a-part for long.
 22 You had told me on that spe-cial Chri-stmas day: "Ev - ery-thing
 27 hap - pens for a reas - - son and some - things
 31 do so in a fun - ny way..." **Fine**
 34 You had asked me on that spe-cial Christ-mas day if I
 37 wan-ted to be to - ge - ther; You had warned me that you are

40 Eb Ab Cm Fm Cm

stub-born and that you have your needs and I knew how you were right!_ you are

44 Ab/Eb Fm Cm Ab/Eb Fm

like me just in__ so ma-ny ways... Oh!_you're like me I see__ it in your

49 Cm Dm G7

gaze... yes, we're hap - py with each oth - er's com - pa -

51 Cm C

ny.

Tantum Ergo

Rachel Farrell

Lento con espressione

The musical score is written for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Bass (B), and Piano. It is in 4/4 time and begins with the tempo marking "Lento con espressione". The vocal parts (S, A, T, B) enter at measure 5 with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The piano accompaniment begins at measure 1 with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The score is divided into three systems. The first system covers measures 1-6. The second system covers measures 7-11, featuring a crescendo (*cresc.*) in both the vocal and piano parts. The third system covers measures 12-16, featuring a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, a ritardando (*riten.*) marking, and a piano (*p*) dynamic. The piece concludes with a final cadence in measure 16.

Nostalgia

Score created with the free version of Flat - <https://flat.io>

Nathan Schembri Rodgers

Piano

♩ = 76

1. 2.

Detailed description: This system contains the first four measures of the piece. It is written for piano in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 76. The first two measures are followed by a first ending bracket labeled '1.' and a second ending bracket labeled '2.'. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a grand staff brace, and various musical symbols like notes, rests, and bar lines.

5

Detailed description: This system contains measures 5 through 8. The notation continues with treble and bass clefs, a grand staff brace, and various musical symbols. Measure 6 features a whole note chord in the right hand.

9

2

Detailed description: This system contains measures 9 through 12. Measure 10 has a second ending bracket labeled '2.'. The notation continues with treble and bass clefs, a grand staff brace, and various musical symbols.

13

1. 2.

rit.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 13 through 16. It features first and second ending brackets labeled '1.' and '2.'. Measure 14 is marked with 'rit.' followed by a dotted line, indicating a ritardando. The system concludes with a double bar line and a fermata-like symbol below the staff.

Transposed in E flat

Uncertainty

Curtis Casha

Adagio

mf *f*

5

9

13

1. 2.

mf

Ave Maria in F Major

Brenda Jane Farrugia
2019

A - ve

The first system of the score consists of four measures. The vocal line begins with a whole rest in the first three measures, followed by a half note 'A' and a quarter note 've' in the fourth measure. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a melody of quarter notes in the right hand.

A - ve Ma - ri - a Gra - tia

5

The second system covers measures 5 through 8. The vocal line continues with 'A - ve Ma - ri - a' in measures 5-7 and 'Gra - tia' in measure 8. The piano accompaniment maintains its rhythmic pattern, with the right hand playing a sequence of chords and single notes.

Gra - tia - ple - na Do - mi - nus

9

The third system covers measures 9 through 12. The vocal line sings 'Gra - tia - ple - na' in measures 9-11 and 'Do - mi - nus' in measure 12. The piano accompaniment continues with its characteristic eighth-note bass line and quarter-note melody.

te - cum. Be - ne - dic - ta tu in mu - li -

13

The fourth system covers measures 13 through 16. The vocal line concludes the phrase with 'te - cum. Be - ne - dic - ta tu in mu - li -' across the four measures. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with its consistent rhythmic accompaniment.

e - ri - bus et be - ne - dic - tus fruc - tus ven - tris

17

tu - i le - sus.

21

San - cta San - cta Ma - ri -

25

a Ma - ter De - i Ma - ter

29

Dei o - ra pro no - bis pec - ca -

33

This system contains measures 33 through 36. The vocal line begins with a whole rest in measure 33, followed by a half note 'o' in measure 34, a quarter note 'ra' in measure 35, and a quarter note 'bis' in measure 36. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand.

to - ri - bus nunc et in ho - ra mor - tis no -

37

This system contains measures 37 through 40. The vocal line starts with a quarter note 'to' in measure 37, followed by a quarter note 'ri' in measure 38, a quarter note 'bus' in measure 39, and a quarter note 'no' in measure 40. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes.

strae. A - men.

41

This system contains measures 41 through 43. The vocal line has a whole rest in measure 41, a half note 'A' in measure 42, and a half note 'men' in measure 43. The piano accompaniment features chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand.

Melancholy

Piece for solo violin

Matthew Zammit

Violin **Adagio**

10

16

p *mp* *p* *cresc.*

p *f*

ff

APPENDIX 8: Ethics Clearance 2018

Ethics



For Research Office Use
Checklist No:
Date Received:

PROPORTIONATE ETHICAL REVIEW

ETHICS REVIEW CHECKLIST

Your application **must** comprise the following documents (please tick the boxes below to indicate that they are attached):

Ethics Review Checklist

X

Consent Form(s)

X

Participant Information Sheet(s)

X

Risk Assessment Form

X

Copies of any documents to be used in the study:

Questionnaire

--

Introductory letter(s)

X

Data Collection Instruments

--

Interview Questions

X

Focus Group Guidelines

--

Other (please give details Workshop Power point presentation

X

For Research Office Use

PROPORTIONATE ETHICAL REVIEW

ETHICS REVIEW CHECKLIST

Sections A and B of this checklist must be completed for every research or knowledge transfer project that involves human or animal¹ participants. These sections serve as a toolkit that will identify whether a full application for ethics approval needs to be submitted.

If the toolkit shows that there is **no need for a full ethical review**, Sections D, E and F should be completed and the checklist emailed to red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk as described in Section C.

If the toolkit shows that **a full application is required**, this checklist should be set aside and an **Application for Faculty Research Ethics Committee Approval Form** - or an appropriate external application form - should be completed and submitted. **There is no need to complete both documents.**

Before completing this checklist, please refer to *Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants* and the *Code of Practice for the Use of Sentient Animals in Research and Teaching* on the University Research website.

The principal researcher/project leader (or, where the principal researcher/project leader is a student, their supervisor) is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement in this review.

N.B. This checklist must be completed – and any resulting follow-up action taken - before potential participants are approached to take part in any study.

Type of Project - please mark (x) as appropriate

Research

x

Knowledge Exchange

Section A: Applicant Details

A1. Name of applicant:	Moira Azzopardi Barbieri
A2. Status (please underline):	<u>PostgraduateStudent</u> / Staff Member
A3. Email address:	moira.azzopardi-barbieri@um.edu.mt m.azzopardi-barbieri533@canterbury.ac.uk
A4. Contact address:	51, G. Borg. Olivieri str, Rabat,

	Malta
A5. Telephone number	79414100

1 Sentient animals, generally all vertebrates and certain invertebrates such as cephalopods and crustaceans

Section B: Ethics Checklist

Please answer each question by marking (X) in the appropriate box:

		Yes	No
1.	Does the study involve participants who are particularly <u>vulnerable</u> or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities), or in unequal relationships (e.g. people in prison, your own staff or students)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to any <u>vulnerable</u> groups or individuals to be recruited (e.g. students at school, members of self-help groups, residents of nursing home)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.	Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without usual informed consent procedures having been implemented in advance (e.g. covert observation, certain ethnographic studies)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.	Will the study use deliberate deception (this does not include randomly assigning participants to groups in an experimental design)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.	Will the study involve discussion of, or collection of information on, topics of a sensitive nature (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) <u>personal to the participants</u> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.	Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to human or animal participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.	Does the study involve invasive or intrusive procedures such as blood taking or muscle biopsy from human or animal participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8.	Is physiological stress, pain, or more than mild discomfort to humans or animals likely to result from the study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9.	Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences in humans (including the researcher) or animals beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10.	Will the study involve interaction with animals? (If you are simply observing them - e.g. in a zoo or in their natural habitat - without having any contact at all, you can answer "No")	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11.	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

12.	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13.	Is the study a survey that involves University-wide recruitment of students from Canterbury Christ Church University?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14.	Will the study involve recruitment of adult participants (aged 16 and over) who are unable to make decisions for themselves, i.e. lack capacity, and come under the jurisdiction of the Mental Capacity Act (2005)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15.	Will the study involve recruitment of participants (excluding staff) through the NHS ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Now please assess outcomes and actions by referring to Section C 

Section C: How to Proceed

C1. If you have answered 'NO' to **all** the questions in Section B, you should complete Sections D–F as appropriate and email the completed checklist to red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk. **That is all you need to do. Once your application is assessed and if it is given approval you will receive a letter confirming compliance with University Research Governance procedures.**

[Master's students should retain copies of the form and letter; the letter should be bound into their research report or dissertation. Work that is submitted without this document will be returned un-assessed.]

C2. If you have answered 'YES' to **any** of the questions in Section B, you will need to describe more fully how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised by your project. This does not mean that you cannot do the study, only that your proposal will need to be approved by a Research Ethics Committee. **Depending upon which questions you answered 'YES' to, you should proceed as follows**

(a) If you answered 'YES' to any of **questions 1 – 12 ONLY** (i.e. not questions 13,14 or 15), DO NOT complete this form, you will have to submit an application to your Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) using your Faculty's version of the **Application for Faculty Research Ethics Committee Approval Form**. This should be submitted as directed on the form. The *Application for Faculty Research Ethics Committee Approval Form* can be obtained from the Research Ethics pages of the Research and Enterprise Development Centre on the University web site.

(b) If you answered 'YES' to **question 13** you have two options:

(i) If you answered 'YES' to **question 13 ONLY** you must send copies of this checklist to the Student Survey Unit. Subject to their approval you may then proceed as at C1 above.

(ii) If you answered 'YES' to **question 13 PLUS any other of questions 1 – 12**, you must proceed as at C2(b)(i) above and then submit an application to your Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) as at C2(a).

(c) If you answered 'YES' to **question 14** you do not need to submit an application to your Faculty Research Ethics Committee. **INSTEAD**, you **must** submit an application to the appropriate external NHS or Social Care Research Ethics Committee [see C2(d) below].

(d) If you answered 'YES' to **question 15** you do not need to submit an application to your Faculty Research Ethics Committee. **INSTEAD**, you must submit an application to the appropriate external NHS or Social Care Research Ethics Committee (REC), *after* your proposal has received a satisfactory Peer Review (see *Research Governance Handbook*). Applications to an NHS or Social Care REC **must** be signed by the appropriate Faculty Director of Research or other authorised Faculty signatory before they are submitted.

IMPORTANT

Please note that it is your responsibility in the conduct of your study to follow the policies and procedures set out in the University's Research Ethics website, and any relevant academic or professional guidelines. This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data. Any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the study should be notified to the **Faculty and/or other Research Ethics Committee** that received your original proposal. Depending on the nature of the changes, a new application for ethics approval may be required.

Section D: Project Details

D1. Project title:	Teaching Music Knowledge and Understanding in Higher Education: challenges, opportunities and aspirations within a Maltese context.
D2. Start date of fieldwork	1st February, 2017
D3. End date of fieldwork	June 2020
D4. Lay summary (max 300 words <i>which must include a brief description of the methodology to be used for gathering your data</i>)	<p>The focus of this doctoral dissertation will contribute to the general discussion on the teaching of theory in higher education. The two study guides which I will be creating will demonstrate what content should be included in the teaching of theory in HE and how this content should be approached, should look like. The study will also propose ways of teaching the material in a way that supports the learners' knowledge, enjoyment of music and music careers. The study will show the research community ways of contextualizing aspects of music theory that are sometimes presented in a de-contextualized way in the theory class. Through technology students can see and hear connections to the curriculum. Through this integrated approach of creating, performing, responding and connecting music theory with practice, students will be better engaged and more motivated. The study guides are intended to show the students the relevance of learning compositional techniques and to apply them in the context of their everyday music practice. The research design to be used in this study is qualitative. In particular, ethnography in the spirit of participatory action research techniques such as observation and reflection will be adopted. Empirical data will be presented and analysed in the form of a reflective practice diary, students' journal which will include their work and compositions and data collected from focus group interviews with students and teachers. The participants will be students attending MSM studying Music Knowledge and Understanding at Grade vii/Gradeviii levels. Besides student participation, the study will also feature teachers' and lecturers' involvement. Teachers teaching Music knowledge and Understanding at the school and university lecturers delivering composition lectures will be asked to form part of focus groups for discussions, workshops and seminars. These meetings will form part of their Professional Development Course. Student participants will keep a student's journal which is mandatory for every student at the school. In this journal students are expected to keep a diary of all compositions produced during their academic year. The qualitative methodology preserves the integrity of students' and teacher interaction in music teaching. Data will be mostly collected in real everyday context, when student groups will be audio-recorded, discussing their perceptions, opinions, feelings and reasoning after each chapter of the study guide. Informal discussions with my students will reflect my work in progress and provide insight for any amendments which need to be rectified. In the focus group interviews with teachers, data will focus on the modes of learning, influences, relationships with students and pedagogical implications. My study will be essentially practical in nature. I will investigate my own practice in planning and delivery of each chapter as presented in the study guides and analyse the outcomes as related to my teaching approach. Each chapter of the study guide will be evaluated and analysed thus generating new plans for the subsequent cycle. All this will be</p>

	preceded by a workshop for teachers teaching advanced compositional techniques due in Summer 2018. This practice led research will be supported with the traditional written submission.
--	--

Section E1: For Students Only

E1. Module name and number or course and Department:	Part Time Mphil/PhD School of Music and Performing Arts
E2. Name of Supervisor or module Leader	Dr. Maria Varvarigou
E3. Email address of Supervisor or Module leader	maria.varvarigou@canterbury.ac.uk
E4. Contact address:	maria.varvarigou@canterbury.ac.uk

Section E2: For Supervisors

Please tick the appropriate boxes. The study should not begin until all boxes are ticked:

The student has read the relevant documentation relating to the University's Research Governance, available on the University web pages at: https://cccu.canterbury.ac.uk/research-and-enterprise-development-centre/research-governance-and-ethics/research-governance-and-ethics.aspx	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The topic merits further investigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The student has the skills to carry out the study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The participant information sheet or leaflet is appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The procedures for recruitment and obtaining informed consent are appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If a Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check is required, this has been carried out	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments from supervisor:

Section F: Declaration

- I certify that the information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I certify that a risk assessment for this study has been carried out in compliance with the University's Health and Safety policy.
- I certify that any required Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check has been carried out.
- I undertake to carry out this project under the terms specified in the Canterbury Christ Church University Research Governance Handbook.
- I undertake to inform the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee of any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over the course of the study. I understand that such changes may require a new application for ethics approval.
- I undertake to inform the RKE Co-ordinator at red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk in the Research and Enterprise Development Centre when the proposed study has been completed.
- I am aware of my responsibility to comply with the requirements of the law and appropriate University guidelines relating to the security and confidentiality of participant or other personal data.
- I understand that project records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future and that project records should be kept securely for five years or other specified period.
- I understand that the personal data about me contained in this application will be held by the Research and Enterprise Development Centre and that this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data Protection Act.

As the Principal Investigator for this study, I confirm that this application has been shared with all other members of the study team	(please tick) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--	--

Principal Investigator	Supervisor or leader (as appropriate)
Moira Azzopardi Barbieri	Name Dr. Maria Varvarigou
Date: May 2018	Date: June 2018

Section G: Submission

This form should be sent as an attachment to a covering email, to red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk

N.B. YOU MUST include copies of the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form that you will be using in your study (Model versions on which to base these are appended below for your convenience). Also copies of any data gathering tools such as questionnaires, and a **COMPLETED RISK ASSESSMENT FORM**.



CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Teaching Music Knowledge and Understanding in Higher Education: challenges, opportunities and aspirations within a Maltese context

Name of Researcher: Moira Azzopardi Barbieri

Contact details:

Address:

School of Music and Performing Arts,
North Holmes Rd,
Canterbury,
Kent.
CT1 1QU

Tel:

01227 767700 ext:3740

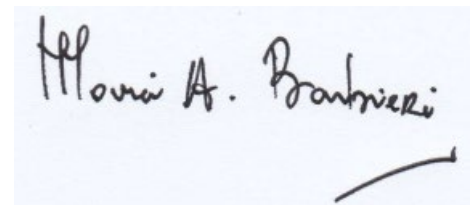
e-mail:debbie.pentecost@canterbury.ac.uk

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential
4. I agree to take part in the above study.
5. I agree to be audio recorded.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Name of Person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature



Moira Azzopardi Barbieri	May 2018	
Researcher	Date	Signature

Copies: 1 for participant
 1 for researcher

**TEACHING MUSIC KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING
IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND ASPIRATIONS
WITHIN A MALTESE CONTEXT.**

TEACHERS' PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Moira Azzopardi Barbieri.

Background

This study will contribute to a general discussion on the teaching of theory of music in higher education. Two study guides for the teaching of theory at grade VII and grade VIII level will be created to demonstrate what a music curriculum for theory teaching should look like. The study will propose ways of teaching the material in a way that supports the learners' knowledge, enjoyment of music and music careers.

What will you be required to do?

Participants in this study will be required talk about their experiences of theory teaching at grade VII and grade VIII level - pedagogical issues of the teaching of music compositional techniques.

To participate in this research you must:

- be an adult who is qualified and trained in music education.
- understand the nature of the research and of their participation.
- have a thorough knowledge of music theory content of grades VII and VIII.
- have taught the subject for a number of years.

Procedures

You will be asked to take part in focus group, unstructured interviews directed at engaging all participants in open discussions sharing opinions on the pedagogical and curriculum implications in the teaching of music knowledge and understanding.

Attached Power Point Presentation will be delivered in Summer 2018.

Feedback

Feedback in the form of written information will be provided as a result of discussion and interviews of the teachers' focus group.

Confidentiality

On the legal basis of *<state the legal basis – this is likely to be consent but not always>* all data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the University's own data protection policies. No unrelated or unnecessary personal data will be collected or stored. The following categories of personal data

will be processed <state the personal data categories that will be collected and processed>. Personal data will be used <state how personal data is to be used>. Data can only be accessed by <state whom; this will normally be at least the same person(s) listed in the initial paragraph of this sheet and any co-researchers. For students it will also include your supervisor and examiner as a minimum. Please also state here if data will be transferred outside of the European Economic Area (EEA)-if this is the case provide details of the recipients and the reason for this>. After completion of the study, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed) and held for a period of <state how long the data will be held for after the completion of the project. CCCU recommends 5 years>.

Dissemination of results

The results of the study will be documented in the final submission of my dissertation accompanied with the two study guides.

Deciding whether to participate

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

Any questions?

Please contact :School of Music and Performing Arts,

North Holmes Rd,

Canterbury,

Kent.

CT1 1QU

Telephone no:01227 767700 ext: 3740

e- mail address: debbie.pentecost@canterbury.ac.uk



**TEACHING MUSIC KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING
IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND ASPIRATIONS**

WITHIN A MALTESE CONTEXT.

STUDENTS' PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Moira Azzopardi Barbieri.

Background

This study will contribute to a general discussion on the teaching of theory of music in higher education. Two study guides for the teaching of theory at grade VII and grade VIII level will be created to demonstrate what a music curriculum for theory teaching should look like. The study will propose ways of teaching the material in a way that supports the learners' knowledge, enjoyment of music and music careers.

What will you be required to do?

Participants in this study will be required to clarify, elaborate and discuss concepts of the framework of music theory. Discussion with students after each chapter of the study guides will give insights as to what I as a researcher should re-define in my next cycle of action research.

To participate in this research you must:

- understand the nature of the research and your participation.
- be students at the Malta School of Music or are students at the Gozo School of visual and performing arts promoted from grade VI.
- have applied for the MSM course on the basis of their performance and theoretical background.

Procedures

You will be asked to take part in a focus group interview directed at providing an opportunity for clarification, elaboration and better understanding of each idea and concept presented in each chapter of the study guide for your particular grade.

Feedback in the form of written information will be provided as a result of discussion and interviews of the students' focus group.

Confidentiality

On the legal basis of *<state the legal basis – this is likely to be consent but not always>* all data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the University's own data protection policies. No unrelated or unnecessary personal data will be collected or stored. The following categories of personal data will be processed *<state the personal data categories that will be collected and processed>*. Personal data will be used *<state how personal data is to be used>*. Data can only be accessed by *<state whom; this will normally be at least the same person(s) listed in the initial paragraph of this sheet and any co-researchers. For students it will also include your supervisor and examiner as a minimum. Please also state here if data will be transferred outside of the European Economic Area (EEA)-if this is the case provide details of the recipients and the reason for this>*. After completion of the study, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed) and held for a period of *<state how long the data will be held for after the completion of the project. CCCU recommends 5 years>*.

Dissemination of results

The results of the study will be documented in the final submission of my dissertation accompanied with the two study guides.

Deciding whether to participate

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

Any questions?

Please contact : School of Music and Performing Arts,

North Holmes Road,

Canterbury,

Kent.

CT1 1 QU

Telephone:01227 767700 ext:3740

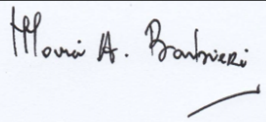
E- mail address: debbie.pentecost@canterbury.ac.uk

General-Risk-Assessment-Form

<i>DATE of Assessment:</i>	<i>18th June, 2018</i>	<i>ASSESSMENT No</i>	
<i>Assessed by (Name):</i>	<i>Maira Azzopardi Barbieri</i>	<i>DEPARTMENT name or code:</i>	<i>School of Music and Performing Arts.</i>
<i>NATURE OF ACTIVITY:</i>		<i>[Classroom/ lecture room Activity</i>	<i>DATE OF ACTIVITY October 2108-June 2020</i>
<i>LOCATION:</i>	<i>Malta School of music/ University of Malta]</i>	<i>NEXT REVIEW DATE:</i>	<i>[June 2020</i>
<i>Approved by</i>	<i>[Head of Department/School, print name & signature]</i>	<i>APPROVAL DATE:</i>	<i>[Date HoD approves risk assessment]</i>

Hazard	Persons at Risk & Nature of harm	Current Control Measures	Risk Rating Severity x Likelihood	Additional Control Measures Required (Further action required)	Revised Risk Rating	Action by who	Action by when	Date action complete
Improper wiring	Students/lecturers	Electrician always present on premises	1	None required				
Physical hazard Projector falling down	Students/lecturers	School and University are at present administered by very efficient and disciplined staff who are always on the alert to take necessary hazard measures	1	None required				
Electrical hazard	Students/lecturers	All plugs and sockets are covered and they all abide by safety regulations	1	None required				
Ergonomic hazard	Students/ lecturers	All desk and chairs are designed and are compatible with students' and lecturers' body posture	1	None required				

All members of staff and where relevant students affected by this risk assessment are to sign and date to confirm they have read and understood it and will abide by it.

NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
Maira azzopardi Barbieri		18th June, 2018

RE: Ethics review Checklist and other documents - Barbieri - 17/A&H/22C

Inbox x

Red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk

15 Jun (2 days ago)

to me

Dear Moira

Thank you for submitting your Ethics Checklist Application. Before this can be sent to the ethics Chair for approval please can you update the documentation/clarify the following:

- Ethics Checklist form - Section D4
 - Please state exactly who your participants are and how they will be recruited
 - Can you clarify what participants will be required to do? For example In the summary you state that you will be reviewing student journals but there is no mention of this in the participant information forms
 - You state that the participants will be your students however you have answered 'No' to question 1 on the checklist. Please clarify
- Consent form
 - Please use CCCU contact details only i.e. CCCU postal address preceded by your Faculty, a CCCU telephone contact number and your CCCU email address
 - Will the focus groups be audio recorded? If so please add in a tick box to allow participants to agree to this
- Participant information sheets (comments apply to both Teacher and student versions)
 - Due to the introduction of the GDPR under Confidentiality please replace the text with this completed paragraph:

On the legal basis of *<state the legal basis – this is likely to be consent but not always>* all data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the University's own data protection policies. No unrelated or unnecessary personal data will be collected or stored. The following categories of personal data will be processed *<state the personal data categories that will be collected and processed>*. Personal data will be used *<state how personal data is to be used>*. Data can only be accessed by *<state whom; this will normally be at least the same person(s) listed in the initial paragraph of this sheet and any co-researchers. For students it will also include your supervisor and examiner as a minimum. Please also state here if data will be transferred outside of the European Economic Area (EEA)-if this is the case provide details of the recipients and the reason for this>*. After completion of the study, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed) and held for a period of *<state how long the data will be held for after the completion of the project. CCCU recommends 5 years>*.
 - Under Any Questions please use CCCU contact details
- Risk assessment form
 - This must be completed. Please consider any venue, travel, data protection risks etc and ensure that the form has been approved and signed by your Head of School/Department

Please resubmit your application to this email.

Kind regards
Tracy

Tracy Crine
Contracts & Compliance Manager
Research & Enterprise Integrity & Development Office
Canterbury Christ Church University,
Hall Place, Canterbury, Kent CT2 9AG
Tel: +44 (0) 1227 922132
tracy.crine@canterbury.ac.uk

From: Moira [Azzopardi Barbieri <moira.azzopardi-barbieri@um.edu.mt>](mailto:moira.azzopardi-barbieri@um.edu.mt)
Sent: 12 June 2018 10:13
To: Red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk
Cc: [Varvarigou, Maria \(maria.varvarigou@canterbury.ac.uk\) <maria.varvarigou@canterbury.ac.uk>](mailto:Varvarigou, Maria (maria.varvarigou@canterbury.ac.uk) <maria.varvarigou@canterbury.ac.uk>)
Subject: Ethics review Checklist and other documents

Dear Sir,

I am a Part-Time PhD student. I am attaching the documents as requested in the Code of Practice for Research Degree by the Ethics' Board.

Best wishes,

Moira



Click here to [Reply](#) or [Forward](#)

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Overseas Ethics Declaration

A declaration of compliance with appropriate ethical procedures and protocols for research undertaken with human participants in countries outside the United Kingdom

2 I declare that I, Moira Azzopardi Barbieri

have followed all the necessary procedures to ensure that the research involving human participants I have carried out, or intend to carry out, entitled

Teaching Music Knowledge and Understanding in Higher Education: challenges, opportunities and aspirations within a Maltese context.

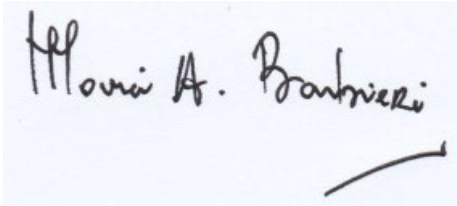
in Malta

between 1st February 2017 and 31st January 2022.

as part of my research project or research degree, conforms in full to the ethical requirements of that country.

- I have acquired all the necessary permission from all the necessary parties with regard to access, use of research instruments or any other invasive procedures, and confidentiality.
- I have made the purpose of my research appropriately clear to all the parties that I am required to, and have behaved appropriately in response to the outcomes of this communication.
- I attach a copy of any regulatory or ethical documentation/certificates that I have had to sign or have been awarded by the jurisdiction within which I am operating.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature reads "Maria A. Bombieri" in a cursive script. There is a long, sweeping horizontal stroke underneath the name.

Date: June 2018

Completed declaration should be returned to the red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk, and the Graduate School. Researchers should retain a copy for inclusion in their thesis/dissertation.



29 June 2018

Ref: 17/A&H/22C

Ms Moira Barbieri

c/o School of Music & Performing Arts Faculty of
Arts & Humanities

Dear Moira,

Confirmation of ethics compliance for your study - *Teaching Music Knowledge and Understanding in Higher Education: challenges, opportunities and aspirations within a Maltese context*

I have received your Ethics Review Checklist and appropriate supporting documentation for proportionate review of the above project. Your application complies fully with the requirements for proportionate ethical review, as set out in this University's Research Ethics and Governance Procedures.

In confirming compliance for your study, I must remind you that it is your responsibility to follow, as appropriate, the policies and procedures set out in the *Research Governance Framework* ([http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/research-and-consultancy/governance-and-ethics.aspx](http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/research-and-consultancy/governance-and-ethics/governance-and-ethics.aspx)) and any relevant academic or professional guidelines.

This includes providing, if appropriate, information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.

Any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over its course should be notified via email to red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk and may require a new application for ethics approval.

It is a condition of compliance that you must inform me once your research has completed. Wishing you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Tracy

Tracy Crine

Contracts & Compliance red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk

Research & Enterprise Integrity &
Development Office

Canterbury Christ Church University

North Holmes Campus, Canterbury,
Kent, CT1 1QU Tel +44 (0)1227 767700
Fax +44 (0)1227 470442 www.canterbury.ac.uk
Professor Rama Thirunamachandran,
Vice Chancellor and Principal

Canterbury Christ Church University has approved your ethics application and you

may proceed with your research in due course.

(Email dated 30/06/2018)

Introductory Letter to Participants:

Dear _____,

This letter is to introduce Moira Azzopardi Barbieri, who is a PhD student in Canterbury Christ Church University, School of Music and Performing Arts. I am undertaking research focusing on effective ways of and resources for teaching Music Knowledge and Understanding at Great VII and Grade VIII level in Maltese Higher Education.

I would like to invite you to assist in the project by agreeing to be involved in interviews and focus groups. Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. You are of course entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Since I intend to record the interviews/discussions in focus groups, I will seek your consent on the attached form to record the interview and to transcribe it in preparation for the thesis.

Any inquiries you may have concerning this project, should be directed to me by phone on 79414100 or e-mail moira.azzopardi-barbieri@um.edu.mt

Thank you for your assistance.

