# The meaning of BMus studies for early career graduates: a phenomenological study

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# Declaration

This is to declare that I, Annette L Combrink, accredited language editor and translator of the South African Translators' Institute, have language-edited the dissertation by

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a phenomenological investigation with the aim of understanding the meaning early career graduates ascribe to their BMus studies in the work environment. Open-ended interviews were conducted with fourteen participants and thematic data analysis was used to make sense of the data. The study provides knowledge of the experiences of BMus graduates to inform music academia on the practical needs existing within musicians' work environment. When assessing the relevance of knowledge, skills and competencies during BMus studies from a work perspective, the participants mentioned learning efficiencies experienced such as gaining a 'musical foundation', which included 'learning a musical language', gaining 'an advantage of understanding music', 'musical knowledge to draw from', and developing 'a musical perspective'. The reasons provided by the participants for the perceived value of subjects, classes and projects referred to were: knowledge, skills and competencies that were 'reusable', 'enriched personhood', and 'enhanced musical ability', as well as learning that allowed participants to 'integrate, transfer or relate information to different contexts'. Learning deficiencies voiced by participants from a work perspective emphasised the need for 'more practical application of knowledge', 'contextual understanding of knowledge', 'in-service training', 'a more supportive musical environment', 'more music-making opportunities', as well as 'career guidance', 'music technology skills', and 'small business management skills'. The essence of the study revealed through the emergent themes of the participants' experiences in the workplace was 'Lifelong learning' and 'Variety within career portfolios', and this in turn enabled the participants to experience 'Financial sustainability'.

**Keywords**

Music graduates, work experience, BMus studies, music education, music careers, employability, financial sustainability, phenomenology

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie is ‘n fenomenologiese ondersoek met die doel om betekenis wat vroeë loopbaan graduandi toeskryf aan hulle BMus-studies in die werks omgewing. Oop onderhoude is gevoer met veertien deelnemers en tematiese data-analise is gebruik om die data verstaanbaar te maak. Die studie verskaf kennis van die ervaringe van BMus-graduandi om die akademiese wêreld van musiek in te lig oor die praktiese behoeftes wat daar bestaan binne die werkomgewing van musici. Wanneer mens die relevansie van kennis, vaardighede en bevoegdhede tydens BMus-studies vanuit ‘n werkperspektief assesseer, het die deelnemers verwys na die ontwikkeling van ‘musikale fondasie’, wat insluit die ‘leer van ‘n musikale taal’, die ontwikkeling van die ‘voordeel om musiek te kan verstaan’, ‘musikale kennis waaruit mens kan leer’, en ‘die ontwikkeling van ‘n musikale perspektief’. Die redes wat deur die deelnemers aangevoer is in terme van die gepersipieerde waarde van vakke, klasse en projekte waarna verwys is, sluit in: kennis, vaardighede en bevoegdhede wat ‘herbruikbaar’ is, ‘verrykte menswees’, en ‘verhoogde musikale vermoë’, sowel as ‘leer’, wat die deelnemers in staat gestel het om te ‘integreer, oor te dra of inligting in verband te bring met verskillende kontekste’. Leergebreke wat deur die deelnemers genoem is vanuit die werkperspektief het die behoefte onderstreep vir ‘meer praktiese toepassing van kennis’, ‘kontekstuele begrip van kennis’, ‘in-diensopleiding’, ‘’n meer ondersteunende musiekomgewing’, ‘meer geleenthede vir musiekmaak’, sowel as ‘loopbaanvoorligting’, ‘musiektegnologievaardighede’, en ‘kleinbesigheidsbestuursvaardighede’. Die essensie van die studie, soos blyk uit die temas voortspruitend uit die deelnemers se ervarings in die werkplek, was ‘lewenslange leer’ en ‘verskeidenheid binne loopbaanportefeuljes’, en op sy beurt het dit deelnemers in staat gestel om ‘finansiële volhoubaarheid’ te kan ervaar.

**Sleutelwoorde**

Musiekgraduandi, werkservaring, BMus-studies, musiekopvoeding, musiekloopbane, aanstelbaarheid, finansiële volhoubaarheid, fenomenologie

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the study

The research is based on an interest in understanding the work experiences of BMus graduates by investigating (1) what BMus graduates experience in the workplace, (2) how they think about the relevance or application of their BMus studies in their work environments, and (3) the process they engage in to make a sustainable living after graduating with the BMus degree. According to Merriam (2009:5) questions about understanding experiences call for a qualitative research design. The research approach used in this study is a phenomenological one, since the study seeks to "know more about a particular phenomenon and the common experiences" of BMus graduates with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013:134).

The need for the study was underlined by a real-life problem that I experienced after graduating with a BMus degree from the University of Pretoria (see Addendum C for Vignette: My work experience as early career BMus graduate). My experience in the workplace confronted me with financial difficulties as a result of an unpredictable, hence also unreliable, income as solo and chamber ensemble group performer, scarcity of professional orchestral opportunities, and a lack of sustainable learner interest in the violoncello – my main teaching music instrument. Similar work experiences are documented in a newspaper article entitled "The Juilliard effect: Ten years later", which explores the experiences of Julliard music graduates in the workplace and how or whether they make a sustainable living after graduation (Wakin, 2004:1-4). My experience in the work environment, like that of the Julliard music graduates, enabled me to identify some deficiencies in the adequacy, applicability and relevance of skills, or skills set training and music education during my music degree studies.

I had perceived a lack of career knowledge and guidance to equip me for the real world of work. Branscome (2010) who summarised career opportunities available to music graduates in a PhD thesis, also identified this deficit in career knowledge and guidance for undergraduates. The experiences I had in the workplace has led to my research interest in music education for sustainable professional practice, such as seen in the work done by Dawn Bennett (2005) in a PhD-study entitled "Classical instrumental musicians: Educating for sustainable professional practice", as well as the enhancement of music graduate employability within the labour market (Brown, 2007; Mills, 2007; Johnsson & Hager, 2008; Bartleet *et al*., 2012; Garnett, 2014). A book edited by Bennett (2012) entitled *Life in the real world: How to make music graduates employable (New Directions in the Humanities)* provided further evidence for the need to research and discuss the research problem in a South African context. Beeching (2010), author of the book *Beyond Talent: Creating a Successful Career in Music,* contributes some insight into some of the additional skills music graduates may require when making a career in music.

Previous literature relating to the work experiences of music graduates that has contributed further discussion and findings, includes some of the following topics:

- The identification of the crucial transition period from music student to professional, and factors that influence career choices (Burland, 2005; Roulston *et al.*, 2005; Weller, 2013; Johnsson & Hager, 2008; Creech *et al.*, 2008);
- Women and music careers, a historical overview of women in music education careers (Howe, 2009); and the effects of positive and negative messages on career choices (Fordon, 1999);
- The importance of musical identity (Weller, 2013; Juuti & Littleton, 2010; Oakland *et al*., 2014), value of support systems, mentorship, and positive socialisation when nurturing professional musicianship (Weller, 2013; Lehmann & Kristensen, 2014);

- Music identities of performers and teachers, and recognising these identities as inseparable in an effort to enhance music graduate employability (Garnett, 2014; Freer & Bennett, 2012);
- Portfolio careers in music, whereby music graduates participate in multiple part-time employment, and discussions about how knowledge of these working conditions can be incorporated to make music education more sustainable (Bennett, 2005; Weller, 2013; Bartleet *et al*., 2012; Oakland *et al*., 2014);
- The work experiences and conditions of itinerant music teachers, or travelling music teachers (Roulston, 2000);
- Classroom music teacher experiences in the workplace and early career challenges they experience (Welch *et al.*, 2011);
- Injuries of orchestral musicians and opera singers (Guptill, 2011; Oakland *et al*., 2014), and the need for education about risk and prevention of such injuries as these issues may affect longevity of performance music careers (Guptill, 2011);
- Suggestions are made for utopian, or more ideal, music institutes (Bennett, 2007; Watkins & Scott, 2013). Models of institutes or initiatives are provided (Lebler, 2007; Watson & Forrest, 2012), and considerations are made with regard to being more relevant to current needs within work environments (Kirk, 2014);
- Music teachers' careers are recognised as consisting of two parts: pre-service and in-service (Eros, 2011), and evaluations of the effectiveness of pre-service education and training are investigated (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004; Legette, 2013);
- Specific work environments within music, such as performer-teachers (Mills, 2004a), conservatoire professors (Mills, 2004b) and specific instrument music teachers, such as pianists (Mills, 2006) and violinists (Mills, 2007) in a series entitled 'Working in music' by Janet Mills. These studies were completed in association with Royal College of Music in London, UK and developed as a mixed-method research model to consider the work experiences of alumni as feedback to inform curriculum research.

Current literature and discussions indicate a deficiency in understanding the work experiences of BMus graduates in the South African context. This study will specifically investigate the meaning BMus graduates from the North-West University (NWU) attribute to their BMus studies in the work environment, since there is no similar study at present within existing music education literature. Some of the studies that include a classical music graduate sample group have been conducted mainly in countries such as the United Kingdom (Mills, 2004a; Mills, 2004b; Mills, 2006; Mills, 2007), Australia (Bennett, 2005) and the United States of America (Branscome, 2010) and they all made use of a mixed-method research approach.

This study is also unique in its intended research approach, as it will incorporate a phenomenological research method. This approach reveals the essence of the lived experiences or realities of individuals, which will provide a valuable perspective into what it is like to be a BMus graduate in the workplace (Creswell, 2013:80; Merriam, 2009:26). Baker (2010:78) states that the problem persisting in conservatoire skills training and education is that not enough is conveyed about labour markets in music education literature to inform music course curriculum or appropriate curricular transformations. For this reason the emphasis of this research will be on addressing this gap within the existing literature by providing an informed discussion on skills training and music education needs that occur in the work environment based on alumni feedback - lived work experience perspective from the labour market. In addition, this kind of research will be valuable to a discussion about “graduateness”, a term that has gained increased attention in debates concerning the improvement of graduate employability within the workplace (Johnsson & Hager, 2008).

Audiences or stakeholders who will benefit from this research include music students, practitioners in the field of music education, other researchers, and policy-makers involved in curriculum research, planning and development (Creswell, 2013:134). The study will be especially useful in an internal and external programme evaluation undertaken at the North-West University

(NWU) as a strategy and initiative to assess the viability of BMus graduate employability within the community and workplace, as well as the industry and labour markets (IPE, 2014: 3-4).

## 1.2 Purpose statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the meaning that NWU BMus graduates, who graduated between 2005 and 2010 (with approximate working experience of 5 to 10 years), ascribe to their BMus studies in the work environment.

## 1.3 Research questions

### 1.3.1 Central research question

What meaning do NWU BMus graduates ascribe to their BMus studies in their work environments?

### 1.3.2 Sub-questions

The central research question can be divided into the following sub-questions to establish the components that make up the essence of the study (Creswell, 2013:141):

- **What** do NWU BMus graduates experience in the work environment regarding the relevance of knowledge, skills and competencies gained during their music studies?
- **How** do NWU BMus graduates experience the context, conditions and circumstances of their work environments in relation to their BMus studies?
- **What** role did BMus studies play in the way that BMus graduates make a sustainable income in the labour market?

## 1.4 Research procedures

### 1.4.1 Qualitative research approach and philosophical assumptions

This study makes use of a qualitative research design, because a complex and detailed understanding provides a unique insight into the research problem. The qualitative research design was chosen as the detail required for this study can be established only through direct interaction with music graduates in the workplace, meeting with them in a natural setting, and allowing them to tell their stories without any prior expectations (Creswell, 2013:48).

The research approach is a phenomenological one, as the common meaning of experiences of several BMus graduates in the work environment is explored to establish a central meaning or essence to inform BMus programme research. This research embraces an ontological philosophical assumption on the basis of which the nature of reality and its characteristics are constructed on the foundation of an idea of reporting multiple realities, using the actual words of the different individuals participating in the study and presenting their different perspectives (Creswell, 2013:36-37).

### 1.4.2 Participants

Participants who have had a lived experience with the phenomenon were recruited for the study (Creswell, 2013:76). For this reason, only individuals who completed a BMus degree and have lived experience in the workplace formed part of the study. The sample group selected consists of BMus graduates from the North-West University (NWU) of South Africa who graduated between the years 2005 to 2010, and has approximately five to ten years working experience.

### 1.4.3 Role of the researcher

In a phenomenological study the researcher's role is to uncover the essence of the participants' experience. This is done by focusing "on the deep, lived

meaning that events have for individuals", and on the basis of the assumption that "these meanings guide their actions and interactions" (Merriam, 2009:93). The essence will give the reader the feeling that they understand what it is like to have experienced the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009:26). In addition, the researcher is also expected to write about his or her experiences of the phenomenon in order to "bracket" those experiences before interviewing participants (Merriam, 2009:93) (see Addendum C: "Vignette: My work experience as early career BMus graduate" for the bracketing of my experience with the phenomenon as a BMus graduate with working experience of almost seven years). Merriam (2009:25) identifies two reasons why this process is important: (1) to examine the "dimensions of the experience", and (2) "to become aware of prejudices, viewpoints and the assumptions" of the researcher. In other words, by setting aside my everyday understandings, judgments and knowledge in this way, they can become evident to me as well as to the reader (Merriam, 2009:25).

### 1.4.4 Data collection and analysis

Data-collection procedures involved interviewing fourteen NWU BMus graduates. Data collection continued until data saturation was reached. The interviews were one-on-one; questions open-ended, general and focused on understanding the central phenomenon of the study from the participants' point of view. A quiet place free from distractions was chosen, since interviews were audio or video recorded, and had to be transcribed afterwards (Creswell, 2013:165).

Data analysis followed a systematic procedure to identify significant statements, sentences or comments in order to develop meaning units. These meaning units (codes) were organised into sub-categories, categories, and themes (see Chapter 4: Findings). A detailed description is provided summarising what individuals have experienced (Theme 1: Lifelong learning – textural description) and how they have experienced it (Theme 2: Variety within career portfolios – structural description), as well as what participants experienced with regards to making a sustainable income in the labour market

with a BMus degree (Theme 3: Financial sustainability). The three themes combined provide the ‘essence’ of the experiences of individuals and allows the reader to fully grasp and understand the experience (Creswell, 2013:79-82).

## 1.5 Strategies for validating findings

Strategies for validating findings include “*clarifying researcher bias* from the outset of the study” to ensure that the reader understands my position and any bias or assumptions that may impact on the inquiry (Creswell, 2013:251). This was achieved by summarising my “past experience, biases, prejudices and orientations that shape the interpretation and approach to the study” (see Addendum C for Vignette: My work experience as early career BMus graduate) (Creswell, 2013:251). *Member checking* is also incorporated, as participants were asked to read the findings and comment on validity in terms of their own experiences (see Chapter 4, section 4.6 Member checks) (Creswell, 2013:252; Merriam, 2009:217). Participants could also comment if they felt there was missing information. *Detailed and thick descriptions* were applied as an important component in the strategy of validation to allow readers to make decisions about transferability of information to other settings (Creswell, 2013: 252).

## 1.6 Ethics

Permission was gained from individuals, and the site of investigation – the North-West University (Reference number NWU-00161-16-A7). Each individual participating in the study was asked to sign a letter of consent (see Addendum A and B). The letter informed individuals that they were participating in this study, explaining the purpose of the study and providing general information to ensure that participants were aware of the nature and purpose of the study. Participants were thereby made aware of potential discomforts and risks involved in the study, such as setting time aside for a lengthy interview, being audio or video-recorded, and data being published in

a dissertation. Protecting the anonymity of participants was prioritised and necessary precautions taken to assign aliases to individuals to whom it was important to be anonymous (Creswell, 2013:174; Moustakas, 1994:107).

If a participant disclosed “off the record” information during the study, this information was respected as such and deleted from analysis. Care was taken not to share my own personal experiences with participants in an interview setting, as I realised such sharing minimises the “bracketing” that is essential to construct the meaning of participants within a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013:175). Leading questions avoided preventing influencing outcomes of questions in interviews. Instead, interview questions merely probe the experience of participants with the phenomenon in a deeper way (Creswell, 2013:60).

When analysing data, multiple perspectives were tracked in order to maintain a complex picture of the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2013:56-57). During the process, siding with information provided by participants, such as disclosing only positive or only negative results was avoided. It was also important to remain mindful of protecting the site and participants by not disclosing information that could create a harmful picture of the participants or site in the present or the future. Also, information was shared with participants for feedback (see Chapter 4, section 4.6 Member checks). Communication was approached in order to be as clear as possible and appropriate language used for the intended audience of the study (Creswell, 2013:60).

## 1.7 Significance of the study

The study contributes valuable information for the country, area and institute by collecting alumni feedback. Music institutions, music students and music educators should be interested in this research, as it provides valuable discussions about the lived experiences of music graduates in the workplace. The results add to existing literature that informs career guidance on the improved employability of music students, as well as needs that could be

addressed within professional development programmes (Conway, 2008; Eros, 2011). The study contributes to the literature on sustainable music careers and uncovers skills or skills set preferences within the workplace. This research is valuable in terms of my personal goals, as it encourages self-reflection and self-understanding of my own experiences with music education, in addition to illuminating the experiences of other music graduates. Barrett (2009:6) believes music educators are at the core of curriculum development, and encourages “probing the impact of prior experiences to affirm where we stand in perpetuating traditional practices or altering them” (Barrett, 2009:13).

## 1.8 Layout of dissertation

In this chapter a background to the study is provided, an overview of the research design given, and a brief outline of the study offered. The second chapter is an overview of relevant literature to the topic of music graduates’ experiences within the workplace. Chapter three is an in-depth discussion of the research design, approach and procedures. Findings obtained through analysis of the data are presented in Chapter four. Chapter five, the final chapter, is a discussion of findings by answering the research questions of the study, and additionally it presents conclusions, recommendations, implications for audiences, and suggestions for future research, all in the context of literature within this field of research.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to organise and synthesise previous research that relates to the experiences of music graduates in the workplace. The process of writing this literature review has been valuable to obtain results, clues and suggestions about what avenues to follow when conducting my own research and to avoid duplication of previous research. It is important to build this study on the foundation of prior research, with particular consideration for more recent literature in the field.

This review of the literature was limited to the search terms: “lived or work experiences of music graduates”, “music careers” and “work environment or workplace experiences of music graduates”. A specific search was also undergone for phenomenological studies on the topic. Databases consulted for the search included EbscoHost, GoogleScholar, JSTOR, Sabinet Reference, and SaePublications.

Significant literature sourced that aligned with this research study included articles by Bennett (Australia), Carruthers (Canada), Beeching (United States), Perkins (United Kingdom), Smilde (Europe), and Weller (United States) (Bennett *et al.*, 2012a), as well as research by Janet Mills (2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2007). These researchers, academics or an international team of educators have investigated work experiences of music graduates including the social context of the indicated countries as a means to provide music academics with effective strategies and tools for implementation to improve employability and sustainability within music careers (Bennett *et al.*, 2012b:3).

This study, a phenomenological investigation based within a South African context, intends to inform music programmes and music students through the lived experiences of music graduates in order to provide knowledge on how to enhance employability and sustainability of music careers. For this reason,

this synthesis of the literature builds predominantly on the foundation of the above-mentioned researchers' work, because of the similar objectives identified to inform music academics by investigating the work experiences of music graduates.

In this chapter, I discuss knowledge accumulated from literature about the careers of musicians in social contexts (2.2), explore factors that influence music careers (2.2.1), discover new definitions of success for musicians (2.2.2), look into skills and attributes regarded as essential for sustaining careers in music (2.2.3), consider recommendations made for career preparation of music students within literature (2.2.4), and discuss learning environment suggestions (2.2.5). Thereafter, I briefly provide context for tertiary music education in South Africa, discuss my search for international phenomenological studies with relevance to the work experiences of music graduates, and finally I discuss relevant literature that gave voice to South African music students and graduates (2.3).

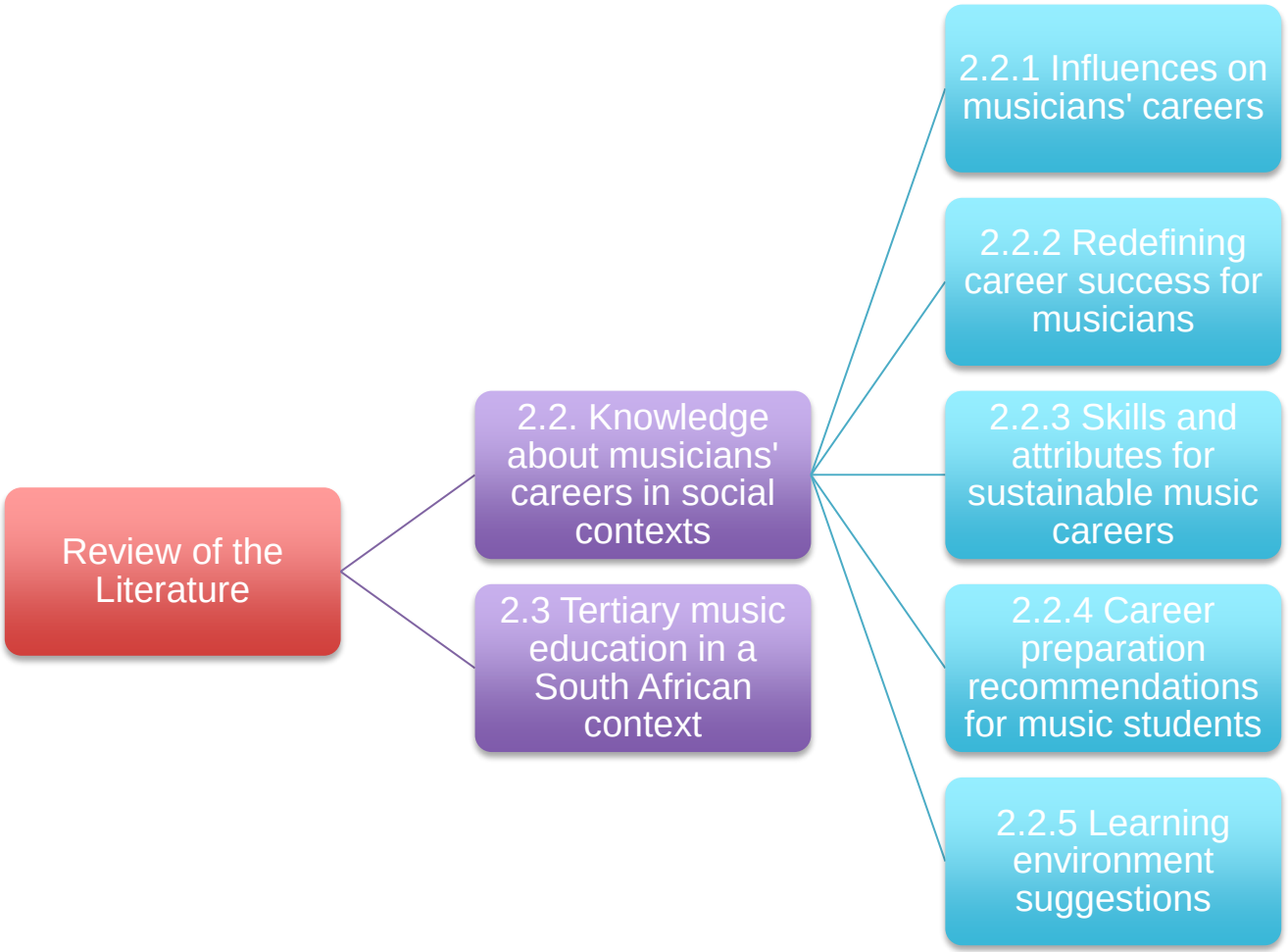


Figure 1: Literature map

## 2.2 Knowledge about musicians' careers in social contexts

Musicians throughout history have been 'portfolio' musicians, for instance JS Bach was a teacher, performer and composer, and this fact still remains true of musicians today (Gregory, 2015:1). Based on research regarding music careers, Bennett *et al.* (2012b:8) provides this definition for a musician as multi-skilled professional: "A musician is someone who works in the profession of music within one or more specialist fields".

### 2.2.1 Influences on musicians' careers

Mills (2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2007) developed the following model (see Figure 2) as a means to research the careers of alumni from the Royal College of Music London (RCM). This model identifies influences on the careers of musicians:

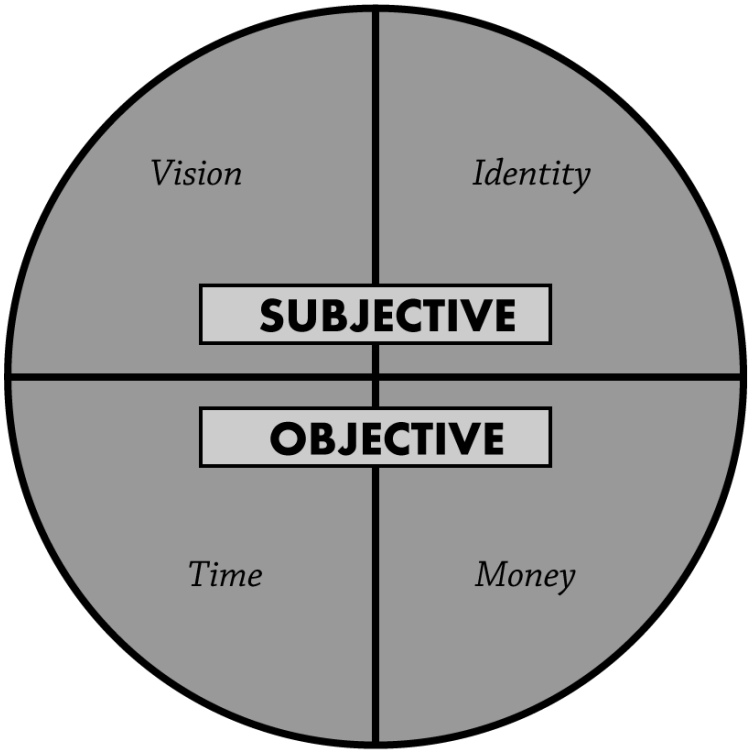


Figure 2: Conceptualising 'career' for musicians (Perkins, 2012:14)

When observing Figure 2, it can be seen that the career of a musician has two dimensions: objective and subjective, and four facets: vision, identity, time and money. Mills (2007:77) explains as follows:

> Objective facets of career include: (1) the time spent on different activities and (2) the proportion of income generated from these activities. Subjective facets include: (3) how a person identifies themselves (how they see themselves), and (4) their vision for their future.

In the article “Rethinking ‘Career’ for musicians: Identity and Vision”, Perkins (2012:11-26) draws on research conducted with RCM alumni and refers to the above-mentioned model (see Figure 2) to rethink what is meant by ‘career’ for musicians. The author takes a more penetrating look at the subjective dimension of *career* and concludes that in order for musicians to be fulfilled by what they do, it becomes necessary to consider both the objective and subjective dimensions of musicians’ careers (Perkins, 2012:14-23)

In further consideration of the subjective dimension: vision and identity, Bennett (2012:73) advocates that music students be engaged in meaningful discussions about what they “most love to do, their interests within and beyond music, their strengths and talents, and their passions”, since the answers to such questions will likely frame future career decisions, and are fundamental to the development of professional identity and a clear self-image (Bennett, 2012:74).

As part of a PhD-thesis entitled “Classical Instrumental musicians: Educating for sustainable professional practice”, Bennett (2005:183) developed a conditional matrix to illustrate the intrinsic and extrinsic influences on the careers of musicians (see Figure 3):

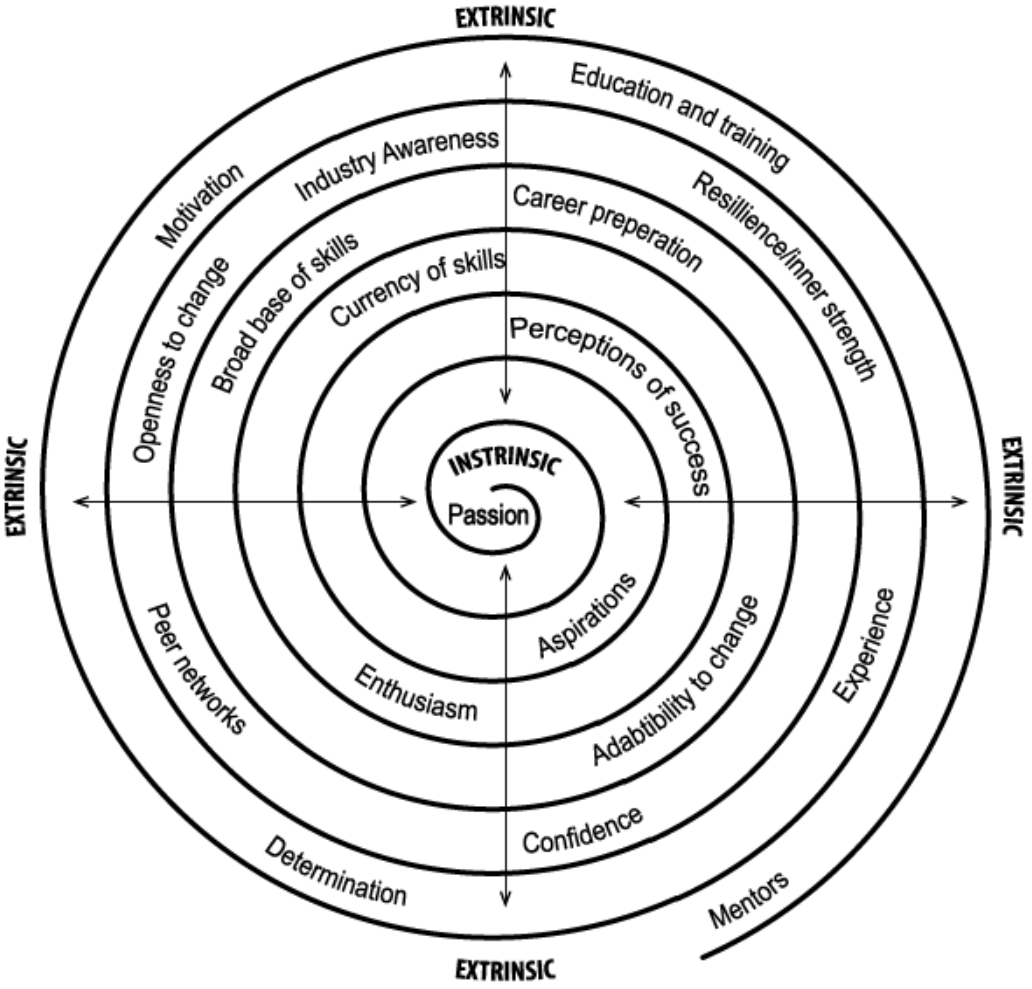


Figure 3: Conditional matrix of intrinsic and extrinsic influences on music careers (Bennett, 2005:212)

Bennett (2012:185-186) uses this tool in themes along with musicians' profiles (or guest musicians) and accessible readings to help music students recognise influences on music careers and navigate the journey towards a sustainable career within music. It follows that in the context of music education and training the need arises to consider both subjective and objective dimensions of musicians' careers, as well as intrinsic and extrinsic influences on the careers of musicians. Furthermore, a need exists to redefine career success for musicians within music academia.

### 2.2.2 Redefining career success for musicians

In an article entitled “Musicians made in the USA: Training, opportunities and industry change”, Beeching (2012:36-41) tackles issues of supply and demand, the arts economy, work within the music industry, and how musicians are trained in the United States (US). The author provides practical information to musicians interested in studying or working in the US, and explains current trends in the workplace of musicians as follows (Beeching, 2012:42): “There are far too many talented, experienced and deserving musicians for the number of traditional full-time competitive performance and teaching jobs.”

Perkins (2012:23) discusses findings from music graduate research undergone in the United Kingdom (UK): “We know that whilst many students will seek a career in performance, and will integrate performance into their working lives, relatively few will become internationally renowned for their solo work.” Thus it is encouraged that this ideal be redefined, since so few musicians are able to achieve such a “musotopia” (Bennett, 2007:179). Wolkstein (2013:iii) also agrees on a shift in the conventionally held assumption of music value and career success. Perkins (2012:23) explains further:

> If the benchmark for success is placed so high that few can reach it, most music students are set up to fail. It is this that leads students to doubt their abilities and to feel that they are ‘failed performers’ if they teach or embark on other non-performance activities.

Musicians in Europe face similar challenges and patterns in building sustainable careers as experienced by music graduates in the USA, Australia, Canada, and the UK (Smilde, 2012:115). Hannan (2012:140) suggests that instead of a mono-cultural full-time appointment in one orchestra, one ensemble or one music theatre company, musicians are more likely to have careers in which change is constant and expected. Perkins (2012:23) supplements this by stating that the vast majority of music students are skilful, educated and accomplished musicians who go on to a wide range of careers.

Research on music careers shows that musicians in the workplace are multi-skilled professionals working within portfolio or protean careers (Bennett *et al.*, 2012b:8). Portfolio careers are categorised by variety and diversity, and "lack formal structures for progression and promotion" (Perkins, 2012:13). Bennett (2012:7) explains that protean careers are categorised by versatility and an ability to change in order to remain employable. Hannan (2012:140) and Bennett (2007:179) agree that musicians engage in a multiplicity of roles in order to sustain their careers. Bartleet *et al*. (2012:32) adds that musicians combine diverse employment arrangements and activities, which may also include industries outside the music sector.

According to Carruthers (2012:93) music students may have an unrealistic idea of the shape and direction their careers might take, which frequently involves a single locus of activity. For this reason, it is important to place music activity in the context of its overall scope and size in order to understand the range and scope of the sector in which musicians build their careers (Bennett, 2012:65). Bartleet *et al*. (2012:32) suggest the importance of gaining knowledge about musicians' work and careers in order to provide effective training and continued career support across the diversity of the music sector. Bennett (2012:70) voices the criticism that preparation of performers in classical music is often too focused on the art and not enough on the business, social and cultural conditions that performers are a part of.

Alumni research emphasises that intrinsically satisfying careers require musicians to surmount the existing hierarchy in which performance is the pinnacle of success, and think about individual strengths, likes and dislikes instead (Bennett, 2012:75). Perkins (2012:23) proposes that career success for musicians should be associated with making and sharing great music, achieving personal goals, and ultimately achieving happiness. A career in music is much more than a job, "successful musicians are those who follow their passion and develop their strengths and interests to forge sustainable careers" (Bennett, 2012:75). According to Bennett (2007:179), the acceptance of, and preparation for "a more holistic career will enable more music

graduates to find their own ‘musotopia’”, which fits into the overall theme of this study to move towards professional satisfaction, as well as financial stability within music careers.

### 2.2.3 Skills and attributes for sustainable music careers

In the article, “Staying Afloat: Skills, Attributes and Passion”, Bennett (2012:71-72) outlines the skills and attributes that are essential to the development and maintenance of a career in music:

- Business and entrepreneurship,
- communication skills,
- performance and passion.

“Excellence in music skills alone is not sufficient for a musician to achieve and sustain financial security within a career in the music industry” (Watson & Forrest, 2012:71). Beeching (2012:27-31) explores a range of contemporary musicians’ profiles. The examples provided highlight trends of today’s emerging artists as “entrepreneurial, technological, savvy and interested in exploring new ways to engage audiences and connect with their communities”.

Changes in technology, such as the emergence of a global audience because of the Internet, and modification of production, reception and distribution of music are some of the factors contributing to changing trends in music society (Smilde, 2012:105). Beeching (2012:42) explains that due to changes in audience and culture, musicians need to cultivate more than just performance skills. Lebler (2007:205) advises that graduates need abilities and attributes that help them to adapt readily to a changing environment.

Musicians need entrepreneurial skills and abilities as this enables them to create opportunities for themselves, as well as create their own career paths (Beeching, 2012:42). Van Zuilenburg (2012:100) supports the notion that

entrepreneurship offers an alternative form of employment for music graduates, and Hannan (2012:140) maintains that music, like all freelance activities in the arts, is a business.

“Teaching plays a role in the working lives of almost all musicians” (Freer & Bennett, 2012:265). Watkins and Scott (2013:47) explain that when:

> [Y]oung professionals freelance, they teach; if they need to supplement their orchestra job income, they will teach; if they manage to secure a college position, they will teach; even if they become superstar soloists, they will be asked to teach.

Research by Bennett (2008) affirms that the roles of performer and teacher are a common combination. Welch *et al*. (2011:309) discuss the idea that “teaching music requires more musical knowledge and skills, than that of only being an excellent musician”. Some additional professional requirements include “dealing with the organising of music learning, the effective management of time and resources, multitasking and the fostering of inter-personal relationships with people of many different ages and backgrounds” (Welch *et al*., 2011:309).

People skills are important, because “musicians interact with people on a daily basis, and use interpersonal relations to build social networks that may lead to employment” (Branscome, 2010:i). Smilde (2012:111) recommends leadership skills, life skills and social skills. Similarly, another author C. A. Smilde (2005:8) highlights important skills such as “management, health issues, marketing, stage presentation, networking, and leadership skills in different contexts”. According to Hannan (2012:140) the value of professional networks and connections, small business management skills, and the need for musicians to learn how to develop audiences for their work are also important. Musicians need to network early on, consider local associations, and be aware of what is going on within their country (Hsiao, 2011:420).

Hsiao (2011:437) contributes the idea that positive attributes such as passion, devotion, commitment, determination, as well as entrepreneurship are

important within music careers. Beeching (2012:39) presents skills and attributes typically found in successful musicians, which I have directly quoted:

- Initiative
- Resilience
- Perseverance
- Optimism
- Interpersonal skills
- Ability to give and receive constructive criticism
- Knowledge of one's strengths and shortcomings
- Creative problem-solving
- Organisational skills
- Planning skills
- Ability to see opportunities and obstacles.

Even though a successful musician may not possess all these strengths, musicians may collaborate with others who have the strengths that they do not themselves possess. The author explains that such skills could be developed by self-directed learning projects (Beeching, 2012:39). Wolkstein (2013:ii) contributes that musicians require versatility rather than being specialists in one genre or one area of music when building sustainable careers.

Music forms part of a much larger creative or cultural industry sector, creative or cultural industries may include "film and video, motion pictures, television, art galleries, libraries, archives, museums, botanical gardens, music and theatre, performing arts venues, and services such as education" (Bennett, 2012:65). Smilde (2012:105) mentions that there is increasing work becoming available within the wider community with emergence of community musicians, teaching artists, as well as animateurs[1].

Other initiatives include cross-arts and cross-genre collaborations. For example, the development of new media spurring on collaborations between

[1] Musicians who work as animateurs engage in activities that build bridges between performers and audiences by enlivening, encouraging and promoting artistic projects; for example, by facilitating workshops or developing new formats for concerts and community work (Smilde, 2012:105).

musicians, actors, dancers and visual artists such as painters, cinematographers or video artists (Smilde, 2012:105). Beeching (2012:42) urges that musicians need to be able to communicate well with audiences, as well as design and devise interactive performance programs. Hsiao (2011:437) proposes that musicians necessitate skills for career planning, including preparing for a job interview and negotiating pay, as well as career development skills, such as advocating and promotion to various audiences, in addition to marketing themselves. The author emphasises that training is key for a solid foundation on which a career can be established (Hsiao, 2011:438).

In Part II of the book, *Life in the Real World: How to make music graduates employable*, the authors contributed activities which encourage reflection on individual temperament, personality and style, skills and attributes, strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes (Bennett *et al.* 2012a:147). These activities are aimed at developing "clear-headed self-awareness, a flexible and adaptable outlook, a developing savvy for the music world as a whole and the interpersonal skills to put it all together". The authors have recognised these characteristics as essential skills and attributes for music graduates within the real world of work from an international perspective based on research with regards to music graduates' work experiences. It follows that these skills are critical to the career preparation of music students.

### 2.2.4 Career preparation recommendations for music students

Fordon (1999:1-20) notes the effects of negative and positive messages as an influence on the careers of musicians, and discusses the need for musicians to develop a strong self-esteem, as well as skills to contradict negative messages in order to succeed within a music career. Perkins (2012:11) states:

> It is often during the years spent in higher education that students struggle to make sense of their place within the music profession, grappling with how they see themselves, how other people see them, and what this means for them in terms of their chosen profession.

The learning environment of music academia needs a learning culture that is inviting, non-judgemental, and that leads music students to increased self-confidence (Smilde, 2012:116). Lehmann and Kristensen (2014:57) agree that musicians need positive responses from their social environment when musicianship is being nurtured. Perkins (2012:20) makes the following recommendations for career preparation, which I have directly quoted:

- Encourage and allow students to change
- Support students as they develop their own ways of being flexible
- Allow students to define success according to their own 'career'
- Create a culture where subjective and objective components of career are valued equally (see Figure 2, section 2.2.1).

Some strategies and tools have proven to be effective in engaging music students in career preparation, which include journals, drawings, discussion groups, mentoring programs, career profiling of musicians and professional internships (Bennett, 2012:73). Beeching (2012:40) lists some career preparation strategies applied in US schools, which I have directly quoted:

- Music career development courses (required or elective)
- Career workshops/seminars
- Career advising
- Alumni networking/mentoring
- Music technology seminars
- Entrepreneurial project assistance (mentoring and seed money for projects)
- Pedagogy courses and mentored teaching experience
- Community/audience engagement projects
- Community service requirements
- Internships.

Lebler (2007:205) supports a "learning experience that produces multi-skilled and adaptable music graduates who are able to self-monitor and self-direct". Weller (2012:59) and Smilde (2012:108) recommend staying in touch with graduates and inviting some back to campus to talk to current students about the changing musical work scene, and incorporating this knowledge into conversations and curriculum. Creech *et al.* (2008:315) propose that higher

education music institutions should assist music students “by exploring the potential for cross-genre peer networks and prioritising the importance of mentoring, as well as fostering a versatile musical self-image”.

Weller (2012:53-54) discusses self-authorship as a strategy for career preparation, which includes these key elements that I have summarised as follows:

- Know thy stuff: an epistemological foundation ─ to view knowledge as contextual.
- Know thyself: an intrapersonal foundation ─ to create a distinctive voice well grounded in technique, skill and knowledge, but unique to an individual.
- Know thy people: an interpersonal foundation ─ regarded as more than people skills, authentic and respectful interdependent interactions, including seeking out mentors and musical and personal or professional relationships.

Music students require engagement with the music industry to balance the mythological ideals so often held (Oakland *et al*., 2014:14). Hsiao (2011:437) advises that students need to be realistic about music careers, and mentions some aspects such as knowing about payment, full-time job opportunities, possible work settings, and being aware of the population they are likely to be working with. Smilde (2012:116) encourages preparing music students to be open-minded and reflective practitioners. Oakland *et al*. (2014:1) recommend that music educators establish “a balanced relationship with music” and develop “a sustainable identity within music students” (Oakland *et al*., 2014:14).

Music academics need to prepare students for the reality of future careers (Smilde, 2012:102). In the article “’Beginning music teachers’ perceptions of the transition from university to teaching in schools”, Roulston *et al.* (2005:59-82) investigated the transition of music educators from training to careers. The

music teachers experienced their first year as difficult. Findings indicated that the music teachers value “pre-service preparation that is ‘hands-on’, and some reported missing learning about crucial aspects relevant to their work”.

### 2.2.5 Learning environment suggestions

In the previous section, I discussed career preparation recommendations for music students. In this section, I consider music identity, experiential and community-based learning, lifelong learning strategies, informal learning and leadership opportunities, as well as professional development and mentoring programmes as learning environment suggestions to enhance music learning experiences within music academia.

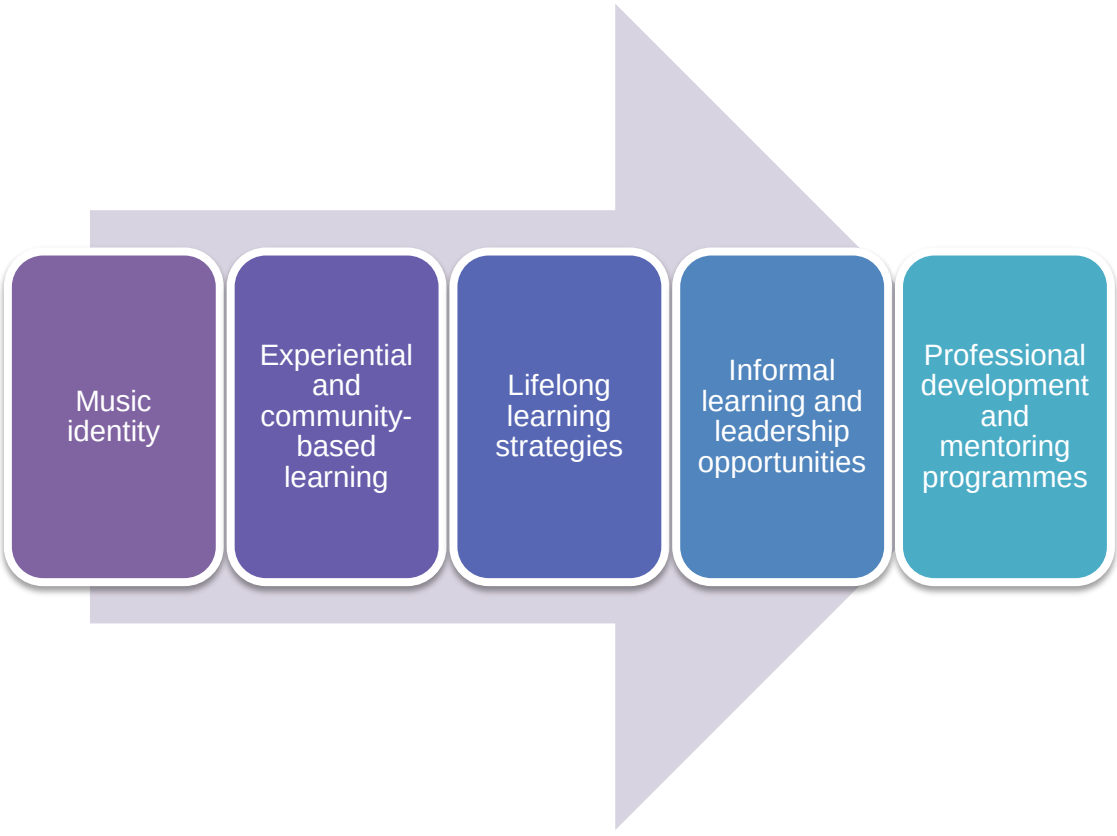


Figure 4: Learning environment suggestions

#### 2.2.5.1 Music identity

Garnett (2014:127) reflects on the relationship between self-identity and employability, and recommends that pedagogy “be considered an aspect of

musicianship from the outset". Watkins and Scott (2013:44) support a unified training that combines performance and pedagogy. The authors debate that the "division of performers and teachers into unequal paths rather than parallel, overlapping and mutually beneficial careers is problematic." Watkins and Scott (2013:45) explain that this fuels prejudices and misconceptions, which are carried into the professional world and keeps music students from a comprehensive education that would help them excel within music careers. Freer and Bennett (2012:265) agree that identity conflict results when music students view themselves as either performers or educators, but not as both.

Taking identity as a point of departure can accomplish a great deal in career preparation, since perceived relevance of music programme courses is related to how music students identify themselves (Smilde, 2012:116). Freer and Bennett (2012:265) advocate that music identity is first presented and that "it provides the framework for making relevant the pedagogical techniques and theoretical models encountered in education courses and initial fieldwork".

Increased personal development emerges from the awareness of one's identity, which then fosters self-exploration and self-management, as well as integration of continued professional development (Smilde, 2012:117). The author explains further (Smilde, 2012:117):

> If teaching and learning start from [identity] and embed entrepreneurship in an integrated and relevant (experiential) way, informed by artistic values, the relevance becomes clear and the impact far-reaching.

Johnsson and Hager (2008:526) propose collaboration aimed at a dynamic curriculum, which strengthens the bond between higher education and industry to allow for the development of a broader music identity. The extent to which musicians' identities are moulded by interaction with the world around them is central to dialogue about careers in music (Carruthers, 2012:79).

#### 2.2.5.2 Community-based and experiential learning

According to Carruthers (2012:91), curricula should be designed in consultation with professionals and foster meaningful community engagement already from the first year of study. Strategies include community service learning and service-learning-like activities, as well as involving university-based research institutes in curriculum design.

Smilde (2012:117) regards experiential learning as advantageous to students and key to music programmes. Johnsson and Hager (2008:526) concur that learning is better conceptualized when it is an embodied experience constructed with others in context. Carruthers (2012:91) contributes further by postulating that whether the focus of programme is performance, theory, music education, and so on, curricula can encourage students to be relevant to communities. The author explains further as follows (Carruthers, 2012:91):

> Curricula that include opportunities for students to participate musically in the community, and to see first-hand the effects that music making and teaching have on the community, will go a long way not only towards helping students forge identity relevant to today's world, but also towards cultivating the incentives and tools to embrace lifelong learning that can help students remain relevant to tomorrow's world.

#### 2.2.5.3 Lifelong learning strategies

Careers of musicians in community involve a variety of roles, which include four central roles ─ performer, teacher, composer and leader (Smilde, 2012:102). When investigating the careers of musicians, valuable insight can be gained into the continuous nature of learning, and the fact that alumni careers continuously evolve (Bennett, 2012:75). Considering the changes, challenges and opportunities in musicians' careers, it becomes clear that musicians need to be lifelong learners to adapt to continuous change (Smilde, 2012:110).

A lifelong learning approach shifts the emphasis from ‘training’ to ‘learning’, which incorporates context, professional and personal development (Smilde, 2012:101). Smilde (2005:6) explains that lifelong learning includes a “new notion of knowledge that brings together formal, non-formal and informal teaching”. When considering career-building and lifelong learning strategies that could be employed by educators, an important consideration is that it is never a matter of simply giving ready-made recipes: it starts with considering the mind-set and identity of each individual (Smilde, 2012:114).

Needs within the workplace of musicians are contextually driven and complex (Roulston *et al.,* 2005:59-82). Different contexts require different learning approaches (Smilde, 2012:101). According to Smilde (2012:116), the learning environment of the music academy could usefully be viewed as an “artistic, generic and educational laboratory that not only reflects the workplace, but also encompasses learning in non-formal contexts with a strong commitment to quality and knowledge-ability”.

Lifelong learning is recognised as a “critical part in developing a fitness for professional practice and the persistence to emerge [from] the wilderness to [become a] professional” (Johnsson & Hager, 2008:526-527). Smilde (2012:116) advises enabling students to develop and lead creative projects in various artistic, community and cross-sectorial settings, so that new audiences are created and leadership skills are developed in varied artistic and social contexts.

#### 2.2.5.4 Leadership and informal learning opportunities

Creating a space for informal learning within formal learning settings is essential. Informal learning involves playing together, observing each other and experiencing music (Smilde, 2012:110). According to Smilde (2012:110-111), participatory learning is a core aspect of informal learning, which includes collaborative music making, for example choir, a wind band, chamber ensemble or orchestra. Secondly, peer learning is referred to as another important aspect of musicians’ informal learning. Wolkstein (2013:iii)

postulates that informal learning approaches are advantageous as a strategy for developing versatility.

Musicians learn in a reflective way, such as playing together, listening, observing and making conversation (Smilde, 2012:110). Lebler (2007:205) proposes enabling students to reach greater autonomy through reflection. Reflection on performances enabled through recordings, self-reflection through self-assessment and reflection on the work of others through peer-based assessments. Hannan (2012:149) affirms the value of informal learning combined with formal learning as a means to broaden skills of musicians. Reflecting on performances enables students to reach greater autonomy. Improvisation is another important feature of informal learning (Smilde, 2012:111). Wolkstein (2013:iii) encourages exploration, as well as improvisation, as a basis of developing creativity. Importantly, Smilde (2012:116) recommends that “leadership in a variety of contexts” be “valued and woven organically into the curriculum”.

#### 2.2.5.5 Mentorship programmes and professional development

Informal learning also occurs within the context of mentorship, and non-formal learning can be accomplished through professional development initiatives within music academics. Roulston *et al*. (2005:59-82) propose that formal and informal mentors assist music teachers in the work environment. Johnsson and Hager (2008:526-536) describe mentorship as “guided contextualization”. Conway (2008:7) and Eros (2011:65) contribute that professional development needs may change throughout the music teacher’s career. Given the complexity of the settings in which music teachers work, effective pre-service teacher education programmes need to be accompanied by appropriate mentoring and professional development (Roulston *et al*., 2005:59-82). Howe (2009:162), as well as Johnsson and Hager (2008:526-536) agree on the value of positive supportive mentorship for the development of successful music careers.

## 2.3 Tertiary music education in the South African context

In the previous section I considered knowledge about the social contexts of musicians' careers in other countries, as well as recommendations drawn from international literature towards improved music education and training within music academia. I will now briefly explore tertiary music education within South Africa and literature related to my research as a phenomenological study.

This study is situated in South Africa and includes a BMus graduate sample group from the North-West University (NWU). In South Africa, tertiary or post-secondary music training occurs mostly at colleges and universities. Universities may offer a BMus degree, BA (Music) degree, or musicians interested in combining education training with music may follow a BMus (Ed) degree. A national diploma in music may be obtained at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) or a Bachelor's degree in Music Technology (Go study, 2015).

A directory of course listings by *Strad* (Anon, 2014:32), an international publication limited to string players, provides a summary of South African universities offering BMus degrees and their curricula as follows: North-West University (NWU) and the University of Stellenbosch (US) offering Performance, Music Education, and a Joint Major. The University of Cape Town (UCT) and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) include Performance and Music Education majors. The University of South Africa (UNISA) was listed as offering a Joint Major. The University of Pretoria (UP) offered the option of Music Education, a Joint Major and Early Music.

A further constructed list of South African universities offering BMus degree programmes, which was obtained by searching university websites (see University website), included: the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Rhodes University (RU), the University of Fort Hare (UFH), the University of the Free State (UFS), the University of Kwazulu-Natal (UKZN), and the

University of Venda (UNIVEN). The duration of the BMus programmes for most of South African universities are four years, except for UNISA, which indicated three years of studies.

### 2.3.1 An international search of literature for phenomenological research

In this study based in the South African context of tertiary music education, I make use of a phenomenological research approach. Therefore, a search was undertaken for relevant phenomenological studies. When searching the literature for phenomenological research studies, I found five international studies that included music careers as the focus of research:

Firstly, there was a hermeneutic phenomenological study that incorporated a music graduate sample group entitled “The lived experience of working as musician with an injury”, which is based in Canada. The article examines the experiences of professional instrumental musicians with playing-related injuries (Guptill, 2011). Findings showed a need for educating musicians about the risk and prevention of injuries, and suggested the problem to be addressed by health-care professionals and music educators.

Secondly, an article entitled “Creating voice, creating being”, focused on the experiences of professional Jazz musicians (Walker & Burgess, 2011). The study made use of an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis research method, and was based in London in the United Kingdom. Findings showed a music career that can be financially unstable. Other aspects of being a Jazz musician included “creating an authentic voice”. Some of the skills required are “taking risks” and “a high degree of agency to overcome obstacles” when continuing on this chosen music career path.

Thirdly, a phenomenological study examined the transition of international music therapy graduates who returned home after studies in the United States (Hsiao, 2011). Findings suggest themes such as “moving from the ideal to the real world, shift from role of student to professional, confronting reality and

working through challenges, and achieving personal growth and self-transformation". Additional themes regarding cross-cultural comparisons included "confronting home culture, and redefining music therapy and professional identities within the local cultural context". Suggestions involved that music therapy programmes prepare students earlier in their education for the career transition from student to professional.

Fourthly, a PhD study by Weller (2013) entitled: "How popular music artists form an artistic and professional identity and portfolio career in emerging adulthood", consisted of popular music graduates based in the United States. This phenomenological study "sought to understand the ways popular music artists experience and make meaning of their transitions from the role of college student to roles as professional artist and independent adult". Themes that emerged included the formation of artistic identity, transitioning from college into professional life, managing financial challenges and becoming a creative artist by aligning artistic expression with life balance. Some of the challenges experienced included lack of paying work, competition, and self-doubt. Weller (2013:iii) suggests that those who began professional work prior to graduation demonstrated an advantage over those who waited.

Lastly, another interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study investigated career disruption by considering psychological issues that negatively impact an operatic career (Oakland *et al*., 2014:1-17). Findings indicated that self-sufficiency, self-esteem and identity are crucial issues. Recommendations include that training institutions give more attention to developing sustainable career goals and that more communication, and interaction should take place with professionals working within the industry.

All of the above-mentioned phenomenological studies consider the lived experiences of musicians and show a gap to be present between training and the real world of work. My study attempts to further fill in the gap between skills acquired during training and skills required in the working place.

### 2.3.2 A South African search of literature for a phenomenological study

A search of South African literature revealed no phenomenological studies; however, some literature was discovered that gives voice to music graduates in the work environment. An article by Viljoen and Pelser (1994) entitled "Career expectations and experiences of some professional musicians in a changing South Africa", is an empirical analysis that evaluates the effectiveness of tertiary music training reveals some shortcomings within the South African music curriculum. In the findings collected from a questionnaire, respondents appealed for more integrated curricula, greater practicality in training, and for more relevant course material.

In addition to the article, a book entitled "Career choice: the voices of music students", was also sourced which included essays of 29 second-year music students from the University of Pretoria (Arnott *et al.*, 2008). The essays of the students articulated the influences of choosing music as a career being related to parents and their social environment, as well as social and cultural factors (Parker, 2009:83). In the essays, students showed a keen interest in music technology, music therapy and music journalism, as well as careers in composition, performance and music research (Parker, 2009:84). The music students desired their courses to cover many music styles and traditions, and asked for more consideration of music as a business. The personal stories indicated that there is more than one path to various available careers within the field of music. The essays provide some valuable insights into South African music students' perspectives.

Lastly, a national study titled, "The career expectations of students majoring in jazz in South Africa: analysis of performance expectations, income and career plans", focused on jazz majors at all tertiary institutions (Devroop & Devroop, 2010:31-40). Findings revealed that the majority of respondents expect to be engaged in a combination of activities such as "teaching, composing and performing music in order to sustain a living". The authors questioned the degree of training and preparation of the jazz majors to be educators in

contexts such as private instruction, public or private schools, and university level. Devroop and Devroop (2010:39) suggest that it is necessary for university-level instructors to know that students expect to be engaged in teaching and that the university curriculum be restructured to better prepare performance graduates for such career expectations. According to Devroop and Devroop (2010:39) there is a need for music educators within South Africa and by preparing music graduates to meet this need helps to “foster a greater music education environment and help students cope with the rigours of the job market”.

It is apparent that most of the literature in the South African context further confirms the gap that exists between educational training of musicians and the skills required in their work environment.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The shortcomings recognised in existing literature underlined the lack of literature on the work experiences of music graduates from a South African perspective and social context. This review of the literature did not include an extensive investigation of the social context of South Africa, as the depth of such an investigation was beyond the limits of this study. Consequently, this leaves a broad scope for future research in the field.

A search for phenomenological studies on the topic revealed an absence of a relevant study based in South Africa, which indicates a clear gap in the literature for this methodological research approach. Subsequently, this study addresses the need identified in South African literature to supplement BMus programmes with the practical needs that exist in the work environment of NWU BMus graduates, and directs discussion towards more relevant and integrated course material within a South African context (Viljoen & Pelser, 1994). Finally, this dissertation contributes to international literature on the work experiences of music graduates from a South African perspective (Bennett *et al.*, 2012a).

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the design of the study and motivate why phenomenology was used as a research approach. I explain how participants were selected, how data was collected, managed and analysed. In addition, strategies of validity and reliability, as well as the researcher's role, bias and assumptions are discussed.

## 3.2 Design of study: qualitative study and philosophical assumptions

The design of this research study is qualitative. When conducting qualitative research the emphasis is on understanding the meanings people construct, "in other words, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in [the] world" (Merriam, 2009:13). As a researcher, I am interested in understanding the meaning of BMus studies for early career graduates.

Qualitative researchers study a phenomenon in its natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:3); within this study the context is the real world of work for NWU BMus graduates. The reader will find the following characteristics of qualitative research present within the design of this research study, as discussed by Merriam (2009:19) and summarised by the researcher:

- A focus on understanding the meaning of experience;
- Researcher as primary instrument in data collection and analysis;
- An inductive process;
- A richly descriptive end product; and
- An emergent and flexible design.

The philosophical assumption of the study is interpretive, which is a term interchangeably used with social constructivism (Merriam, 2009:8-9). In this

research, I seek to understand the world in which BMus graduates live and work within their early careers. The paradigm is that the nature of reality, or ontology, is multiple as seen through many views (Creswell, 2013:21), or rather the multiple views of the BMus graduates within this study. Creswell (2013:24) explains that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences. Hence, meanings are varied and multiple and this leads to the investigation of a complexity of views.

I, as researcher, report the different perspectives of the BMus graduates and, therefore, rely on quotes as evidence from the participants who formed part of the study. The nature of knowledge, or epistemology, of this research is based on subjective evidence from the BMus graduates. It is important to understand that subjective meanings are constructed by interaction with others, historical, as well as cultural norms in operation within the lives of individuals (Creswell, 2013:25). It can thus be assumed that BMus graduates, who are the participants in this study, as well as the researcher, have subjective views of their experiences with the phenomenon.

## 3.3 Research approach: phenomenology

Merriam (2009:24) explains that “phenomenology is both a twentieth-century school of philosophy associated with Husserl (1970)” which “had an impact on all qualitative research”, and also “a type of qualitative research with its own focus and methodological strategies” (Merriam, 2009:27). In this section, I will discuss phenomenology as research approach considered appropriate for this qualitative inquiry.

Creswell (2013:76), Merriam (2009:24) and Van Manen (1990:9) discuss phenomenological research as the study of lived experience. Lester (1999:1) offers the view that a phenomenological inquiry is a useful approach to understand subjective experience, as a means to gain insight into people’s motivations and actions, and to cut through “the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom.” Butler-Kisber (2010:52) contributes

that phenomenological research focuses on revealing “some common features of shared understandings across experiences.”

Phenomenology was considered to be the appropriate approach for this study, since I am interested in generating an understanding of shared experiences of early career NWU BMus graduates in the workplace, and gain a deeper understanding of the features of this phenomenon. Butler-Kisber (2010:52) states that phenomenological inquiry involves (1) acknowledging researcher assumptions, and (2) focuses on understanding experience from the perspectives of participants.

Creswell (2013:80) remarks that when conducting phenomenological research it is required of researchers to state their assumptions and biases, and ‘bracket’ these in order to strive towards understanding the essence of the lived experiences of others. The notion of ‘bracketing’, also known as the ‘epoche’ originated as one of Husserl’s concepts, which is discussed by Moustakas (1994:85-90) as a major process of phenomenological research. Moustakas (1994:101) explains the purpose of the procedure for the researcher:

> One learns to see naively and freshly again, to value conscious experience, to respect the evidence of one’s senses, and to move toward an intersubjective knowing of things, people, and everyday experiences.

Due to criticism regarding the impossibility of “achieving a state of pure consciousness” (Conklin, 2007:275-287), I have followed Butler-Kisber’s (2010:60) recommendation for a more realistic phenomenological procedure which involves: (1) acknowledging (see Addendum C for Vignette: My work experience as early career BMus graduate), (2) explaining (see section 3.8 Researcher’s role, bias and assumptions), and (3) monitoring my presuppositions and biases during the research process.

## 3.4 Selection of participants

When conducting phenomenological research individuals who have lived experience with the phenomenon and are willing to participate form part of the study (Creswell, 2013:150). The participants are, therefore, purposefully selected (Merriam, 2009:16). Individuals who graduated with a BMus degree were an essential criterion for participant selection. A sample group was decided on from the North-West University (NWU), as this was a convenient geographical location for the researcher, and because this South African university was interested in obtaining feedback from alumni as a means of informing an internal and external programme evaluation assessing the viability of BMus graduate employability within the community and workplace, as well as the industry and labour market.

The sample was limited to BMus graduates who were in their final year of study between 2005 and 2010, since this would allow for approximately five to ten years of experience in the labour market. The reason for this decision was to allow for a fuller encounter of the BMus graduates with the community, industry and workplace. An additional criterion for the study was to provide alumni feedback to inform the music curriculum. Consequently, BMus graduates selected for the study did not extend beyond ten years back in time.

The criterion did not necessarily include five to ten years' work experience, since BMus graduates with experiences of unemployment, or continued studies, or additional studies were not excluded from the sample group, as such experiences were considered relevant to the meaning ascribed to BMus studies by alumni. In addition, participants were also included in the study whether they were employed within South Africa or based overseas, because it was regarded as applicable to understand how the BMus graduates' geographical location was related to their work experiences in the labour market, the goal of the research being to provide valuable insight into today's workplace experiences of BMus graduates.

### 3.4.1 Participants

After the Research Committee of the School of Music of the North-West University (NWU) and the NWU Ethics Committee office had approved this study, a list of BMus graduates from the year 2005 to 2010 were requested from NWU Records Management and Administration office. The request was approved subject to the researcher adhering to the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) law. Strict regulation included that contact information of BMus graduates be used only for the purposes of this research study. The list included 38 graduates. All the participants on the list were contacted. Participants who agreed to participate and signed consent forms formed part of the study (see Addendum A and B for example of consent forms).

The following list describes the fourteen participants who formed part of the study (see Table 1: List of Participants) the table includes a summary of the participants' gender, main subjects taken during final year of BMus studies, and the context, conditions, circumstances related to their music career path, as well as their perceptions of income sustainability, further education undertaken and future career ideals. Participants were given the opportunity to select their own *noms de plumes* to protect their identity within the study. In some instances participants selected the same name, and it then became necessary for the researcher to assign names to participants, which were then used in the following list of participants:

**Table 1: List of Participants**

| Name | Gender | Majors | Context | Conditions | Circumstances | Income sustainability | Further education | Future career desires |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gillian** | Female | Piano methodology, Music education | Employed at music studio abroad[2] | Teach piano and voice individual lessons, Kindermusik group music classes | Teaching some special needs children among others | Sustainable and satisfactory | Kindermusik licence | Opening own music studio |
| **Tanya** | Female | Piano methodology, Piano performance | Own music studio, Freelance pianist | Freelance piano accompaniment, teaching individual lessons | Accompany choir and individuals, teaching piano and music theory lessons. | Unstable | MMus in progress | Studying PGCE |
| | | | Employed at music studio | Individual lessons | Teaching piano lessons. | Dissatisfactory | | |
| | | | Full-time position at public school | Classroom music teacher, Individual lessons | Teaching subject music to Grade 8 and 9. Teaching piano lessons. | Sustainable and satisfactory | | |
| **Morgan** | Female | Woodwind, Music theory, Research | Part-time contractor at private school | Individual lessons | Teaching voice lessons, elementary music theory and aural training. | Unstable and unsustainable | Completed MMus | |
| **Jane** | Female | Music theory, Music Education | Locum music teacher at public school | Teaching group classes | Teaching Grade 9 arts and culture and Grade 8-12 subject music. | Temporary | Completed MMus | PhD |
| | | | Lecturer at FET College | Teaching group classes | Teaches music business, keyboard skills, music theory or jazz theory, academic writing, music culture, create and arrange modules | Sustainable and satisfactory | | |
| | | | Full-time (permanent) | Classroom teacher, conducting, band | Grades 6 and 7 class music, Grades 8 and 9 | Sustainable and | | |

[2] Participant based in another country.

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | departmental position at private school | directing, individual lessons | arts and culture, and Grades 10-12 subject music. Conducts school orchestras, directs marimba bands, conducts a cappella choir, teaching saxophone and piano beginner lessons | satisfactory | | |
| **Barry** | Male | Woodwind performance, Bassoon methodology | Employed as industrial engineering consultant | Part-time orchestral work | Playing Bassoon | Orchestral music gigs additional income | Industrial Engineering | Performing with others |
| **Mary** | Female | Piano methodology, Piano Performance, and Music Theory | Part-time employment at public school, Freelance piano accompaniment | Extra-curricular music centre teaching individual lessons and music theory classes | Teaches individual piano lessons beginner to Grade 8 and music theory UNISA and Royal Schools Grades 4,5,6. Fund-raising and organising concerts. | Unsustainable | Completed MMus and PGCE | Lecturer at music department of university, teaching music students, accompani-ment and ensemble playing. |
| | | | University music lecturer at faculty of education | Teaching general education subject music | Foundation phase students up to senior and FET phase students. | Sustainable and satisfactory | DMus in progress | |
| **Mia** | Female | Piano Performance, Piano methodology | Receptionist at Hotel, and Freelance pianist in London (UK) | | | Sustainable | MMus in progress | Obtaining a PGCE and being involved with tertiary music education. |
| | | | Business consultant at Financial company, Freelance piano accompaniment | | Accompanying singers at concerts | Sustainable | | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Full-time employment at public school | Classroom music teacher | Teaching subject music for Grades 10-12, Music director for music events at school, hosting events, working with professional artists, accompanist for choirs | Sustainable and satisfactory | | |
| | | | Music store, employed by performing artist and freelance | Key Accounts Manager, Freelance pianist. Piano accompaniment for famous singer | Handling client relationships and marketing, sheet music and instruments. Piano accompaniment and performance | Sustainable | | |
| **Lucy** | Female | Music theory, Piano pedagogy | Assistant at university | Lecturer assistant and worked in community project at university | Tutorials and assistantships, helping out with the magazine, helping out with different journals, helping out with classes | Working during BMus studies and afterwards | Completed MMus<br><br>PhD in progress | Wishes to continue working at the university. |
| | | | Lecturer at University | Music education and aural lecturer. Run community project, teaching general musicianship, involved with school concert productions, and project used to provide BMus students with teaching experience. Teach master students. Teach special | Teaches 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year students, and teaching practice for 4th years. Aural training for 1st and 2nd-year BMus students. Teaches pre-school children, recorder ensemble, recycle band ensemble. Teaching teachers of the community project. | Sustainable and satisfactory | | |

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| | | | | needs children. | | | | |
| **Sarah** | Female | Woodwind performance, Flute pedagogy | Part-time employment at more than one school | Individual lessons | Teaching flute and music theory, and few beginner piano students. Also teaching recorder | Unsteady income, although sustainable, and satisfactory. Travel bothersome | | Performing in ensembles. Practicing and performing. Taking a sabbatical to rethink teaching approaches and to work in new things related to music. |
| | | | Freelance wedding and function gigs, own ensemble (self-employed) and playing for other ensembles (employed) | Background music performance | Playing flute | Additional income, income vary with seasons | | |
| | | | Freelance orchestral gigs at theatre | Concerts | Playing flute | Additional income | | |
| | | | Full-time departmental position at private school | Individual flute lessons, Classroom music teaching, directing flute ensembles | Teaching the fife and flute, teaching Grades 5 to 7 class music, and flute teacher, 1 senior and 2 junior flute ensembles. | Sustainable and satisfactory | PGCE in progress | |
| **Sally** | Female | Piano performance, Piano pedagogy | Church | Minister, music director of worship band and worship school, teach individual lessons and music theory lessons. | Administration, teaches band instruments, and piano lessons. Organises productions. Wrote a music theory book for church, and presents book to worship band members and students in worship school. | Sustainable and satisfactory | Bible studies at Christian Church Institute | Recording albums, national worship school |
| **Kate** | Female | Voice, Voice | Part-time | Individual lessons, | Teaching singing and | Employment | Completed | Being |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | pedagogy | employment at public school | conductor | choir conducting | during BMus studies | MMus | successful |
| | | | Lecturer at music department of university | Individual lessons | Teaching singing | Employment during Master's | | |
| | | | Part-time employment at more than one school | Individual lessons | Teaching singing | Sustainable, travelling was bothersome | | |
| | | | Full-time departmental position at private school | Individual lessons, and classroom music teacher | Teaching singing, and teaching subject music | Sustainable and satisfactory | | |
| **Nellie** | Female | Music education, Voice methodology | Full-time (permanent) position at public school | Head of music department, music subject, choir conducting and band directing | Teach class music and music appreciation Grade 8-12, conduct school choir, chamber choir and direct music ensembles | Sustainable and satisfactory | Completed PGCE | Master's degree |
| **Kelly** | Female | Piano and piano pedagogy | Employed at music centre of public school<br><br>Assistant at university<br><br>Orchestra manager<br><br>Part-time lecturer at university | Working as music teacher, teaching piano, classical guitar, electric guitar, bass guitar, acoustic guitar, popular music, music theory, music history and harmony, preparing students for external examinations as well as the practical component of subject music | General administrator and arts manager responsible for organising and marketing music concerts, compiling and design of concert programmes and general administration. Managing orchestra responsibility of liaison between the conductor, members of the orchestra and their parents. Also, doing marketing and fundraising for the orchestra as well as performing administrative | Dissatisfactory due to no future prospects, benefits or promotion. | Completed PGCE, Completed MMUS, Completed Post graduate certificate in management | To be busy with professional music activities, teaching at tertiary institution only, earning an income that reflects skill level |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | (Grades 10-12). Also arranging music, teaching ensemble and performing with students. | duties and organising of performances and rehearsals. Teaching music notation and theory to undergraduate students. Responsibilities included preparation, teaching and assessment. | | | |
| | | | Part-time lecturer at university<br><br>Self-employed working at a school | | Teaching Afrikaans children's literature, communication and music education. Responsibilities include preparation, teaching, assessment and examining. Also, study leader to honours students. | | | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Steve** | Male | Piano performance, Piano methodology | Conductor of children's choir, private individual piano lessons Financial Manager at clothing manufacturing company. Church organist, Freelance accompanist | Choir conducting over weekend (resigned from choir conductor position), had few private students not enough time with financial management position | Works from 8am to 4pm, and rest of the day is music. Freelance and church organist position additional income. | Sustainable and satisfactory | MMus in performance in USA (not completed), BCom Financial Management | Creating a musical society in local area, whilst continuing employment as Financial manager. Create performance opportunities for learners, teachers, and personal platform to perform for smaller audiences. Teaching kids about music. |

## 3.5 Data-collection method: Interviews

Open-ended interviews generated the field texts of participants' experiences for this research study (see attached CD for interview transcripts). Interviews in phenomenological research are in-depth, and questions are open-ended in order to bring out accounts of the experience, descriptions and explanations (Butler-Kisber, 2010:52-53).

Interviews were chosen as data-collection method, because behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them cannot be observed (Merriam, 2009:88). Language is the means by which we understand others, for this reason interviews are a frequently used method for data collection within phenomenological inquiry (Butler-Kisber, 2010:52).

An interview allows the researcher to enter into the interviewee's perspective – to find what is "in and on someone else's mind" (Patton, 2002:341). Interviews can also be described as a conversation with a purpose, in other words a conversation focused on questions related to the research study (Dexter, 1970:136; DeMarrais 2004:55). When conducting a phenomenological interview the aim is to uncover the essence of the individual's experience (Merriam, 2009:93).

The open-ended interview questions related to (1) what the participants have experienced (textural description), and the (2) context or situations that have typically influenced or affected their experience with the phenomenon (structural description) (Creswell 2013:60). The focus is on the "deep, lived meanings that events have for individuals", and the assumption is "that these meanings guide actions and interactions" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006:105).

### 3.5.1. Semi-structured interviews

Merriam (2009:89) suggests that the unstructured interview be used when the researcher does not know enough about the phenomenon to ask relevant

questions, or has an aim of learning from the interview to formulate questions for later interviews. The review of the literature (see Chapter 2: Literature Review) assisted in informing and focusing interview questions, and because I am a BMus graduate with seven years' experience in the labour market the phenomenon was not completely unfamiliar. For this reason, a semi-structured type of interview (see Table 2: Interview guide) was incorporated instead of an unstructured interview.

Interview questions were used flexibly, however, a specific data was required from all participants. The largest part of the interview was guided by the list of questions or issues to be explored. Wording and the order of questions were decided on the spot, which allowed the researcher to respond within the situation, according to worldview of respondents, as well as to new ideas on the topic (Merriam, 2009:90). The interview questions were open-ended in order to yield descriptive data (Merriam, 2009:99).

### 3.5.2. Procedures of data collection

The BMus graduates were contacted by making use of a social media website called Facebook and informed about the study. It was then asked whether they would be interested in participating in the study. If they were willing, an email was sent out to them containing two consent forms (see Addendum B and C). The email also had a link to a Google form that contained a structured question form to obtain background information from each participant, such as gender, year of birth, main instruments, majors, and so forth.

The Google form was used to improve convenience of participants submitting background information. This format proved useful to the researcher as it automatically captured and saved data into a Google spread sheet document on my Google drive, which is a cloud storage service that immediately backed up the data online. Each time a participant filled in the form the document automatically updated with the new information. Thus providing the researcher with an updated list of all participants and their details in an easy to read and compare format.

Interviews were conducted making use of online video and audio calls that utilised Skype software. The calls were recorded with Call Recorder plug-in software, which saves the video files automatically onto the computer hard-drive and these were afterwards copied into my Google drive for safe storage. Video recordings, instead of audio recordings, became the preferred way to collect data for this study as it allowed the capture of verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Unfortunately, video recordings had not been possible in all instances, since the Internet connection was not always good enough for visuals. In two instances participants submitted a written reply to interview questions, as this method of response was preferred.

Before an interview was conducted the participant was reminded that the interview would be video or audio-recorded, in addition to being informed by the consent forms. The video recordings were not intrusive as participants were familiar with the nature of online video or audio calls. Furthermore, this was a very cost-effective way to conduct interviews, as the NWU BMus graduates were dispersed throughout South Africa and one of the participants was located in an overseas country.

Digital media transcription software, called InqScribe, was used to transcribe all the interviews. I preferred this software due to its compatibility with the format of the video files. The video files were imported into the software and the playback device was used to reduce playback speed. Shortcut keys were also utilised to improve convenience of the manual interview transcription process for the researcher (see attached CD for interview transcripts).

### 3.5.3 Interview questions

The purpose of the study was revisited throughout the interviewing process, data was read, and reread, and notes were made to comment on data. Notes included suggestions about what to ask in the next round of data collection. Data from each new interview was also compared to the previous interview, and used to inform the next interview (Merriam, 2009:170). The interview

questions were developed based on phenomenological questions recommended by Moustakas (1994:95):

- What happened?
- How did you feel?
- What did you think?

These questions were restructured with a focus on the research questions specific to this research study:

1. What happened after graduating with your BMus degree?
2. How do you feel about the relevance and applicability of your BMus studies in the work environment?
3. What do you think about the role your BMus degree has played in your ability to earn a sustainable income?

An interview guide, or list of questions intended to be asked in the interview, was then developed based on types of questions suggested by Patton (2002:348-351), discussed by Merriam (2009:96-97) as examples of good questions that stimulate participant response. The following types of interview questions are directly quoted from Merriam (2009:96-97):

- *Experience and behaviour questions* – questions that get at the things a person does or did, his or her behaviours, actions, and activities.
- *Opinion and value questions* – here the researcher is interested in a person's beliefs or opinions, what he or she thinks about something.
- *Feeling questions* – questions that "tap the affective dimension of human life".
- *Knowledge questions* – these questions elicit a participant's actual factual knowledge about a situation.
- *Sensory questions* – similar experience and behaviour questions but try to elicit more specific data about what is or was seen, heard, touched, and so forth.
- *Background/demographic questions* – all interviews contain questions that refer to the particular demographics of the person being interviewed as relevant to the research study.

Keeping these questions in mind the following open-ended, semi-structured questions were formulated as seen in Table 2: Interview guide, which was adapted to the natural flow of participants' response during interviews.

**Table 2: Interview guide**

| *No.* | **Lead Questions** | **Type of question** |
|---|---|---|
| *1.* | Could you tell me a little about where you find yourself at the moment regarding employment? | *Background/demographic questions* |
| *2.* | What was your reason for studying a BMus degree? | *Background/demographic questions* |
| *3.* | What happened after graduating with your BMus degree up until this point? | *Background/demographic questions* |
| *4.* | What factors influenced your work position (or location) changes along the way? | *Experience and behaviour questions* |
| *5.* | What were your reasons for further studies? (When applicable) | *Experience and behaviour questions* |
| *6.* | How have you experienced the demands for skills, knowledge and competencies when looking for work? | *Sensory questions* |
| *7.* | If you think of your story, by what process did you obtain employment for each of your work appointments? | *Experience and behaviour questions* |
| *8.* | Could you tell me, in detail, about each one of the workplace experiences, what were and are your duties and responsibilities? | *Experience and behaviour questions* |
| *9.* | What has been your experience with performance in the work environment? | *Experience and behaviour questions* |
| *10.* | What were your main subjects or majors during your BMus studies? | *Background/demographic questions* |
| *11.* | How do you feel about the relevance and applicability of your BMus studies within the work environment? | *Opinion and value questions* |
| *12.* | How have you attained knowledge, skills and competencies needed in your work environment that was not learned during your BMus studies? | *Experience and behaviour questions* |
| *13.* | What are your current desires for your career path? | *Background/demographic questions* |
| *14.* | What music education and training, or professional training would be valuable when you think about your workplace experiences? | *Knowledge questions* |
| *15.* | What do you think about the role your | *Knowledge questions* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | BMus degree has played in your ability to earn a sustainable income throughout your career up until this point? | |
| *16.* | How would you describe your ideal BMus study programme? | *Ideal position question* |
| *17.* | What career guidance and knowledge do you feel would have benefited you during your BMus studies? | *Feeling questions* |
| *18.* | Do you feel you have shared all that you would like with regards to the meaning your BMus studies has had for you? | *Feeling questions* |

Merriam (2009:95) explains that the key to getting good data is to ask good questions and that asking good questions takes some practice. Different types of questions generate different types of information and questions asked depend on the focus of the study (Merriam, 2009:95). The questions from the interview guide allowed participants to share their knowledge, opinions, and experiences (Merriam, 2009:231). In addition, when appropriate, interview questions were incorporated, informed by previous literature into some opinion and value questions to get alumni feedback on some issues from South African perspective. An ideal position question was also incorporated, Merriam (2009:98) explains that such a question reveals “both the positive and negative or shortcomings” of a programme. I had decided such a question would be appropriate as it would reveal what participants like and would not want changed about the BMus programme, as well as aspects that would improve the programme from the perspective of the BMus graduate.

## 3.6 Data analysis

Creswell (2008:184) summarises data analysis within phenomenological research by explaining that it involves “significant statements, the generation of meaning units and the development of an essence description”. Phenomenological research has some structured methods for data analysis, some of which include Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method discussed by Moustakas (1994), Riemen (1986), Colaizzi (1978), Giorgi (2009) and Van Manen (1990) (Creswell, 2013:193). Butler-Kisber (2010:51) mentions various types of phenomenology, such as transcendental phenomenology, existential

phenomenology, psychological phenomenology, and hermeneutic phenomenology.

Laverty (2003:1-27) distinguishes between phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology. Butler-Kisber (2010:51) clarifies that the difference between phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology is “the move beyond description to interpretation where the researcher actively takes a role in explaining participant meanings”. Creswell (2013:80) agrees that hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry is not only a description of the participants’ view, but also that the researcher interprets the meaning of the lived experiences.

Sloan and Bowe (2014:1291) grouped phenomenological research into two types, namely descriptive and interpretive phenomenology. Creswell (2013:80) explains that in descriptive phenomenological inquiry the focus is less on the interpretations and more on the description of the experiences of the participants. This study falls into the category of descriptive phenomenology, since my key concern, as researcher is to understand the meaning of BMus studies from the participants’ perspectives (Merriam, 2009:14). Hawkins (1988:63) discusses adopting the ability to see the world through the eyes of another person, to stand in their shoes, to be empathic, and to take an imaginative and intuitive leap into their world.

### 3.6.1 Procedures of data management and analysis

Data analysis began during the data-collection process. Merriam (2009:171) advises that the “preferred way to analyse data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection” to avoid being overwhelmed by large volumes of data. Likewise, Lichtman (2013:247) recommends a circular model of gathering and analysing during data collection (see Figure 5).

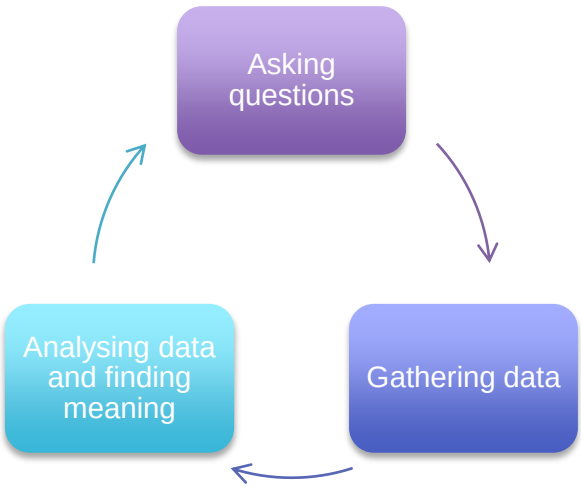


Figure 5: A circular model of data analysis (Lichtman, 2013:255)

Lichtman (2013:246) explains that a "systematic approach to analysis and interpretation brings order and understanding" to research. Therefore, after transcribing each interview I copied the transcribed interview into a word processor, Microsoft Word, which I modified in order to make margin notes. I then read through the interview line by line and wrote descriptive codes – a summary of what is contained in the data segment within the margin areas. Immediately thereafter, I wrote a summary memo about what had been learned from the interview as a whole.

A folder was created for each participant after every interview on my laptop and saved on my Google drive, which meant that data was immediately backed up. Thereby, each participant had a folder that contained all the data collected from that participant, which included signed consent forms, interview video or audio files, the transcribed interview with margin notes and an informal summary memo, and so on.

Lichtman (2013:248) reminds that all data is gathered, "in order to answer the research questions of the study". Lichtman (2013:250) asserts that the goal of the researcher is to take a large amount of data without clear meaning, and to interact with it in such a away that what was gathered makes sense. Hereby, data analysis within this study involved a process of analysing the words of participants, and moving from coding initial data through to the identification of

important concepts or themes – a process that involves organising and categorising (Lichtman, 2013:254).

Codes emerged from reading and thinking about the text material; similar data segments or quotes were collected and provided with a common meaning label (sub-category) (Friese, 2014:159). The codes assigned to quotes were concerned with the topic or content of the responses of the participants (Lichtman, 2013:243-244). I made use of the following model, which I adapted from Saldana (2009:12) known as “a streamlined codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry”. The model was used as a guideline to move “from codes to categories to concepts” (Saldana, 2009:12; Lichtman, 2013:252):

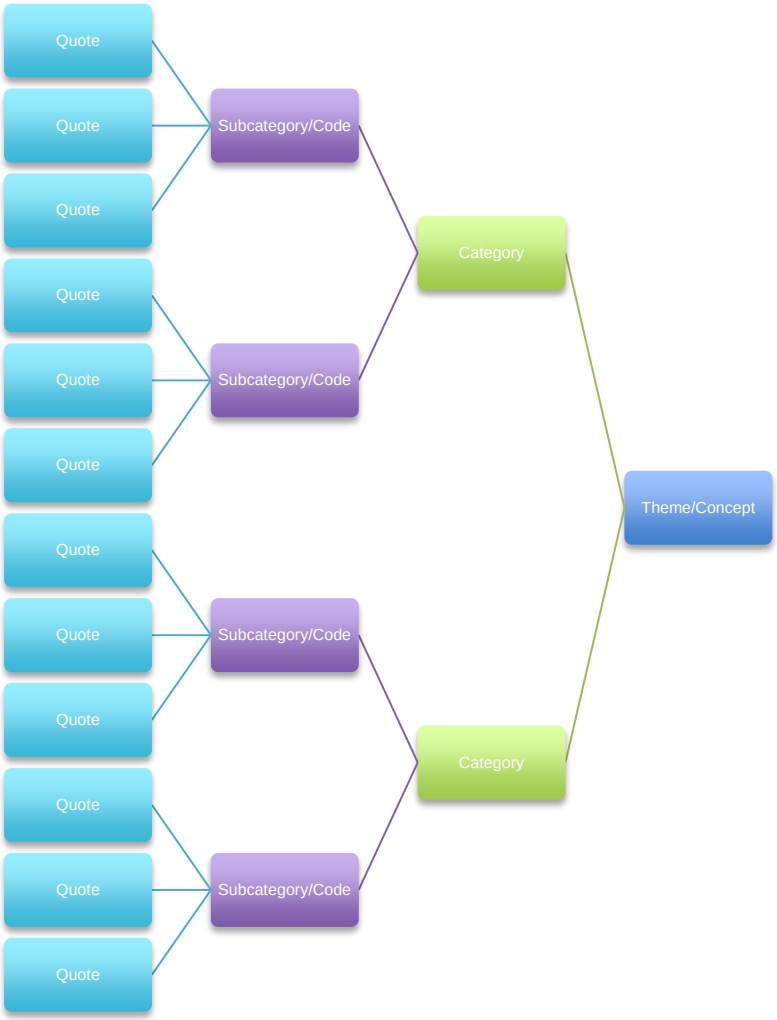


Figure 6: Data analysis process (Saldana, 2009:12; Lichtman, 2013:252)

I made use of ATLAS.ti, computer-assisted qualitative data-analysis software (CAQDAS), as a digital reader and data management tool. A word processor, Microsoft Word, was used to collect and organise similar quotes into sub-categories and categories, and a brainstorming session with intellectuals, as well as an intense process of conceptual level thinking facilitated arrival at themes or concepts. Friese (2014:159) maintains that conceptual meaning labels (sub-category, category and concept) unite data segments with similar content, and fulfil the criteria of being “a properly sized container where all those things are collected that have something in common and that are in some ways different from others”.

Saldana (2009:29) mentions that creativity, the ability to think “visually, to think in metaphors, and to think in as many ways possible to approach a problem” is essential to the process of data collection, data analysis, up until writing the final report. During the data-analysis process an extensive vocabulary, as well as dictionary and thesaurus became useful reference tools, including common sense and logical thinking to ensure accurate conceptual meaning labels of sub-categories, categories and concepts. Finally, the last step in the process was to select quotes as supportive evidence for the concepts developed in order to write the final report (see Chapter 4: Findings Chapter).

## 3.7 Validity, reliability and ethics

Validity, reliability and ethics were important concerns within this study. The goal of the research has been to contribute knowledge to the field that is trustworthy and honest. Validity, or the extent to which research findings are credible within this study, is addressed by applying some of the strategies promoting validity described by Merriam (2009:229-234):

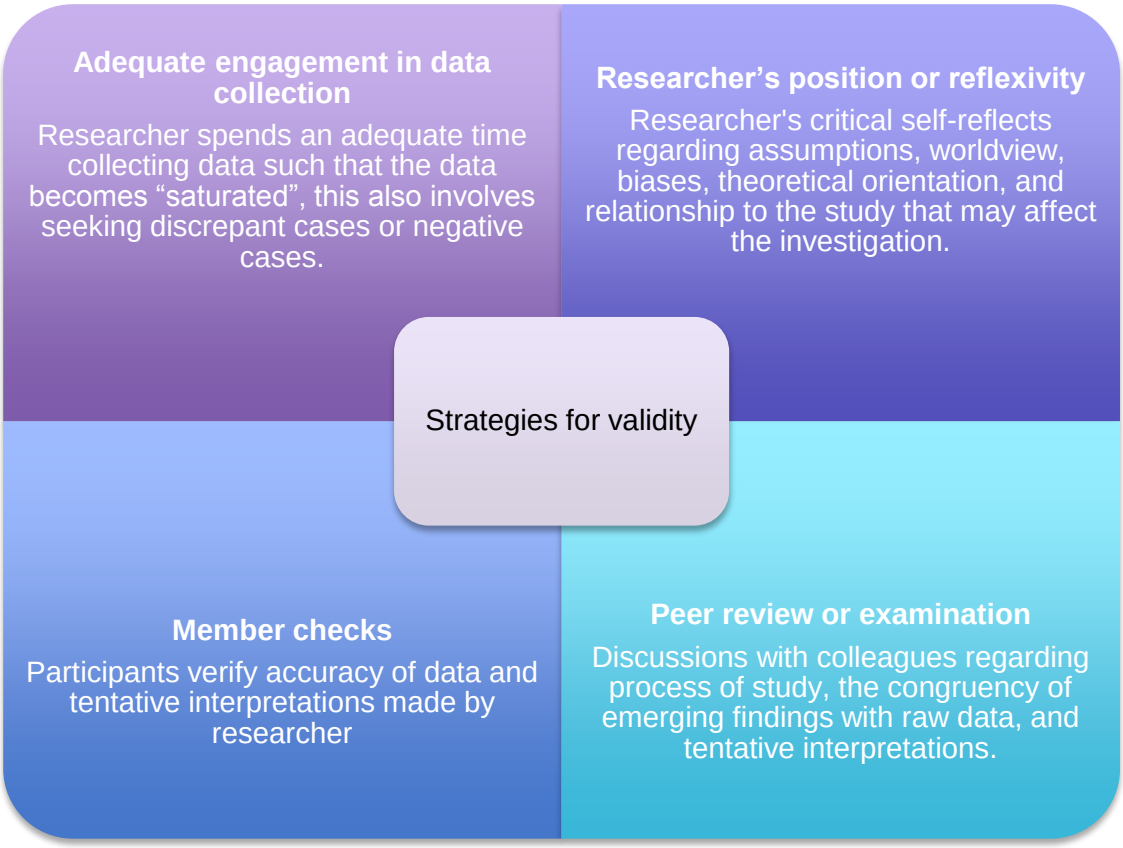


Figure 7: Strategies for validity

- **Adequate engagement in data collection:** In this study, data collection was influenced by time and availability of participants for interviews (Lichtman, 2013:261). The intention being to conduct interviews until a point of data saturation is reached where no new information is forthcoming (Merriam, 2009:80). Creswell (2013:78) mentions that within a phenomenological research study, the sample group varies in size "from three to four individuals to ten to fifteen". This study included fourteen participants.

- **Researcher's position or reflexivity:** My position or reflexivity, as researcher, can be seen in the next section (see section 3.8. Researcher's role, bias and assumptions).

- **Member checks:** Validation by participants or member checks formed part of the end process of this research by which participants affirmed

> the formulated descriptions made by the researcher to ascertain the accuracy of findings (Polkinghorne, 1989:53).

- **Peer review:** Two supervisors monitored this study and the final process undertaken is an examination before publication.

In this study “aspects of reliability, or the extent to which there is consistency in findings” are attended to by explaining (1) “the assumptions and theory underlying the study” (2) by leaving an “audit trail” which can be seen within this chapter, (3) and “describing in detail how the study was conducted and findings derived” from data (Merriam, 2009:234). Furthermore, the extent to which “findings can be generalized or transferred to other situations” is facilitated by “rich, thick descriptions” (Merriam, 2009:234).

According to Merriam (2009:234), “trustworthiness of a qualitative study also depends on the credibility of the researcher”. Therefore, I, as researcher, had to remain aware of the ethical issues present in the process of conducting a qualitative research study. Formal ethical issues included an informed consent procedure with participants (see Addendum A and B) and obtaining permission from the music department research committee, as well as the Ethics Committee office of the North-West University (NWU) (Reference number NWU-00161-16-A7) to proceed with this research. Some of the informal ethical considerations expected of a researcher include being meticulously ethical and honest. Saldana (2009:29) explains:

> You need to be rigorously ethical with your participants and treat them with respect; rigorously ethical with your data and not ignore or delete those seemingly problematic passages of text; and rigorously ethical with your analysis by maintaining a sense of scholarly integrity and working hard toward the final outcomes.

## 3.8 Researcher’s role, bias and assumptions

Merriam (2009:15) explains that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, and that the human instrument has biases that

may impact the study. Instead of eliminating biases, it is important for researchers to be aware of their own subjectivities and remain conscious of its influence during collection and analysis of data. Creswell (2013:80) recommends that the investigator sets aside his/her experiences, as much as possible, in order to take a fresh perspective towards the phenomenon.

In the following section I will explain further biases and assumptions I have as a researcher by providing my personal thoughts regarding an experience I had with music studies at a Finnish university that I had recognised as valuable music and education training from a work perspective. Some of these experiences described in the following section I identified as providing some practical examples for the implementation of concepts discussed as learning environment suggestions in Chapter 2: Literature review, in section 2.2.5, such as integrating a music identity of both teacher and performer within the music curriculum, providing informal learning and leadership opportunities, experiential and community-based learning, as well as the incorporation of mentorship. In addition, the music-learning environment experienced at the Finnish university was supportive towards developing a positive self-esteem or self-image within the music students:

During my first year of study as MMus student, I had participated in an exchange programme with a Finnish university. During the five-month stay in Finland I participated in various music classes and activities; some of which included “practice” choir and orchestra conducting classes, playing cello in the university orchestra, piano and singing lessons, as well as Finnish folk music, band instruments, music pedagogy and folk music classes. In a conversation with the head of the Music Department at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland, he mentioned that the music department was recognised as a teaching institution, and specialised in nurturing music educators. At the time I did not understand what he meant by saying this, but after participating in the mentioned classes and by the end of my visit to Finland I truly began to understand what he had meant with this statement.

The classes I attended were musically engaging, fun, involved numerous opportunities for music making and had an open invite for participation. Lecturers at the university were caring and showed much interest in their students – even on a personal level. There were no extreme formalities among lecturers and students; instead, the students were encouraged to share their knowledge and the lecturer was eager to gain insight from the knowledge and experiences of the students.

The interactions and engagement at the Finnish university were open to understanding and learning from world cultures. In addition, there was a strong emphasis on ethnomusicology, and incorporating folk and world music into the music education classroom. Music students were also encouraged to understand the world in consideration of social or cultural context, and not to limit musical understanding to the classical music genre.

My experiences in the group music activities and all the teaching I had received were very practical and involved plenty of informal learning opportunities. For example, in the piano lessons the teacher gave me pieces to learn that were meant to accompany one of the other exchange students for singing lessons. The result was an immediate platform for accompaniment and collaboration. The attitude at the University of Jyväskylä was that you can learn anything at any time without the need of any prior background. Both mastery of main instruments and learning multiple instruments had been prioritized in various contexts of formal and informal learning.

In band classes, we were taught to play guitar, drums, bass, and keyboard. In this instance, one of the Finnish students was assigned to teach us as part of his training. We were a group of four exchange students in the band class. The Finnish student had to take us from scratch, gather lesson content, present lesson content, and teach us the basics on the different instruments. We were also introduced to the relevant music technology aspects of playing the band instruments. At the end of the term, the lecturer of the student came to observe how we as learners had progressed and we performed what we had learned to the lecturer. The lecturer showed his approval of our progress

and gave acknowledgement to the Finnish student on his work with us. In my opinion, this is an example of an effective method to teach a music student what it would be like to teach learners in the workplace, to make use of a mentorship approach, hands-on learning and provide practical feedback to the music student. The student also then benefits from taking on the role of the teacher and develops leadership skills essential to the work environment.

In the folk music classes we spent the term practising for a concert, which was presented to a Finnish audience in a community hall. What I found intriguing about the experience was its relevance: we were playing and practising for a concert that would be presented to the community. It was also valuable to go out to perform in a community space as this allowed me to became more familiar with surroundings and Finnish audiences. In my opinion, this allowed the music students to reach a broader audience. In the folk music classes we were also given opportunities to improvise, and all members of the ensemble were given a chance to play solos that developed leadership skills.

After the community concert, the folk music classes continued with a further introduction to various world music instruments and then as part of the music curriculum we became actively involved in making music instruments from easily and cheaply accessible materials. I recognized this as a valuable experience, because of my encounter in the work environment as a group classroom music teacher where music instruments and resources were not always readily available, and where making musical instruments is a very useful skill. The exposure to making the instruments allowed for a very practical demonstration of how easy it was to engage in the act of making musical instruments. The opportunity was also utilised to teach students further aspects such as instrument groups, social, cultural, and historical contexts of the instruments, instrument development, and the effects of change in sound with change in construction. This experience enhanced the learning process and improved the relevance of the theoretical component of the course. Learning felt effortless as it was complemented by theoretical, as well as experiential knowledge.

In the Folk music classes, students were encouraged to research local Finnish artists and played on traditional Finnish folk musical instruments, which really assisted in gaining familiarity with music traditions within the country. Events on the community calendar were also prioritised and the music curriculum supported such events, reminding students to be relevant to their surrounding community. For example, while I was in Finland, the national composer Sibelius was being celebrated. Many of the students had an item of the composer's work to perform, which resulted in a tribute concert showcasing various ensembles performing to a Finnish audience. The concert had been advertised to the community as a cultural activity, which I experienced as being very educational to the community. It was also my feeling that the variety of different music ensembles made the concert more interesting to the audience.

In the "practice" choir and orchestra, students were taught conducting skills, while the other students eagerly volunteered to participate as performers. The conducting lecturer was always present to guide, mentor and provide instruction to the conducting students, while the other students benefited from the additional performance and music-making opportunities. At the end of term, the outcome was a concert with the various conductors leading the orchestral ensemble and choir in a lunch-hour performance to Finnish students at the cafeteria hall.

The opportunities for performance and music making were plentiful, which made music learning easy and fun. There were numerous choirs that could be joined for people from all musical backgrounds, which meant no one was excluded from music-making opportunities if they had a desire to participate. I had also attended an international student choir. We sang songs from around the world making use of an aural learning approach. This experience helped me realise the possibilities of taking music to the people of a community, since the aural approach used was accessible to anyone interested in singing within a choir and did not require musical background.

In summary, my bias and assumptions are that tertiary music education should be relevant to the real world of work, serve the community and educate towards sustainability. I do not believe in an either/or approach to music, but rather a both/more approach that values both performance and teaching without being limited to only one or the other (see Chapter 2, Section. 2.2.5.1 Music identity). I feel that it is worth mentioning that my bias and assumptions are emerging and flexible, since I am continuously learning by doing this research. Thus I would describe my bias and assumptions as a “growing perspective”.

## 3.9 Conclusion

In this Chapter I provided a detailed description of the research design, approach and procedures incorporated in this study. The next chapter presents the organised findings obtained from data collected.

# CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

## 4.1 Introduction

This descriptive phenomenological study investigated the meaning of BMus studies from the perspectives of early career graduates. The meaning ascribed to BMus studies by the participants reflected a commentary on life in the real world of work. The definition of meaning within this study is as follows:

> A psychological construct with cognitive and affective aspects, manifested overtly through behaviour, reflecting an individual's evaluation and valuing of an experience (Hylton, 1980:20).

In this chapter, I present three emergent themes as an essence of this phenomenological study. I continue with an expanded discussion of the categories revealed within each theme, and each category includes sub-categories recognised within the data collected. Verbatim examples, or quotes, are provided from the participants as supportive evidence for each subcategory and presented as the organised findings for this research study.

## 4.2 Emergent themes

Findings within this study revealed participants' perspectives on the relevance and applicability of their BMus studies within the work environment, which is considered in the (1) 'Lifelong Learning' theme. In this theme, it was found that the experiences of participants were expressed as an assessment or evaluation of their BMus studies. The (2) 'Variety within career portfolios' theme reveals a discussion of the contexts, or situations, that influenced and affected the BMus graduates' work perspectives, as well as the skills utilised within their work environment. The (3) 'Financial sustainability' theme reflects what the participants experienced with regards to their BMus degree and employability within the labour market (see Figure 8: Three emergent themes).

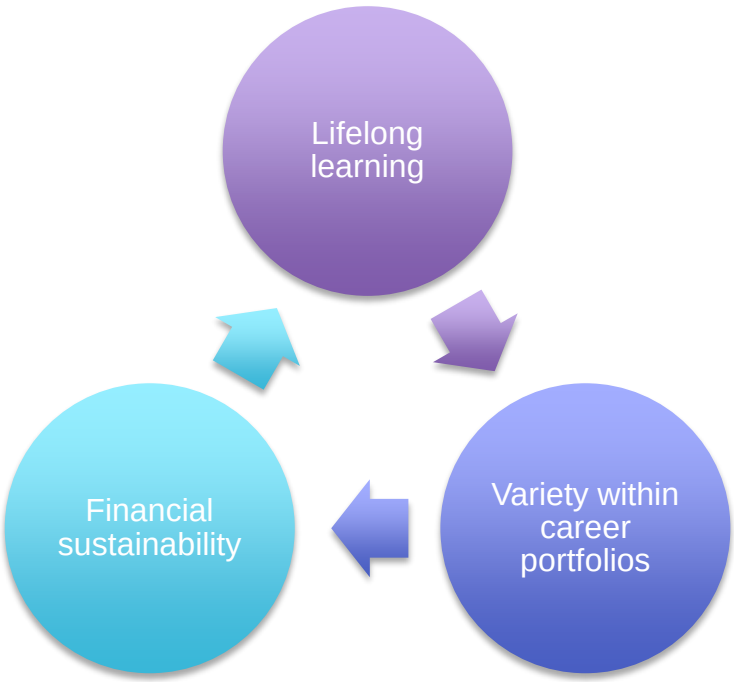


Figure 8: Three emergent themes

In essence, when asked the question “what is it like to be a BMus graduate in the work environment” findings suggest that BMus graduates experience lifelong learning and variety within career portfolios, and this then enables the BMus graduates to experience financial sustainability. These themes are described as the essential, invariant structure of this phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013:82).

## 4.3 Theme 1: Lifelong learning

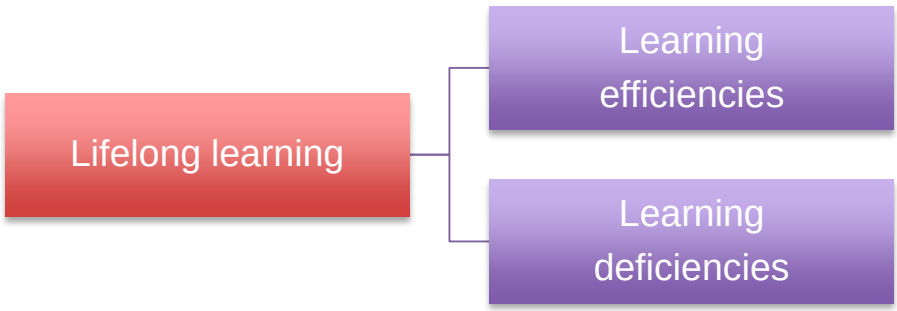


Figure 9: Theme 1 – Lifelong learning

When assessing the relevance of the knowledge, skills, and competencies gained during BMus studies from a work perspective the common experience of all participants was continuous learning, otherwise known as lifelong learning. The participants had discussed the relevance of knowledge, skills, and competencies by assessing learning efficiencies and deficiencies of the BMus programme from a work perspective.

### 4.3.1 Learning efficiencies

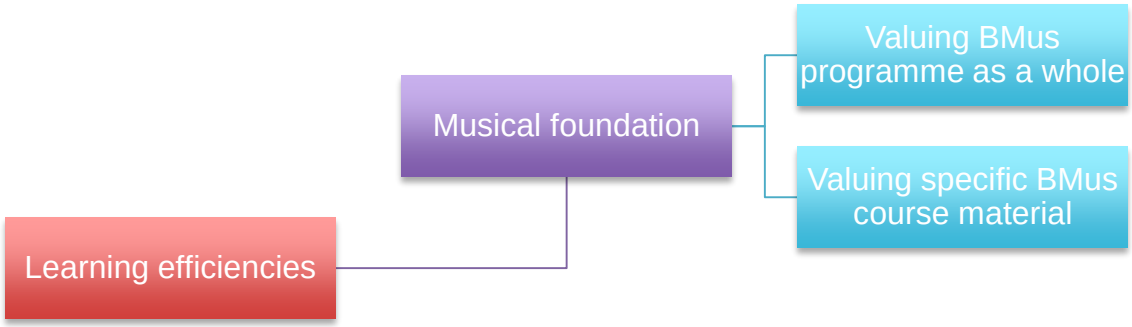


Figure 10: Category – Learning efficiency: Musical foundation

The learning efficiencies experienced by the BMus graduates were gaining a 'musical foundation', and the sub-categories included showed that the participants value the BMus programme as a whole and expressed an appreciation for specific BMus course material.

#### 4.3.1.1 Valuing BMus programme as a whole

Steve, Mary, Mia, Sally and Nellie expressed an appreciation for the whole BMus programme. Sally said: "The whole package was good for me". Mary explained an experience of [3]**learning a language of music**: "I always say when I did my BMus I learned the language of music and now when I am working I have to apply that language of music". She believed that it was important to learn this language as it enables her to teach others, and because she can speak this language she has the ability to apply it in her work environment. Steve averred that he believed the true meaning of BMus

[3] Important text is in bold.

studies was to enrich his life with “knowledge about music to be able to pass that knowledge on to other people”.

Steve and Nellie discussed how the BMus programme provided them with **an advantage of understanding music**. Nellie explained her experience: “It helps you be a bit different from other people who have not studied music”. She stated that the understanding of music was gained as a result of the BMus degree being integrated and offering a variety of music subjects.

Gillian depicted how she has a foundation of **musical knowledge to draw from**: “I kept all of my notes and all of my assignments. I am looking at the bookshelf right now, where all my notes are. I have like ten or eleven big binder folders that I have put all my notes in”. She said that she still refers back to it regularly and found her studies relevant for this reason.

Barry, who continued with further studies in industrial engineering, discussed the **acquisition of a musical perspective**, which has a great deal of value in his personal life: “I listen to a lot of music and I explore various artists, not only classical, but also other genres as well”. He clarified that he would not have had the same perspective if he had not studied music and done performances.

Key ideas that emerged from participants’ experience of valuing the BMus programme as a whole included [4]‘learning a musical language’, gaining an ‘understanding of music’, ‘musical knowledge to draw from’, and developing ‘a musical perspective’.

#### 4.3.1.2 Valuing specific BMus course material

The participants expressed appreciation for specific course material and offered reasons for its perceived value. **Performance,** as well as **instrument methodology,** was regarded a valuable. Tanya said: “From a technical side. I

[4] These inverted commas indicate formulated meanings for sub-categories within categories.

think the solo works definitely helped". Sarah voiced, "I think it really helped me so much in terms of getting to know my instrument and making me the teacher that I am today". Sarah, Steve and Mia cherished **master classes**. Mia mentioned: "We had master classes at NWU, which was phenomenal".

Sarah referred to the effectiveness of a **music education class project**, which involved organising "an entire production" that stretched her "creativity" and "imagination", which she regarded as a useful skill as a classroom music teacher. Sarah also shared on the efficiency of a **community-learning project**, which helped her to learn "to be flexible", since during the project she worked with different-aged children where "some of them knew a little about music and some of them have never seen a recorder before".

Nellie, Sarah and Jane mentioned the usefulness of **African music**, Nellie said: "I have marimbas in my classroom as we speak, which I did not know we would use". Participants also considered music theory, music history and aural training as advantageous. Steve referred to the value of **music theory** when doing arrangements for a choir and when teaching private piano students, "for analysis to help them understand the music better and to memorize it better".

Sarah, Nellie and Sally explained the helpfulness of **music history** to improve the depth of explanations when teaching others. Sally articulated: "If I did not know the history part of music, then I could not explain the depth of music to my students". She uttered that because she knows where music comes from she is able to explain better when she teaches her music theory students.

Jane, Morgan, Lucy and Steve mentioned **aural training** as important. Morgan answered, "I teach voice, elementary theory, sight-singing and I try to incorporate aural training into all of that". Jane expanded as follows: "I think just being able to fulfil being a working musician requires more demand for very well developed aural skills so that you can quickly function within any environment".

Jane valued the **research** training provided during her BMus studies, "at North-West we were taught to do responsible research with very good advice, in that sense I was prepared excellently". Gillian, who is based [5] abroad, described that some of her voice students are special needs learners and how "by doing that research" in the **music education subject** she was prepared to work with learners with disabilities in her work environment. Sarah appreciated **music therapy** classes, and learning through "case studies".

Lucy explained that she learnt from how lecturers presented classes, "the way they conveyed material", and benefited from **academic writing skills**, as well as learning to discern the relevance of learning material. She valued being challenged to think, especially within the **social musicology subject**: "I come from an environment where I did not think like that and then suddenly they taught us to think differently".

In general, Lucy valued learning to "think outside the box", as well as not being given all the answers, but rather challenged to find answers, and learning to "be proud of your work". Mary spoke about how gaining **thinking skills** and **knowing where to search for information** provided a beneficial musical foundation for a transfer of skills into the workplace:

> I think they taught you some concepts of how to think about music and so when I started doing that job, I really had the skills to think about it. How can I do it, and if I saw it did not work this year I had the skills to try a different approach and I knew where to look.

Tanya and Sally mentioned that **Arts Management** was helpful for learning about the business side of performance arts and organising events. Sally verbalised that "we learned how to organise events like the Aardklop Arts Festival. It was more like the business side of studying music that helped me so much, because a lot of my work was very administrative".

In summary, useful course material included 'performance', 'instrument methodology', 'master classes', 'music education', 'community-learning

[5] Participant is based in another country.

project', 'African music', 'music theory', 'music history', 'aural training', 'research', 'music therapy', 'academic writing skills', 'social musicology', 'thinking skills', 'knowing where to search for information', 'Arts Management'. In addition, important aspects that emerged as reasons for the perceived value of course material from a work perspective included subjects, classes and projects that promoted the ability to 'integrate, transfer or relate information to different contexts', as well as knowledge, skills and competencies that were 'reusable', 'enriched personhood', and 'enhanced musical ability'.

### 4.3.2 Learning deficiencies

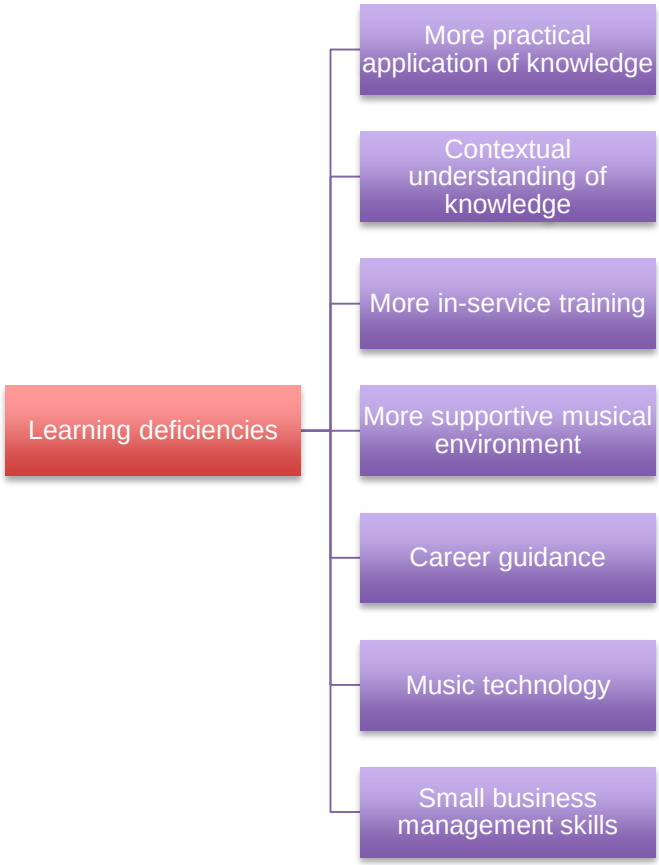


Figure 11: Category – Learning deficiencies

The BMus graduates experienced a need for more practical application of knowledge and a contextual understanding of knowledge. Participants desired in-service training, more exposure to teaching beginners and a more supportive musical environment, which includes more music-making

opportunities. Moreover, participants required career guidance, music technology and small business management skills.

#### 4.3.2.1 More practical application of knowledge

The participants had expressed that learning would be more meaningful if additional opportunities for practical application of knowledge were present in the BMus programme. Tanya summarised her experience as containing, “too much theory, and too little application”. Mia proposed more **practical integration of subject material** to improve relevance: “I think writing a thesis was a bit of a first, getting to your last year and then you have to start working on a thesis. I think making it part of the course”. She explained further that as a performer she would have loved to integrate knowledge about the composers and the pieces she was performing, in order for it to be more relevant “than only choosing a few pieces and just performing them”.

Steve and Sally discussed a need for **more practical application within subjects**. For instance, Steve referred to “a more practical approach to research”, not only learning theoretically about “what research is” and “different ways you can do it”, but also to be shown “how to do it”, and adding practical assignments, like “go and find this”. Steve summarised that when learning is more practical it is more fun, more relevant and results in a more memorable learning experience.

Mary and Sarah mentioned how **more practical music pedagogy courses** would be helpful. Sarah said, “We did like one course a year and it was for a day or so. I think we could have definitely done more of Dalcroze or anything that would have enriched us”. Sarah also suggested, “Kodaly methods and things like that”. Likewise, Mary desired more Dalcroze training. She articulated that in her work environment she was teaching adults “and they really struggled to grasp the concepts. It is difficult for them”. She noticed when she applies more practical learning through Dalcroze that her students understand better.

To conclude, key aspects included ‘more practical integration of subject material’, ‘more practical application within subjects’ and ‘more practical music pedagogy courses’.

#### 4.3.2.2 Contextual understanding of knowledge

The participants voiced a need for contextual knowledge within the BMus course. Morgan described her experience with **changing contexts** within the work environment, and how this challenges her to continuously learn: “It is very different working with adults than working with children”; she also mentioned how it is different working with individuals and groups. Morgan felt that she was constantly learning something new, or in her words: “Learning a new skill”.

Mary explained how she approached teaching university education students by **integrating contextual knowledge into teaching** as she learnt through her experience that this improves transferability of knowledge into the workplace: “I cannot just teach them the syllabus then in four years’ time they will not know what to do”. Instead, she teaches them a language of music, and then trusts that like her they too can apply it to different contexts.

The participants agreed that music is a broad field. Jane discussed how readily content is available on the Internet, and that a valuable skill is to **discern quality of information on Internet**. Lucy contributed that “if you **know how to work with a great deal of content**” you have gained a valuable skill.

Lucy described some disadvantages of learning content without context: “Otherwise you learn like a little parrot, or circus animal, and getting trained like a circus animal, and then the moment when you have to survive in the wild, you cannot”. Lucy added: “We have to know why we should do it and how we should do it” and then the “what”, or content, can follow.

Mary and Steve mentioned how learning could be more meaningful to students if they were involved in the **selection of subject content**. Steve thought that this approach could especially be valuable for a subject like social musicology, which is "not a passive field". Mary described an experience she had selecting content for a course in Sweden and the meaningfulness of that experience: "You actually go to class and you select a course that you want to take and the teacher asks you what do you want in this course, and you tell her and that is what you are doing". She explained that the curriculum gets decided on in terms of what the students find interesting, and she had experienced it as a "wonderful way of teaching the students". She saw this opportunity, as a learning curve for students to select what they think is important, or meaningful, for them to know each year.

To summarise, within the work environment participants encounter changing contexts, learning seems irrelevant and inapplicable if the focus of learning is content. Important topics included 'integrating contextual knowledge into teaching'**, '**knowing how to work with a great deal of content', a skill of 'discerning quality of information on the Internet', as well as giving students opportunities to be involved in 'selection of subject content' when applicable.

#### 4.3.2.3 More in-service training

The participants suggested the value of learning through experience and recommended learning through real life experiences, namely in-service training. Mary suggested that "[w]hen I teach my students it is not something that I learned at the BMus, but I think it is something that I gained through experience". Lucy recommended **learning that takes place in real life**: "I think it will be more valuable for students and for me, to do more in-service training, especially in music education. Real life experiences, what do real musicians do." Lucy continued to explain, "I would rather have gone out into schools and had projects to teach in real life, have a mentor there, and we can reflect the whole time on what we do". Jane shared her opinion, "I think at

North-West University, [6]Musikhane is a much under-utilised resource. It is a very big asset, but it is much under-utilised", and added: "You have to educate people to serve their communities".

Tanya explained how learning was not meaningful because of a lack of real-life application during BMus studies: "We had some lessons with one lecturer who would bring us a student then we would sit there in a group and she would ask us questions where you can improve the students playing, but when I had to actually teach myself I was wondering where do I begin now". Tanya elaborated that it felt like a whole new thing and that she was not sure what to do. She expanded on what she thought may have been more helpful: "So what I wanted from my BMus was to actually pick up my own student and figure out from while I was studying what I am supposed to do".

Lucy stated that because she had real-life work experience she did not struggle to make the transition from being a student to being a professional: "I had the teaching experience before I went to study, and then also while I was studying I had been working the whole time and that helped in training". Lucy expounded that she had been working with mentors the whole time and got advice from them on how to approach certain things, "so it was not such a big shock for me".

Kelly added that the skills she did not learn from the BMus programme she gained through work experience and **learning from mentors**. Mary explained: "It really helps to get advice from people that has done it before and has more experience than you". Sarah explicated how **discussion groups** could improve the transition into the work environment: "If there was a forum or a group where we could have discussed and talked about things. I mean it will just help in various ways of development as a teacher and as a musician." Sarah elaborated on the value of sharing ideas with others: "There are so many people with different ideas and it is great to share them, because that is how you learn and get to be a better teacher."

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[6] A community project run by the North-West University for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Similarly, Lucy suggested “a platform where music educators can share their different experiences, and problems, like a forum”. The participants had also identified a need for **more experience with teaching beginners**. Tanya added that “most of the students are beginners and I think we could have addressed teaching beginners in the syllabus”. Sarah contributed, “I think learning how to start teaching is maybe something that I would have liked to be more equipped with. I had like 30 beginners”. Mary discussed an experience of teaching adult beginners group classes and that she had found this to be challenging as her BMus training was more focused on advanced musicality.

In brief, significant issues raised included ‘learning that takes place in real life’, learning from ‘mentors’, or a mentorship approach, incorporation of ‘discussion groups’ to share and learn from others, and ‘more experience teaching beginners’. These features were also identified as a means to improve the transition from student to professional.

#### 4.3.2.4 More supportive musical environment

The participants discussed the impact of negative messages and an inner struggle with not being good enough. Nellie spoke about the vulnerability of the student-teacher relationship, and the **impact of a negative message**: “I was always scared to play the piano. Not that I cannot play the piano. It is just that I am scared to play piano, because I had a music teacher who actually told me that I cannot play”. Nellie elaborated, realising that it could have been intended as a motivational tool, but the state of her identity was so vulnerable that if somebody told her that she could not do something she would believe him or her.

Sarah and Mary suggested the fragility of nourishing musicianship and the **inner struggle of not being good enough** during BMus studies. Sarah said: “I mean if you do not believe that and if other people also do not think that, then how are you going to believe that yourself, that you are okay, or a good

musician". Sarah added, "it is such a competitive world out there, I am really hard on myself, and really strict on myself. I am already broken down. I already think I am not good enough".

Nellie mentioned **being branded as a teacher** for 'not being good enough' during her BMus studies: "If you were not a good performer, you were not going into performance as your main subject. It was sort of implied that you go into teaching. I have been branded as that stereotype". Nellie voiced: "If you do not have a strong personality it sort of gets stuck on you" and she spoke about how in the work environment she is starting to believe that she can perform outside of this stereotype.

The participants required a **more supportive musical environment** that includes positive messages, as well as more music-making opportunities. Sarah explained the need for **positive messages** and opportunities for musicianship to grow and be nurtured: "For yourself to be a better musician and a better performer and just become better, you need to have support. If you do not have it, you cannot go anywhere". A positive supportive message that Nellie suggested she needed during her BMus studies was, "do [music] because you love what you are doing".

Participants desired **more music-making opportunities** as means of a supportive musical environment, such as the university orchestra, playing in ensemble groups and opportunities to play concertos. Mary spoke about her love for making music with others, and thereby implied the importance thereof: "The solo world is quite lonesome and that is one thing when I started singing in the university choir that I really loved, because at that point I was at a cross-road if I still want to play piano at all". Through participatory music-making opportunities, Mary was reminded of how much fun it was to make music with other people, which she explained was her reason for studying music.

Tanya referred to the need for more exposure to **piano accompaniment** training. Tanya elaborated: "I feel we could have done more accompanying

work, because that is what we do. I feel that is where the need was. We did one ensemble in a year and I feel that was not enough". Mary explained further: "I think that for a pianist you will always have a job if you do [accompaniment], because there are so many instrumentalists that always need an accompanist". Mary discussed that in the piano performance world she experienced more performance opportunities in chamber and ensemble music.

Overall, the main facets of requiring a more supportive environment included recognition for the 'impact of a negative messages' and 'an inner struggle of not being good enough' experienced during BMus studies. The feeling of 'being branded a teacher' when not viewed as good enough as a performer. Instead, participants need 'positive messages' and 'more music-making opportunities', which also includes 'piano accompaniment training' to nurture musical growth and employability.

#### 4.3.2.5 Career guidance

The participants expressed a need for career guidance, especially with regards to knowing **career options** and exposure to a **broader landscape of music**. Sally needed to know: "What is there? What can you do after your BMus studies? What are the possibilities?" Sarah discussed the following issue: "For us staying here in South Africa, I think it is important to have more guidance and to know what you are going to do". Sally explained a need to "know more about what is out there" and that her exposure felt limited to classical music. In addition, she suggested a "career day" for musicians.

The participants also articulated a need for **guidance on subject choices** for future career prospects. Sarah said: "It felt to me like they did not always guide us so well in the subjects that we could choose. I think they could have been more helpful in terms of that". Morgan discussed her situation: "I think I definitely could have benefited from [career guidance] to know what the other

options are if you do not get accepted into the performance programme, and how you can rework your studies to fit that."

Tanya, Sarah and Mary recognised that **music education is important**. Tanya contributed: "I did not have music education, which was kind of a mistake on my part not to take that subject". Mary said: "I would have wanted to do more work in music education, because that was actually not one of my main subjects in my fourth year, but that is where I have been working since I started working". Mary expanded that she would have liked to know that she should keep her possibilities open, "because there are a lot of music careers and the chances are that you are not going to end up where you think you are going to end up".

The students also discussed a **lack of understanding the relevance of subjects**. Jane explained: "I do not know if you have the insight as an undergraduate student to really appreciate things". Sarah mentioned: "I mean you are a student. You do not know anything up until you are really out there in the world. I think you are still very narrow-minded". Sally and Steve agreed on not fully understanding the relevance of BMus subjects during their music studies, and only realised its worth later on in the workplace. Steve elaborated as follows: "I was perhaps one of them that had a subject and loathed it, and did not understand why they teach that subject. What is its relevance?"

The participants also spoke about the need to be **informed on professional qualifications needed to be employable at a school.** Kelly expressed an idea: "When giving career guidance it should be made very clear how the BMus qualification would make the student employable". Jane voiced, "I mean to anybody in education knowing the professional qualifications, such as the PGCE to be able to have a full-time job is very obvious, but when we were studying that was not communicated to us clearly". Jane added that it would have been "very valuable if that were communicated more clearly from first year and not from fourth year". Sarah explained her thoughts on the matter:

> I think if you knew that, then you could have done that together with your BMus, or they can throw in a programme that is accredited by the different universities or by SACE, just to make it easier for us.

To conclude, participants desired knowledge about ‘career options’ and being exposed to a ‘broader landscape of music’, ‘guidance on subject choices’, recognition that ‘music education is important’ and ‘keeping career possibilities open’ was advised. Participants also experienced a ‘lack of understanding the relevance of subjects’ and also felt like it was important to know about the ‘professional qualifications needed to be employable at a school’ as early as possible.

#### 4.3.2.6 Music technology

The participants experienced a deficiency in music technology. Jane explained that, “the music technology programme was very underdeveloped”. Kelly and Nellie also discussed a need for music technology skills, Kelly summarised her ideas as follows: “Skills such as making **backing tracks**, doing **live performances** and **making recordings** should be taught”. Jane said: “I do think in some ways South African universities can benefit much more from embracing music technology to a greater extent. I mean Berklee has being a deejay as a major, so why don't we?” Jane further contributed on the topic: “I think we should just realise the society we live in. We should be relevant to society. You cannot study something that does not serve society”.

Kate described the technological skills she required as a classroom music teacher: “I would like to have had more experience regarding **music apps** that are available out there, because I now have to teach the students on these apps that I do not even understand”. Sally recommended that **notation software** “Sibelius or Finale” be taught to all music students from as early as possible, “I think that is something that they can teach the first years”. Jane shared her opinion on current technological demands within society, such as learning a **programming language**, “offering some kind of programming language would be beneficial for people in creative industries”. Jane hoped to learn more about making music apps and interfaces for people to interact with

musically. She said: “Things like that I think are quite missing from our curriculum”.

In summary, the participants requested technological skills such as ‘making backing tracks’, ‘doing live performances’ and ‘making recordings’. In addition ‘notation software’ should be taught to all music students from first year, and exposure to ‘music apps’ and a ‘programming language’, towards possibly designing a music app.

#### 4.3.2.7 Small business management skills

The participants had experienced an inadequacy in the provision of instruction in small business management and entrepreneurial skills. Kelly explained: “A general realisation that a music graduate will most probably be self-employed will make a big difference”. Kelly felt that “the business and administration side of having a private practice, or even teaching at a school is hugely neglected”. Jane elaborated on the employment experienced by private individual music instructors at schools:

> I mean private individual instructors have to know how to run their business. If I look at our school, for instance we employ 18 part-time teachers and each one of them has to know how to run their business, because they are actually independent contractors.

Sarah agreed on the need to add business management aspects to BMus studies as a **teacher**: “I actually think they should do something like a financial management course while you are doing BMus, because we are actually running our own businesses”. Sarah explained further: “I do not think that we learnt how to manage our time, or manage finances, or any of that”.

Mia described the need for small business management skills as a **performer**, “we did not really go into depth about running music as a business and it is a business”. Mia elaborated: “There are things that you have to be, you have to acquire certain skills. There is cost management, your budget, your marketing”, to name a few.

Kelly suggested: “Entrepreneurship should be a more substantial part of the course, taught by **someone with experience of being self-employed**”. Jane explained that she did not find the music business subject useful in teaching entrepreneurship or small business management skills, “I had a module on it and I found it a big waste of time”. She then deliberated on other options to teach entrepreneurship, “maybe not teaching entrepreneurship, but teaching with a **problem-based approach** might be very valuable in the creative industry where you have find your niche”.

To summarise, in both the context of the ‘teacher’ and ‘performer’ small business management skills were needed. The participants also required an improved approach to entrepreneurship training, possibly a ‘problem-based approach’ and learning from ‘someone with experience of being self-employed’.

## 4.4 Theme 2: Variety in career portfolios

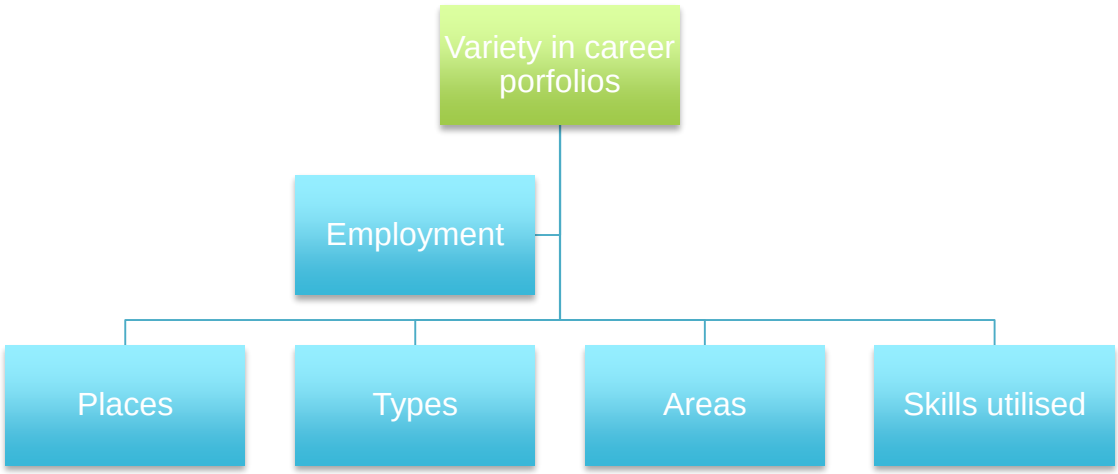


Figure 12: Theme 2 –Variety in career portfolios

The context, conditions and circumstances experienced by the participants were characterised by a variety in career portfolios. The participants had experienced multiple places, types and areas of employment. The

participants' careers were not marked by specialisation, but rather by diversity and the utilisation of a wide array of skills.

### 4.4.1 Employment

The employment experiences of the participants ranged from being employed to being self-employed, or a combination of both:

- **Employed** – employment at established business or institution.
- **Self-employed** – employed at own business.

Sarah, a flute performance major, provides an example of a combination of being both employed and self-employed. She was employed by a school, played for ensemble groups, which sometimes included orchestral gigs, and managed a music ensemble group with a friend playing at weddings and functions. Sarah explained: "We have got our own group and I also play for other groups. I do freelancing in terms of that. So especially when it is wedding season we play quite a bit".

Employment experiences also ranged from **self-administration** to **business and institution administered**, or both. For instance Gillian, a music education major, explained her experience with employment at a music studio:

> It is a combination of the two. I work for myself, but the lady who runs the studio does all the scheduling and that kind of thing for me. The only thing I have to do is just give her an invoice at the end of every month and she pays me accordingly.

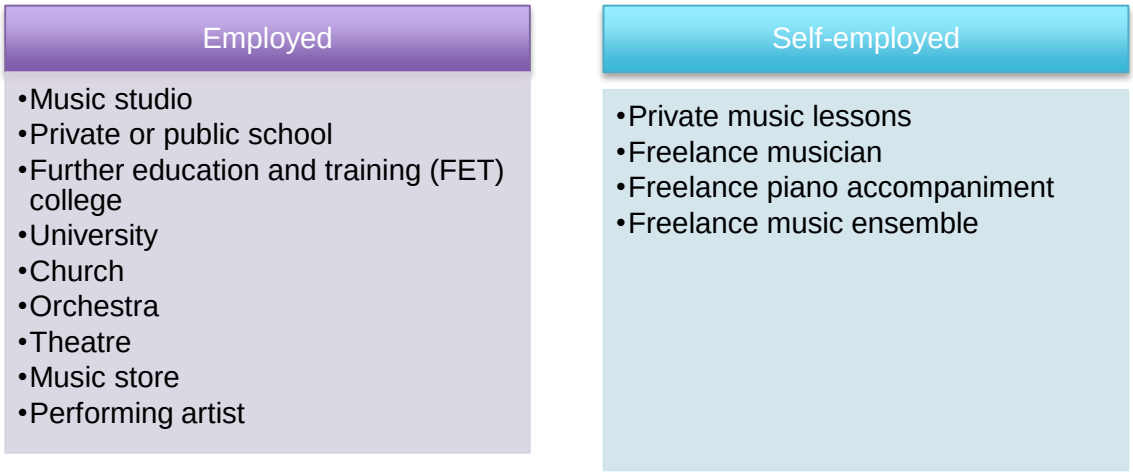


Figure 13: Employment

### 4.4.2 Places of employment

The BMus graduates in this study experienced various places of employment within the labour market namely private and public schools, FET colleges, universities, music studios, church, choirs, orchestras, theatres and music stores. Other employment opportunities also included teaching private music lessons, ensemble groups, piano accompaniment and being employed by a performance artist.

| | |
|---|---|
| Places of employment | Music studio (Gillian, Tanya) |
| | Private / public school (Tanya, Sarah, Morgan, Jane, Mary, Mia, Kate, Nellie, Kelly) |
| | FET College (Jane) |
| | University (Lucy, Mary, Kelly) |
| | Church (Sally, Steve) |
| | Home (Sally) |
| | Choir (Tanya, Steve, Mia) |
| | Orchestra (Barry, Sarah) |
| | Music ensemble (Sarah) |
| | Theatre (Sarah, Mia) |
| | Weddings and functions (Sarah, Nellie) |

Figure 14: Places of employment

Steve mentioned his place of employment at a **choir**, “I had the provincial choir up until the end of last year. When I resigned”. Sarah talked about paid employment at a **theatre**, “I played a few gigs for [Brooklyn theatre]”. Kate spoke about her employment at a **private school**, “I am currently teaching voice at a private school in Cape Town. My main responsibility is vocal teaching, but I also teach class music”. Mia described her employment at a **music store**, “I am a key account manager at a music store in Pretoria. I am handling client relationships and marketing, and sheet music and instruments mainly, and I am dealing with the company’s most important clients”. Mary discussed her employment at a **university**: “I am working at the faculty of education and I am lecturing from first years up to fourth years. I am teaching music education for foundation phase students up to senior and FET phase students”.

### 4.4.3 Types of employment

The participants also experienced various types of employment, such as full-time, part-time and temporary employment.

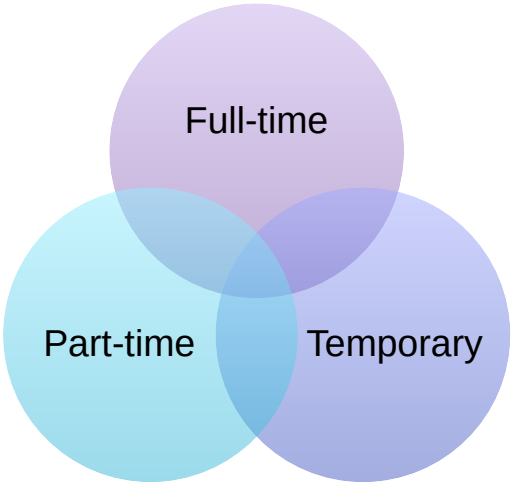


Figure 15: Types of employment

Sarah described her experience with a **full-time**, or permanent employment position, “I am very fortunate, because I get a salary every month and I do not have to worry about holiday lessons.” Mary explained her experience with **part-time** employment:

> You just receive payment for hourly work. So over holidays I did not receive anything. There were no advantages regarding maternity leave or even pension funds or anything like that. So it was just a part-time, day-to-day, hourly income.

Mary also discussed her experience with **temporary** employment: “Doing temporary contracts and accompanying, helping out with teaching, but it was nothing permanent ever. So I have done a lot of that over the years”.

Participants **multi-tasked** employment, as well as activities. For example, Kate and Sarah were employed part-time at more than one school and later moved on to full-time employment. Kate explained her experience: “I worked at one school for three days a week and at another school two days a week.

However, the demand at the one school then grew and now I am full-time there".

Barry, who completed further studies in industrial engineering is employed full-time in a non-music related business enterprise, but also takes on part-time or freelance work opportunities as a performer on occassion. Kelly described the multi-tasking she is engaged in within her employment: "I am self-employed. I teach piano and guitar at a prep school two and a half days a week. I am also a part-time lecturer at a University, and I am a freelance performer".

### 4.4.4 Areas of employment

Participants overall were employed within three main areas: **education**, **business** and **performance**. Gillian, Tanya, Morgan, Jane, Mary, Lucy, Sarah, Kate, and Nellie were predominantly employed within the area of education. Steve, Barry, Sally, and Mia were mainly employed within a business area. None of the participants were employed exclusively in performance. Despite being predominantly employed within one area, participants **combine areas of employment**.

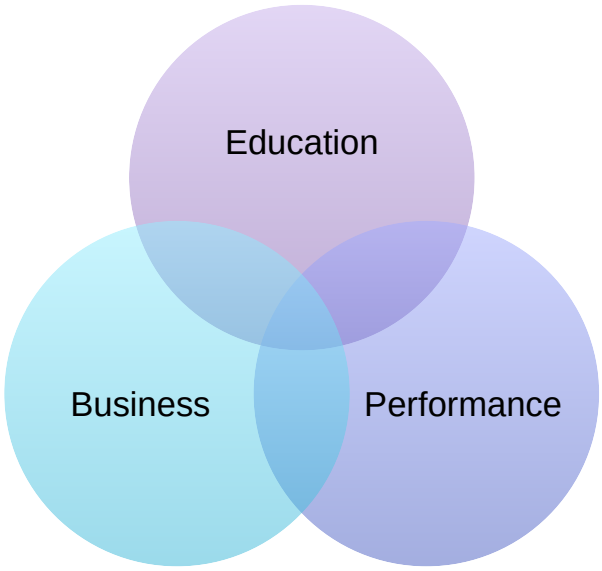


Figure 16: Areas of employment in the community

Tanya provided an example of how she combined areas of employment such as education and performance: “I accompanied a choir in Potchefstroom, and I did freelance accompaniment for people who want to perform somewhere. I also had a few piano and music theory students then”. Steve explained being employed predominantly in business, but also participating in employment within the area of performance:

> My full-time position at the moment is as a financial manager and accountant at this firm and then also as part-time accompanist for people that need accompanying, and also I am the full-time organist at the church.

Although participants were employed mainly within one area, participants experienced **overlapping roles** within areas of employment. For example, Sally was employed at a church, which involved business, teaching and performing responsibilities. Sarah who was employed at a school also experienced teaching, performance, and business responsibilities. Sarah explained the business responsibilities experienced whilst employed within education, “at some of the other schools I have to make contact with the parents myself, send out invoices, and they pay me directly”.

Lucy and Nellie who are employed within education described how they experience performance as part of their responsibilities as teachers. Lucy, lecturer at a university, uttered that performance is an everyday occurrence: “I perform every day when I teach. I usually have an instrument available, especially in aural training. I do a lot of performance and then at the school where I am at now we have this huge concert coming up and I perform there”. Lucy elaborates that her performances are not on stage as such, “I see my job as a teacher as a performance. I memorize all my work and I put quite a lot of effort in, so it is always a performance in class”.

### 4.4.5 Skills utilised

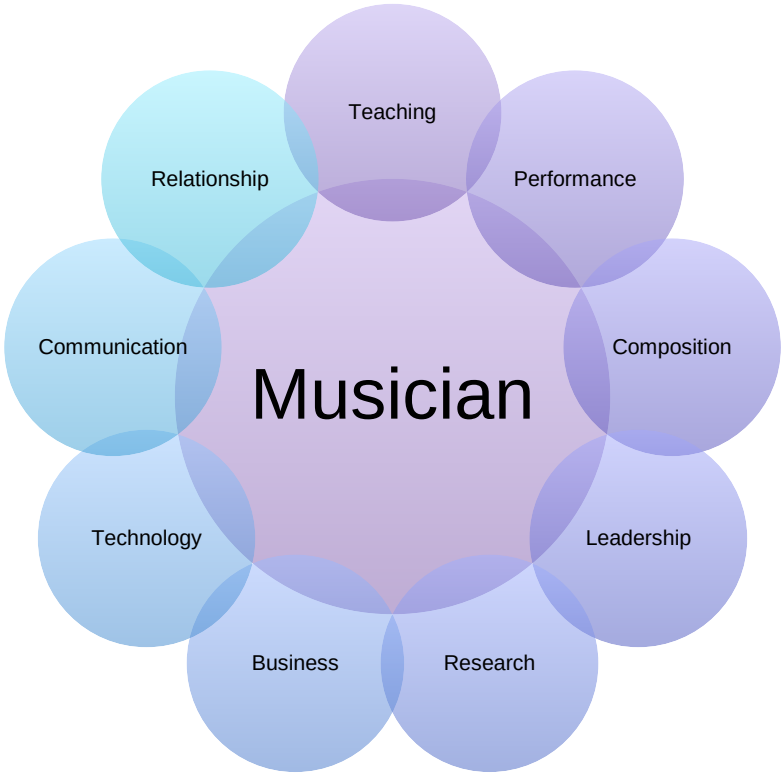


Figure 17: Category – Skills utilised

The participants utilised various skills, which included teaching, performance, composition, leadership, research, business, technology, communication, and relationship skills. These skills are interconnected and are used within roles of both teacher and performance majors who participated in this study.

#### 4.4.5.1 Performance skills

Performance experiences of the participants included various contexts of performance. Morgan explained, “You cannot specialize in one single thing anymore, you have to be flexible’”. Jane elaborated: “So you need well-rounded musicians, you need musicians who can walk into any situation and converse musically”.

Nellie described the context within which she performs, “I sing at church and here and there for weddings, as well as now with the ATKV”. Sally mentioned

that after her BMus studies she did not do any classical performances, but that her exposure was more with band instruments and contemporary music. Sally explained: “So my performances are mainly church-based. I had performances with other [famous South African music artists], but it was because they are in the same church movement. We did big shows”. Barry said: “I do part-time sort of work for orchestras and things like that”. Mia accompanied singers for concerts. Steve, a piano performance major, explained his perspective of performance opportunities as a soloist:

> There is not a big enough platform to do performance. If you are a pianist and you are playing a piano concerto you need an orchestra. So there are quite a few of those and there are only a handful of people who get to do performance with those orchestras.

Steve continued by explaining how solo performance opportunities needed to be self-created: “I still think and that is actually part of my idea to create a sort of platform for people to perform. Because there is a need for that, but I do not think there are enough performance opportunities for people”.

Sarah also explained the possibility of creating her own performance opportunities, “I think if I want to I can create my own opportunities, definitely. Do house concerts. It is just that I do not have time to practise as much I would like to.” Kate also struggled to find time to practise, she explained: ”It is not easy doing both, teaching and performing, but I always try to make an effort to perform, because that is why I studied music in the first place.”

The participants also experience performance, or playing her instrument as a teacher. Sarah discussed her teaching experience: “I still play every day with every single student. I have students from five years old and I have students that are matric, who are doing Grade 7, and Grade 8 subject music”. She explained that she has a whole spectrum, and still did scales and technique with them.

Nellie, employed as a classroom music teacher at a high school, expounded: “I have performed more with my choirs in the work situation than I actually

performed in my solo career". Jane discussed the performance contexts she experienced as a teacher in the following terms: "I am a conductor of an orchestra, and arrange the music for them. That is about the most performance I do, and play hymns in chapel on the piano."

Overall, performance skills occur in various contexts, for example performing at churches, weddings, festivals, orchestras, and performing when teaching individuals and groups. Participants also performed using various genres such as classical to more contemporary music. Solo performances in the traditional classical sense presented limited and restricted opportunities for performance and had to be self-created for lack of platform.

#### 4.4.5.2 Teaching skills

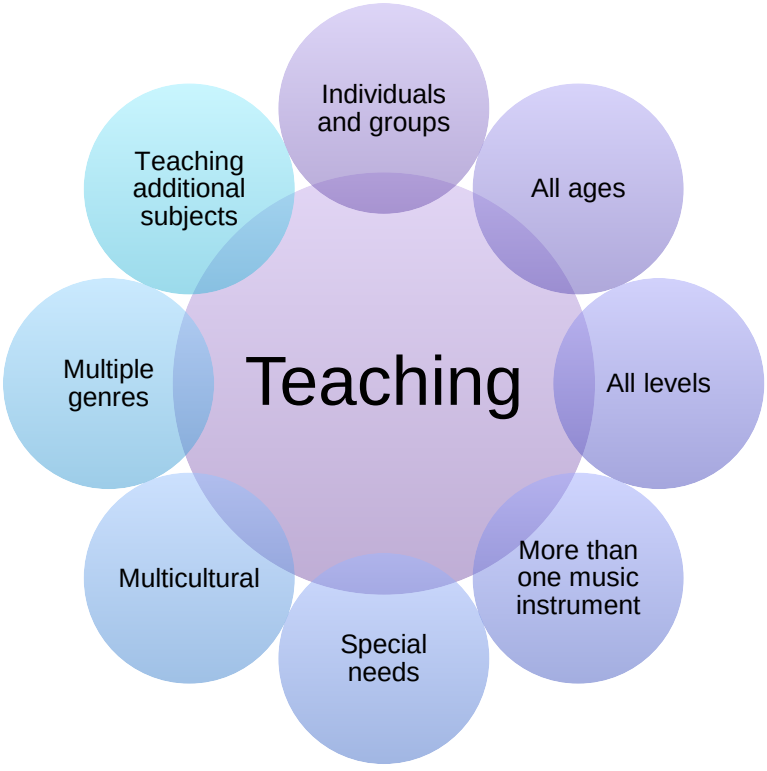


Figure 18: Subcategory – Teaching skills

Teaching skills experienced by the participants included teaching individuals and groups of all ages and all levels from beginners to advanced. Other teaching skills included teaching various genres of music popular within the community from classical to popular culture, teaching multicultural groups, as

well as special needs teaching. Additional skills included teaching multiple musical instruments and the ability to teach additional subjects as this improved employability. Other skills also included leadership, communication, business, performance, research, technology and relationship, however these skills are discussed in the overall skills palette of a musician.

- ***Teaching individuals and groups of all ages, and levels***

Nellie mentioned: “I am in charge of all the classes with class music, Grade 8 and 9 goes towards Arts and culture, and my Grade 10, 11 and 12 are music appreciation.” Gillian teaches voice and piano individual lessons and Kindermusik group classes. Morgan said that “you have to be able to teach individuals and groups, and that is across all ages”. Tanya stated that a different skill is involved when teaching individuals than when teaching groups: “It was a whole different learning experience for me to be able to control a class and to actually present a lesson in a flowing way.”

- ***Teaching more than one instrument***

Sarah, a flute major, particularized her experience with teaching more than one instrument in a school environment: “I started with twelve students and I just taught the flute, and obviously theory that goes with that. I also had a few piano students, but beginner students, and at the other school, I started out to teach the recorder”. Sally described the demands within her workplace for teaching more than one band instrument. As the music director of a church, if “there was a new song, I would write it down on the chord sheet and then listen to it. During band practice I would teach it to the drums, then teach the electric part what it should play, and teach the piano what they should play”.

Mary, a piano major, and lecturer at a university described the versatility she required with musical instruments to meet workplace demands, “I do play a bit of guitar, because of my job, because for the education students, I teach them guitar, as well as recorder.” Morgan explained why teaching more than one

instruments is a valuable skill, “Yes, so [teaching more than one instrument] helps because then the school does not have to employ another teacher for another instrument, which increases your value as an employee at a school”.

- ***Special needs, multicultural, and multiple music genres***

Both Lucy and Gillian had experienced working with special needs learners. Lucy said, “I teach special needs learners”. Gillian described special needs cases she experienced based at a music studio abroad, such as a girl in a wheel chair who is “blind and deaf”, a student with a “split cleft palate” and another learner who has “cerebral palsy”.

Morgan described some challenges regarding teaching learners with different cultures and religions. Nellie summarised that “sometimes you cannot do things because of this culture, or because of that [culture]”. Jane described the need to work with many genres of music within a multicultural environment: “A very general understanding of different music is needed. You have to be able to teach everything from Bach to Kwaito, to blues and everything else in between.” Jane discussed that teaching multiple genres includes modelling it. Jane expands as follows: “You need musicians who have had exposure in many different musical genres and can find their voices within that. You do not need musicians who can only play Vivaldi, Bach and Beethoven.”

Morgan discussed the need to teach multiple genres of music in order to motivate learners’ interests in music: “You sometimes sit with a student who is only there, because he has to be there. If you go purely classical, they will completely hate it”. Morgan expressed that if she combined teaching Walt Disney or pop songs, the students get more involved in the teaching process and enjoy it more. The result is that, “the parents feel like [music] lessons are worth it, because their child is engaging in the lesson”.

- ***Teaching additional subjects***

Mia explained her experience at a school, “I started off as an Arts and Culture teacher, without the teaching diploma or the teaching qualification. They also gave me Afrikaans to teach as a second language, as well as life skills”. Mary replied: “So I applied for positions at other schools, but we immediately went on to the type of question that I would get in the interviews like: ‘Can you also teach Geography?’ or ‘Can you also teach Afrikaans?’” Morgan added that “[i]f you can teach more than one subject that would count in your favour, even if it is a non-music subject”.

#### 4.4.5.3 Composition skills

The participants utilised composition skills, which would include arranging skills within various contexts. Steve used arranging skills to create vocal parts for a choir when needed and “arrange what needs to be arranged” for Christmas concerts as a church organist. Mary and Nellie talked about arranging music for singing groups. Mary said: “When I was teaching at the music centre I coached a singing group from a school and for them I did some arrangements”.

Sally, as music director of a church, arranged music by ear for band instruments and composed, “I write songs”. Jane, Mary, and Morgan talked about how composition and arranging skills are important to have as a music teacher. The need arises to compose and arrange for various ensemble groups for different levels of difficulty from beginner to advanced. Morgan expanded, “you have to be able to re-write music and even compose a completely new thing, so whatever the school is doing you can make it work”. Mary said that “some teachers who had the group music theory classes for the really small children, they would arrange easy percussion pieces for their students”. According to Jane, “you need people who can arrange things for school orchestras, where you have one Grade 1 flute and 1 Grade 8 flute”.

In summary, composition and arranging skills are applied in the workplace in different contexts, in this case arranging ‘vocal parts for choirs’ or other ‘singing groups’, or ‘band instruments’, or ‘various music ensemble groups’ including ‘orchestras’, and composing and arranging for ‘different levels of difficulty from beginner to advanced’ and ‘writing songs’.

#### 4.4.5.4 Business skills

The participants utilised business skills, which included administration and organisational skills within the work environment within various contexts. Sally, a music director at a church, mentioned how she ran a worship school utilising business skills: “I saw it as a business, because you work with people and you need to do it professionally, like having a logo, doing the marketing. Being professional”. Sarah discussed using business, administration and organisational skills as a performer: “My friend and I are playing at weddings and we started our own business two years ago. I am managing the bookings and finding music, and she is managing the finances, because that works for us”.

Morgan explained her utilisation of business and administration skills as a part-time employed music teacher: “You have to keep lesson records, timetables, and we write reports every term. You have to be able to express yourself in an email, because that is how we relate to the parents at this moment”. Morgan continued further by explaining the importance of working with money, keeping track of payments and outstanding fees, doing taxes, doing book orders, as well as managing calendars. Lucy, a lecturer at the university, said that “the whole time I have to do administration”. Jane, as a full-time music teacher at a school, remarked: “Half of my job is administration”.

Other skills also included organisational skills. Mia, as a music director at a school, spoke about “hosting events at the school”. Mary, as a part-time music teacher at an extra-curricular music centre, discussed some of the organisational activities including organising fund raisers or concerts for

students, and the administrative responsibilities that go along with organising such events. Mary expanded on these remarks: “The times that I helped, my job was more administrative, like contacting all the different teachers. They had to fill in forms of students that they wanted to perform at the concert and then we had to select a programme from that”. She also mentioned having to select repertoire for her students and sometimes being a bit creative with decorations, and also booking the hall. Sally also mentioned organisational skills, such as organising larger productions: “organising the sound equipment, the lights, telling the light people what to do, what the sound people should do”, to name a few.

In brief, business skills included administration, as well as organisational skills and were experienced in various contexts. Business skills included business branding, such as logo design and marketing. Administration skills such as managing finances, keeping track of payments and outstanding fees, managing bookings or appointments, keeping records, timetables, writing reports, taxes, book orders, managing calendars, and communicating verbally, on paper or electronically. Organisational skills included hosting events, organising fund raisers, concerts, organising people, providing instructions, creating forms, developing programmes, selecting music, booking a hall, doing decorations, organising sound equipment and lights.

#### 4.4.5.5 Leadership skills

The participants had also experienced leadership skills within various contexts. The participants mentioned business, music, and teaching-related leadership skills. Music-related leadership included conducting and band directing. Nellie explained, “I am in charge of choirs and music ensembles”. Teaching-related leadership, included curriculum design and lesson presentation. Sarah explained her experience within the music classroom environment: “I do not have a syllabus, so I created my own syllabus. They leave that completely up to my judgment and what I want to do”. Morgan also referred to business-related leadership such as leading a team: “If you are

head of department you have to be able to manage your team. In our case, we only liaise with our head of department".

To conclude, leadership skills occur in various contexts. Some music and teaching-related leadership included band directing, conducting, curriculum design, and lesson presentation, as well as managing a team as head of department.

#### 4.4.5.6 Relationship and communication skills

Relationship and communication skills come into play when working with people. Kate, as classroom music teacher and individual instructor, discussed relationship matters encountered like "politics in the work environment, the parents and the fact that you have to deal with every child in a different way." Sarah highlighted relationship skills like setting boundaries, gaining resilience, and managing people, "I had to just put my foot down, grow a thick skin, and learn how to deal with people, and learn how to manage people". Nellie and Sarah, as classroom music teachers, referred to challenges of learners not appreciating music and handling these interactions. Sarah expounded: "You work with people in a school who are not necessarily interested in music". Sarah explained in such instances she has to use relationship and communication skills to inspire learners "to start caring", "see the bigger picture", appreciate music as a subject, work together with other people and let them see "what our environment is like".

Classroom management, discipline techniques and conflict management are some of the additional encountered aspects. Morgan, as an individual music instructor, stated that she handled, "conflict between colleagues, between the HOD and me, between a student and me, and also between myself and students' parents". Morgan explained that dealing with situations, such as "students who are constantly absent from lessons that do not bring their books to lessons, who forget their diaries, who do not do their homework". Morgan also mentioned the importance of communication skills in the work

environment: “communicating, either verbally or written, you have to be able to express yourself clearly, and do it without attacking the other person”.

To summarise, relationship and communication skills are required in various contexts when working with people. Some matters encountered in the work environment included handling politics, managing clients or parents, inspiring learners, setting boundaries, gaining resilience, conflict management, dealing with uniqueness of individuals, classroom management and discipline techniques.

#### 4.4.5.7 Technology skills

Technology skills were used in various contexts, such as business, communication, teaching, and performance. Morgan and Sarah spoke about how they implement technology as teachers, Sarah said “I do presentations and show videos”. Morgan elaborated as follows: “Technology and computer literacy, we use that more and more. In the case where a student needs accompaniment a backing track could work better, because a live accompanist is not always available”. Morgan continued: “I mean there are so many other things that you can use like iPhones, iPads and videos. You have to incorporate technology into your lessons”. Nellie, a music teacher, mentioned using music software to make backing tracks. Using music equipment like microphones, mixers, and knowing about cables and how to connect devices was necessary. Teaching learners to perform with technology was also in demand within Nellie’s work environment.

To sum up, technology skills occur in various contexts including business, communication, teaching, and performance. Some uses for technology included doing presentations, showing videos, working music software, making and using backing tracks, operating smart phones, tablets, and music equipment.

#### 4.4.5.8 Research skills

The participants were continously learning and engaging in research. Sarah said: “You constantly need to develop yourself and learn more”. Jane mentioned the continued study and research she experienced: “Reading, the Internet, just reading a lot, and watching documentaries”. Tanya explained the research skills she utilised such as examining the national curriculum and adding content:

> I do the Grade 8’s theory. So, with the theory we do the Grade 1 ABRSM syllabus, and Grade 9’s, I do history. So we look through the CAPS syllabus, but we have to add quite a lot of information there, because the CAPS is not enough.

Jane expanded on continuous learning and research encountered in the workplace, “I mean if you do not know how to improvise using chord concepts, then you Google it and you find someone doing it and explaining it”. She also mentioned that the challenge when acquiring new skills is finding the time to “practise those skills to such a degree that you can confidently stand in front of a class and teach it the next day”. Jane provided an example, “one week you do not know what modal jazz is and the next week you have to teach on improvising modal concepts”.

Morgan described a need to research labour laws, doing tax, knowing about music curriculums, such as UNISA, ABRSM, Trinity and Rockschool and obtaining musical books and equipment as a music teacher. About her experience researching music curriculums Morgan said:

> I was brought up on UNISA and that was it. I did not know about ABRSM, or Trinity, or Rockschool or these different syllabuses. I have had to spend quite a lot of time researching each of those and deciding what would work best in our current environment.

In conclusion, some of the research skills included reading, using the Internet, and watching documentaries. Further research was done to acquire new skills through reading, observation and by watching explanatory videos combined

with practically applying what was learnt. Some research interests included labour laws, doing tax, music curriculums, music resources such as books and music equipment.

## 4.5 Theme 3: Financial sustainability

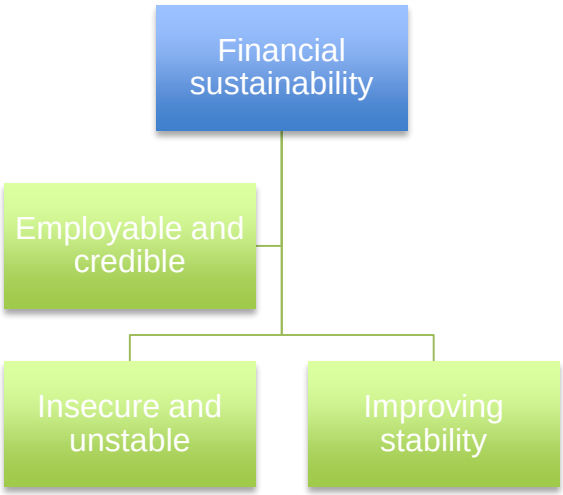


Figure 19: Theme 3 – Financial sustainability

The participants experienced being employable and credible, because of having a BMus degree. However, employment options were sometimes insecure and unstable if too specialised. Stablity was improved by being a 'portfolio' musician and through further studies.

### 4.5.1 Employable and credible

The participants experienced that the BMus degree made them employable and cedible. Morgan, a music contractor at a school, explained: "It [BMus degree] enables me to occupy this position as music teacher". Mia, a freelance performer, said: "If you have got a degree, people believe in you". Kate, who worked part-time at multiple schools and later moved on to a full-time position discussed: "It [BMus degree] has played a big role, because without the experience and education I would not have had jobs at the establishments I worked at". Sally voiced: "I am so glad that I studied music, because it really opened many doors for me in church ministry". In addition,

Sally spoke about writing a music theory book for worship band musicians and that her BMus degree provided more credibility for her work, “it really helps, if you have the degree to show. It makes it legit”.

### 4.5.2 Insecure and unstable

Employment possibilities for BMus graduates involved mostly part-time or freelance employment opportunities. Full-time employment as a performer was scarce in the labour market. Full-time employment as a teacher required further studies. Barry discussed a performance career as bassoonist and orchestral musician:

> There are only two bassoons in an orchestra and if you are really interested in orchestral music and that is what you want to do almost exclusively it is very hard in South Africa, because there are very few professional orchestras and also not all of them are financially stable.

Insecurity and instability were experienced when participants were too specialised in either performance or teaching only one musical instrument. Tanya, who had a performance focus earlier in her career as a freelance piano accompanist and taught a few students piano lessons privately, described her income as “very unstable, there were times that income is more than enough and other times you barely scrape by”.

Morgan experienced being a part-time individual music instructor and teaching one instrument at a school as being unsustainabile. Morgan explained: “A great deal of our expenses in a month gets paid by my husband, if I would be on my own I would have to work a lot harder than I do now, and I might have had to take on other part-time jobs to be able to sustain myself”. When employment is part-time or freelance, income is dependent on number of working hours. Income stability is dependent on demand for the service rendered. In the case of the BMus graduate, financial sustainability may be dependent on the demand for the musical instrument played or taught. Jane described: “I have not played bassoon in about five years. I sold my bassoon five years ago and I have not played. I have taught myself saxophone in the

meantime and I have been teaching saxophone, because it was a need at the school".

### 4.5.3 Improving stability

Income stability was improved by teaching more than one musical instrument. Gillian who was based abroad, and employed on a part-time basis at a music studio teaching voice and piano experienced financial sustainability. Gillian said, "The most amazing thing about it is that I am teaching five days a week, between seven and eight hours each day. There is a big demand for it".

More demand means more working hours, which leads to more financial sustainablity. In those instances where demand is not high enough for sustainabiity at one place, the participants enhanced sustainability by taking on more than one part-time employment position, which was the case for Kate and Sarah who taught individual music lessons at more than one school; however, this kind of employment still involves some instability. Sarah explained further: "If you do not work you do not get paid. So usually over the holidays I will still go and teach for financial reasons. You have to work to make your money." Mia explained her strategy to improve her sustainability as a performer by taking on music-related full-time employment at a music store:

> I got the key account management position, because for me it is just easier to have a stable income. I have to support my studies, so I did not want to do only freelance. You cannot live on this month is going well and the next month is a little bit quiet.

Steve and Barry pursued further studies and non-music related employment. Barry discussed his motivation:

> My initial plan after studying BMus was to maybe move to the United States or Europe and work there as an orchestral musician. But I decided I would rather stay in South Africa and then I decided I would need to study something else to make a decent living.

Steve stated that he had doubted the sustainability of a music career after graduating with his BMus degree, but through observing his peers and some work opportunities that came across his path he realised that making a career in music could be sustainable. Steve articulated that sustainability is achieved through variety within a music career, “you can be an accompanist and do something else as well. It is all music and it is varied”.

The participants also improved financial sustainability by earning additional income as freelance performers and teachers, whilst employed in full-time or part-time jobs. Nellie explained her experience of making additional income as a full-time employed music teacher at a school: “The performances I have outside of school does help me to earn extra, which helps with some of the holes you have to fill”.

The participants had experienced a stable and secure income when employed within full-time work appointments. Tanya, Mary, Lucy, Sarah, Jane, Nellie and Kate had all experienced income sustainability when employed full-time at a school, FET College or university. Sustainability was promoted through multi-taking activities. For example, Sarah, Tanya, Jane and Kate were both full-time classroom music teachers and individual instructors.

Further studies were necessary to maintain full-time positions, in the case of working at schools Gillian, Tanya, Mary, Sarah, Jane, Nellie and Kelly all mentioned experiencing a need to obtain a post-graduate certificate in education. Sarah explained the situation:

> When I got the permanent position at the school. One of the requirements from them was that I must do a PGCE, because in South Africa we need to be part of SACE or you need to have a SACE number, and without an educational diploma or degree you cannot get a SACE number.

Full-time positions were very desirable to the participants. Mary explained how she desired a full-time position for more security and stability, “I wanted

something that was more sustainable in the long run. You know something that I knew that I had a job every month".

## 4.6 Member checks

As a means to verify the accuracy of findings and interpretations made by the researcher in this chapter, a process known as member checks was undergone (see Chapter 3, section 3.7 Validity, reliability and ethics). Hereby, an email was sent out to all participants that contained (1) the list of participants details in table format as seen in Chapter 3: Methodology (see Table 1: List of participants) and (2) this findings chapter. The following questions were asked to participants to ascertain formulated descriptions:

- Did I (the researcher) understand you correctly?
- Is this your experience in the work environment?
- Did I leave something out?
- Is there something you would like to add?
- Is there something you do not agree with?

A certain period of time was provided for participants to respond. The participants who responded replied positively and affirmed accuracy. In a few instances participants wanted to add information:

- The need for a 'more supportive music environment' in the form of positive messages, "to build the student up rather than break them down" was further emphasised, as well as the destructive impact of negative messages within a student-teacher relationship on self-esteem and self-image. Support in the form of therapy was suggested in such instances.
- The value of aural skills was also restated and it was stressed that aural skills be emphasised in music teaching practice for music students as an essential aspect for the enhancement of musical ability.
- In another instance a participant provided the additional fact that obtaining a full-time post is possible at a school with the BMus degree,

with the condition being that one would apply for a temporary SACE number that expires after a certain period time.

A few minor details were contributed towards quotes and small alterations suggested for Table 1: List of participants, which were added to the final draft of this dissertation.

## 4.7 Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to present the three emergent themes and each category including the sub-categories. The lived experiences of the participants contributed to the descriptive quality of this phenomenological study. In the next chapter I place my findings back into context of the literature and research questions, as well as new literature that surfaced from the findings chapter.

# CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

I hear, I forget
I see, I remember
I do, I understand

***- Chinese Proverb***[7]

## 5.1 Introduction

In the Findings chapter, it is seen that BMus graduates are 'portfolio' musicians, which enables them to be financially sustainable (Gregory, 2015:1). In this final chapter the central research question is answered, as well as the sub-questions. The answers to the research questions include a thematic discussion of the three themes identified, 'Lifelong learning', 'Variety within career portfolios' and 'Financial sustainability', and summary of findings, which have been placed back into the context of the literature. I then provide a critical overview of the study to justify the methodological approach chosen and discuss some limitations perceived. Implications for different audiences are specified, and I end with concluding remarks with suggestions for future research.

## 5.2 Research questions

In this section I refer to literature used in Chapter 2: Literature review. In addition, I also came across older sources as new information that assisted to contextualise meaning within music education and the value of feedback from students. Additionally, more recent sources came to light relevant to the investigation that I incorporated into this discussion. Relevant literature is woven into the text whilst answering the research questions. In so doing, I want to create the connections that prove that this dissertation makes sense as a whole.

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[7] This source *(English language and usage, 2015)* contains a forum debate on the origins of this quote.

### 5.2.1 Central research question

#### 5.2.1.1 What meaning do NWU BMus graduates ascribe to their BMus studies in their work environment?

“When a student values something, we say that it is meaningful to him” (Wayman, 2005:17). In this study, the participants **valued the BMus programme as a whole**, and referred to or remembered **specific course material** that was meaningful to them. According to Wayman (2005:17) meaning can be ascribed to “actions, activities, experiences, and objects” according to the “value placed on them by the individual”.

With regards to valuing BMus studies as a whole, meaningful aspects that emerged from findings as indicated by the participants included gaining a ‘musical foundation’, which included: ‘learning a musical language’, attaining ‘an advantage of understanding music’, ‘musical knowledge to draw from’, and developing ‘a musical perspective’. Older sources like Leonhard and House (1972:122) state that “without meaning there can be no learning”, thus meaning is considered an essential ingredient for learning.

Woodruff (1970:54) mentions that students experience “both meanings and feelings simultaneously”, and their “concept and value patterns reflect those meanings and feelings”. When considering the meaning ascribed to the BMus programme as a whole, it is possible to deduce that learning results in a feeling of enrichment, growth, development, or a state of becoming more advanced. According to the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* (electronic source, 2015) learning is “an activity or process of gaining knowledge or skill by studying, practising, being taught or experiencing something”. I, therefore, concluded that the meaning or the value ascribed to BMus studies by the early career graduates was **learning**.

From a work perspective, the participants experienced **changing contexts** within their work environment. These changing contexts can be more

accurately described as a variety within career portfolios. For this reason, ‘Variety within career portfolios’ was identified as a theme and is also the structural description of this phenomenological study. To clarify, “the structural description reflects the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced” (Creswell, 2013:194).

The textural description of the experiences of the participants, or “what” the participants experienced (Creswell, 2013:80) was continuous learning. Continuous learning can also be termed **lifelong learning**. Hence, ‘Lifelong learning’ was identified as a theme and the meaning attributed to learning from a workplace perspective. Lifelong learning was essential to cope with workplace demands. Lifelong learning is referred to as “continuous[ly] building skills and acquiring knowledge during one’s life through experiences faced” (Laal *et al.*, 2014:4047).

In the article, “Lifelong learning: What does it mean?” the author, Laal (2011b:470-474) arranges “phases of learning from pre-school to post-retirement” and describes “the whole spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning”. Aleandri and Refigeri (2013:1242) recommend that tertiary education come into closer contact and cooperation with working life.

Laal (2011b:470) contributes the notion that learning should be directed towards individual needs as well as the needs of the community. Interactive technology and electronic tools are seen as valuable to assist with lifelong learning strategies, since people can then “learn anytime and anyplace without obstacles” (Laal, 2011a:439). Laal and Salamati (2012:399) state:

> Our world is changing around us in such a frantic pace that if we do not continue to grow and develop; we will soon be left behind. In the 21st century, we all need to be lifelong learners. We need to continually keep our skills sharp and up to date so that we have an edge in all we do. Of course, we all have a natural desire to learn for adapting to change, enriching and fulfilling our lives.

Smilde (2012:99-123) suggests “the implementation of a ‘lifelong learning environment’ within music academics”. In the article, “Lifelong learning as a

challenge for music colleges", Smilde (2005:17) defines lifelong learning within the specific context of music academia and summarises important concepts for its practical application within this environment. Lifelong learning enables musicians to cultivate their own pathways and develop an awareness of identity, while encouraging self-exploration and reflection (Smilde 2005:17), the author expands:

> Lifelong learning leads to the emergence of informed musicians who can interact in a variety of contexts, whose attitudes are open minded and sensitive, who can listen and respond, who can be flexible and adapt, and for whom a culture of continuing professional development is taken for granted.

Countries throughout the world agree that lifelong learning, training and education are critical to manage the fast-paced changing society and demand for more competencies, skills and knowledge (Aleandri & Refigeri (2013:1242). Laal and Laal (2012:1539) suggest the development of a new learning culture to help people meet challenges faced in the twenty-first century. It is determined that lifelong learning is not only a human experience, but also an educational movement within global society.

To summarise, my answer to this main research question had two main dimensions, viz. (1) BMus-related experiences and (2) work-related experiences. The answer in terms of the meaning ascribed to BMus-related experiences was 'to learn' and the meaning ascribed to BMus studies from a work perspective was a need 'to learn continuously', building on the 'musical foundation' provided by the BMus studies. In addition, a lifelong learning approach is recognised as valuable to be considered for implementation within music academia.

### 5.2.2 Sub-questions

#### 5.2.2.1 What do NWU BMus graduates experience in the work environment regarding the relevance of knowledge, skills and competencies gained during their music studies?

In this study, participants discussed both **learning efficiencies** and **learning deficiencies** when assessing the relevance of the knowledge, skills and competencies gained during BMus studies from a work perspective. Feedback from students informs educators on how an environment and curricula had been received and assimilated by the students (Rogers,[8] 1983:306).

According to Wayman (2005:18) the meaning students find in their learning could determine if the information is retained or forgotten. The "value of an experience is an individual expression of meaning" and can change according to the circumstances of the person (Rogers, 1969:248-249). The participants remembered and referred to different aspects of the BMus programme, highlighting specific course material as valuable, namely:

- Performance
- Instrument methodology,
- Master classes,
- Music theory,
- Music history,
- Aural training,
- African music,
- Music education,
- Music therapy,
- Arts management,
- Community-learning project,
- Research,

[8] An older source that assisted with contextualisation of meaning within music education.

- Social musicology,
- Academic writing skills,
- Thinking skills,
- Knowing where to search for information.

“Understanding the meaningfulness of music education can help educators in developing better educational opportunities for students” by bringing the “students’ perspectives” into consideration (Wayman, 2005:32). The reasons provided by the participants for the perceived value of subjects, classes and projects referred to were: knowledge, skills and competencies that were ‘reusable’, ‘enriched personhood’, and ‘enhanced musical ability’, as well as learning that allowed participants to ‘integrate, transfer or relate information to different contexts’.

**Learning deficiencies** experienced by the participants included a need for ‘more practical application of knowledge’ and a ‘contextual understanding of knowledge’. The participants had also desired ‘in-service training’, a ‘more supportive musical environment’, which would include ‘more music-making opportunities’, as well as ‘career guidance’, ‘music technology’ and ‘small business management skills’. For more detailed, summarised, descriptions of learning deficiencies experienced by the participants in this study see Table 3.

**Table 3: Learning deficiencies**

| Topic | Learning suggestions made by participants | Literature suggestions |
|---|---|---|
| **More practical application of knowledge** | • More practical integration of different subjects<br>• More practical application within subjects<br>• More practical music pedagogy courses | • Lifelong learning, community and in-service training strategies (Smilde, 2005:5-18; Smilde, 2012:110-117; Carruthers, 2012:91-94). |
| **Contextual understanding of knowledge** | • Integrating contextual knowledge into teaching approach<br>• Knowing how to work with a great deal of content<br>• Discerning quality of information on Internet<br>• Student involvement in selection of subject content | • An epistemological foundation, viewing knowledge as contextual (Weller, 2012:53)<br>• Hannan (2012:137) refers to contextual studies such as “popular music history (styles, technology, legislation, business practices, cultural movements), music cultures (world music traditions and global music industry), industry critique (of genre, production, commodification, consumption, demography, mediation, technologisation, appropriation, copyright, authenticity, identity, censorship, cultural policy, globalisation, localisation, taste, fashion, gender, ethnicity and so on”. |
| **In-service training** | • Learning that takes place in real world of work<br>• Learning from mentors<br>• Incorporation of discussion groups to share and learn from others<br>• More experience in teaching beginners | • Easing the transition from student to professional (Weller, 2012:45-59)<br>• Value of mentorship (Johnsson & Hager, 2008:526-533)<br>• Build a small private teaching practice, include discussion group with faculty advisor to discuss challenges and opportunities of pedagogy and business aspects of studio teaching. Also, incorporate pedagogy courses to support such |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | activities (Weller, 2012:57) |
| **More supportive music environment** | • Recognition of the impact of negative messages on music students<br>• An understanding for an inner struggle within the student with feelings of not being good enough during the establishment of identity<br>• Not branding a student as a teacher if not viewed as good enough for solo performance, since performance occurs in various contexts within the work environment.<br>• Understanding the need for positive messages<br>• More support in the form of music-making opportunities<br>• Piano accompaniment training according to employment needs of students | • Developing subjective aspects, identity and vision, of a music student's career (Perkins, 2012: 2012:11-26)<br>• Fordon (1999:1) states that music students need strong self-esteem and skills to contradict negative messages.<br>• Watkins and Scott (2013:44-48) recommend unifying performance and pedagogy training.<br>• Hannan (2012:136) discusses teaching occupational health and safety such as "noise levels, lifting, climbing, overuse injuries, posture, fitness, vocal health, performance anxiety, work stress, crowd control, road safety, work/life balance, substance abuse." |
| **Career guidance** | • Knowledge about career options<br>• Exposure to a broader musical landscape applicable to real world of work and employment opportunities available<br>• Guidance on subject choices<br>• Recognising music education as an important aspect of sustainability and employability in workplace<br>• Addressing the lack of understanding regarding relevance of music subjects experienced during BMus studies<br>• Informed on professional qualification needed to be employable at a school as early as possible | • Implementation of career development programmes (Beeching, 2012:40-41)<br>• Understanding disconnect between career expectations and outcomes (Carruthers, 2012:79)<br>• Career guidance activities (Bennett *et al.*, 2012a:155-266). |
| **Music** | • Training in making backing tracks | • Technology changing the music profession |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **technology skills** | • Course content relevant to music jobs in the industry, e.g. Deejay<br>• Training in technology and music equipment for live performances<br>• Training in making professional recordings<br>• Working with music apps<br>• Notation software taught to all students from as early as possible.<br>• Learning a programming language, possibly towards the design of a music app. | (Beeching, 2012:34).<br>• Hannan (2012:137) lists music technology skills such as live sound reinforcement, lighting and projection, sound design, stage management , stagecraft, recording, editing, signal processing, mixing, mastering, systems design, composition technologies, multi-media technologies, technology troubleshooting, crisis management. |
| **Small business management skills** | • Adding small business management skills to curricula in context of both teacher and performer<br>• Entrepreneurship taught with a problem-based learning approach by someone with experience of being self-employed. | • Business and entrepreneurship skills needed (Bennett, 2012:71-72)<br>• Beeching (2012:41) provides entrepreneurship-training strategies.<br>• Hannan (2012:137) describes business skills such as industry structures, career planning, recording, publishing, agency, management and merchandising, image creation, negotiation, self-promotion, public relations, entrepreneurship, networking, audience development, small business management (business structures, financing, market analysis, marketing, marketing technologies, business planning, insurance, business communications, office management, office technologies, etc.), project management (planning, team building, quality control, budgeting, sponsorships, grant applications, conflict management, project evaluation) and |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | time management.<br>• Building professional and personal contacts (Weller, 2012:58)<br>• Internet and social networking (Weller, 2012:58-59) |

When distinguishing between learning that is meaningless and meaningful, Rogers (1969:5) referred to meaningless learning as rote memorisation without context that does not involve feelings or personal meanings, and meaningful learning as learning that bears significance to learners. The author explains that for learning to be meaningful to learners it must meet the needs of the individual (Rogers, 1969:5).

Bennett and Bridgstock (2015:33) advise that in-depth studies are important to consider when educators seek to find a better understanding of musicians' needs in the workplace. By gaining a better understanding of the "value students find in their musical experiences, educators can better meet individual students' needs", and organise "more meaningful curricula for students" (Wayman, 2005:32).

#### 5.2.2.2 How do NWU BMus graduates experience the context, conditions and circumstances of their work environment in relation to their BMus studies?

From a work perspective, participants had experienced being employed, being self-employed, or both. Places of employment included private and public schools, FET colleges, universities, music studios, churches, choirs, orchestras, theatres, and music stores. Other employment opportunities also included ensemble groups, piano accompaniment, teaching private music lessons, and being employed by a performance artist.

Participants' experiences with places of employment included self-administration, business and institution administered, or both. For instance, a school may manage finances and pay an indivdual music instructor, or it could be the music teacher's responsibility to manage finance and clients directly. Participants also experienced various types of employment:

- **Full-time or permanent** – paid a monthly salary
- **Part-time** – paid for hours of work on regular basis

- **Temporary or freelance** – paid for hours of work on demand or on temporary basis, also described as freelance employment

Bennett and Bridgstock (2015:264) mention full-time, part-time, and casual as types of employment experienced by music graduates. In this study, participants combined areas of employment by **multi-tasking** types of employment. **Areas of employment** included business, performance and education. **Overlapping of roles** such as those of administrator, performer, and teacher were experienced by the participants within their workplaces. For this reason, the theme 'Variety within career portfolios' was identified due to the multiple contexts, conditions and circumstances experienced by the participants. Similarly, Smilde (2012:100) found that musicians "combine several professional activities, function in different cultural contexts and have varying roles".

**Skills[9] utilised** in the workplace categorised in this study included: teaching (Smilde, 2012:108), performance (Bennett, 2012:72-73; Hannan, 2012:137), composition and arranging (Hannan, 2012:136), leadership (Smilde 2012:110-111), research (Hannan, 2012:140), and business skills, including administration, organisation (Bennett, 2012:71-72; Hannan, 2012:137), technology skills (Beeching, 2012:34; Hannan, 2012:137), communication (Bennett, 2012:72; Weller, 2012:56) and relationship skills (Weller, 2012:54).

In Table 4, a detailed summary of skills utilised in the workplace, as experienced by the participants within this study, is provided:

**Table 4: Skills utilised and descriptions**

| Skills utilised | Descriptions |
|---|---|
| Performance | • Various contexts (e.g. performing at church, weddings, festivals, orchestras, performing when teaching individuals and groups)<br>• Various genres (e.g. classical to more contemporary music). |

[9] "The ability to do something that comes from training, experience, or practice" (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, 2015)

| | |
|---|---|
| | • Solo performance, in the traditional classical sense, presented limited and restricted opportunities for performance. |
| Teaching | • Individuals and groups<br>• All ages<br>• All levels (beginner to advanced)<br>• More than one instrument<br>• Multicultural<br>• Multiple music genres<br>• Special needs<br>• Teaching additional subjects |
| Composition | Composition, including arranging skills:<br>• Vocal parts for choir or other singing groups,<br>• Band instruments,<br>• Writing songs,<br>• Various music ensemble groups, including orchestras,<br>• Composing and arranging for different levels of difficulty from beginner to advance. |
| Business | Business skills include administrative, as well as organisational skills, and were experienced in various contexts:<br>• Business skills (e.g. logo design and marketing)<br>• Administration (e.g. managing finances, keeping track of payments and outstanding fees, managing bookings or appointments, keeping records, managing timetables, writing reports, doing taxes, book orders, managing calendars, communicating verbally and in written form on paper or electronically such as emails, etc.).<br>• Organisation (e.g. hosting events such as fund raisers or concerts, managing people and providing instructions, creating forms, developing programmes, selecting music, booking a hall, decorating, organising sound equipment and lights etc.). |
| Leadership | Leadership skills occur in various contexts. Some examples of business-, music- and teaching-related leadership included:<br>• Directing bands,<br>• Conducting choirs or ensembles,<br>• Curriculum design,<br>• Lesson presentation,<br>• Managing a team as a team leader or head of department. |
| Relationship and Communication | Relationship and communication skills are required in various contexts when working with people. Some aspects encountered in the work environment included: |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • Handling politics,<br>• Managing clients or parents,<br>• Inspiring learners,<br>• Setting boundaries,<br>• Gaining resilience,<br>• Managing conflict,<br>• Dealing with uniqueness of individuals,<br>• Classroom management,<br>• Discipline techniques. |
| Technology | Technology skills occur in various contexts including business, communication, teaching and performance. Some uses for technology includes:<br>• Doing presentations,<br>• Showing videos,<br>• Using and making backing tracks,<br>• Using smart phones, tablets, and music software,<br>• Operating music equipment and plugging in devices. |
| Research | • Reading, Internet, watching documentaries.<br>• Researching national curriculum and adding content.<br>• Acquiring new skills through research: reading, observation by watching videos with explanations, and practical application.<br>• Research interests included labour laws, doing tax, music curriculums, music resources such as books and music equipment. |

Hannan (2012:125) mentions that professional musicians undertake a broad range of activities in order to survive – although these activities are not only motivated by survival, but are also experienced as satisfactory. To summarise, the following figure 20 is an imaginary visual presentation of musicians' work environments. The ideas for creating this figure came from my experiences as an entrepreneur combined with findings from this research.

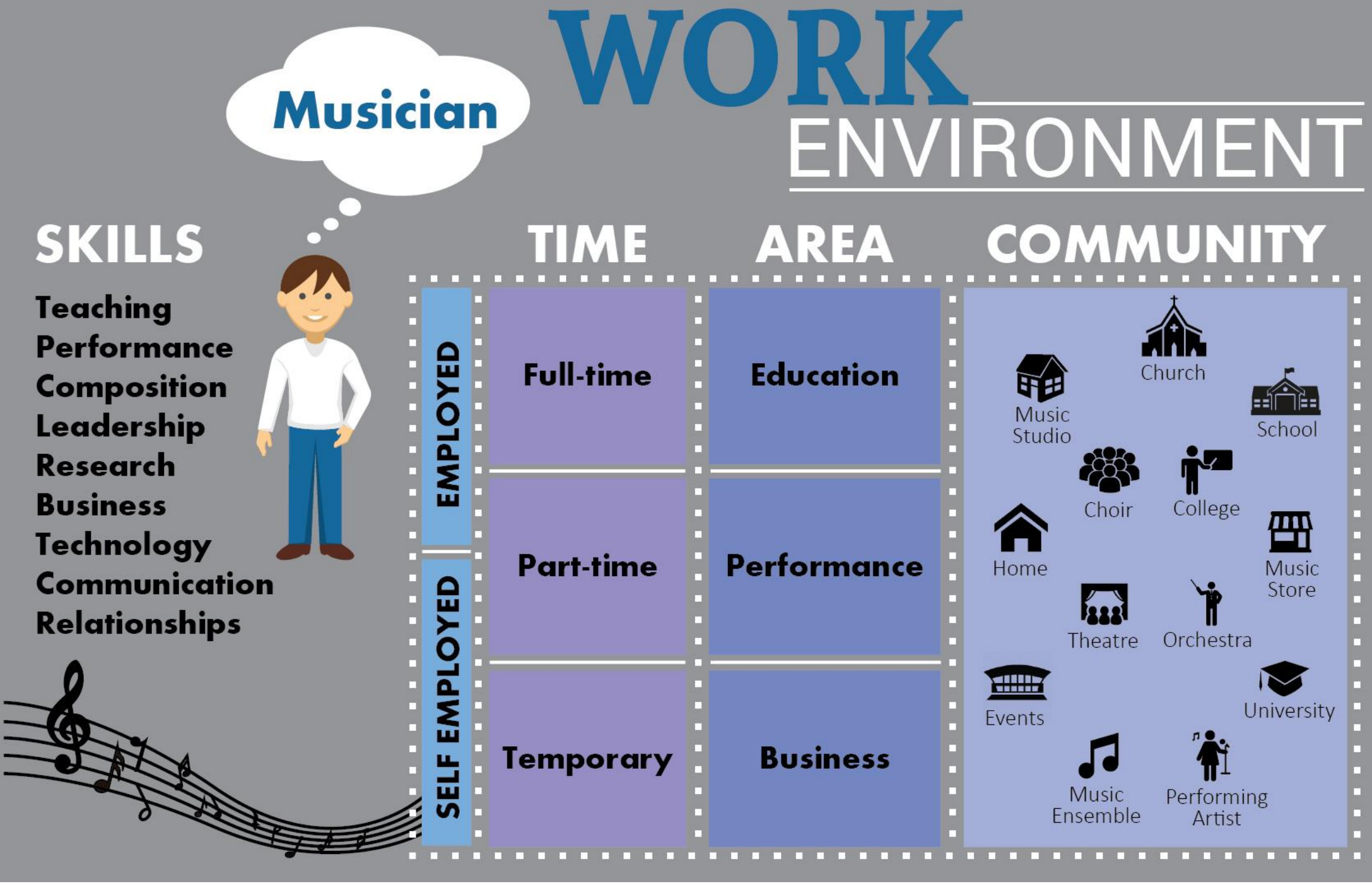


Figure 20: Musicians' work environments

#### 5.2.2.3 What role did BMus studies play in the way that BMus graduates make a sustainable income in the labour market?

The participants experienced employability and credibility within a BMus degree mostly within the limits of part-time and freelance employment, which can be a rather unstable and insecure type of employment as it involves payment based on working hours, instead of a monthly salary. Specialisation was unsustainable and was thus experienced as dissatisfactory.

According to *Cambridge Dictionaries Online* (electronic source, 2015) combining part-time and, or freelance employment is referred to as a "portfolio career"[10], which was necessary for the participants in this study to experience sustainability with a BMus degree. For example, some of the participants had more than one part-time job and combined this with freelance or temporary employment.

It could be said that the BMus degree makes a musician employable for a portfolio career. Perkins (2012:12) mentions that "portfolio careers" have become the norm for musicians. Portfolio career musicians are increasingly self-employed, entrepreneurial and mobile (Smilde, 2012:100). However, participants did not only experience "portfolio careers", but 'variety within career portfolios' in order to generate a financially sustainable income. To explain more clearly, participants multi-tasked activities, for instance teaching more than one instrument, or teaching individuals, as well as groups, and so on. Bennett *et al.* (2012:7) refer to protean[11] career and explain further as follows:

> Protean careers are so-called after the mythological Greek sea-god Proteus, who was able to change form at will in order to avoid danger. This is something increasing numbers of people need to do in order to remain employable. Stemming from the mythical sea-god Proteus, who was the first 'shape-shifter', the protean musician refers to one who

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10 "The fact of having several part-time jobs at once rather than a full-time job, also the fact of having a series of jobs each for a short time, rather than one job for a long time" (*Cambridge Dictionaries Online*, 2015).

11 "Able to change into many different forms or able to do many different things, displaying great diversity or variety" (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2015).

> does not limit his or her activities, but instead forges a career from diverse activities in music and is able to take advantage of new opportunities as they appear.

Gregory (2015:1) suggests the term ‘portfolio’ musician, in a newspaper article titled: “We lack a strong enough workforce of professional ‘portfolio’ musicians”. The ‘portfolio’ musician is a descriptive term I recognise as encompassing both portfolio careers and protean careers. Likewise, research by Bennett (Australia), Carruthers (Canada), Beeching (United States), Perkins (United Kingdom), Smilde (Europe), and Weller (United States) on music careers (Bennett *et al.*, 2012a:1-143) revealed that music graduates were ‘portfolio’ musicians.

Bennett *et al.* (2012a:1-143) refer to traditional employment like playing in orchestras, or teaching at universities as being scarcer as a result of music graduates out-numbering such vacancies. In this study, the participants also perceived full-time employment as more rare. An additional challenge was that full-time employment at schools could only be obtained temporarily, on the condition that the BMus graduate pursued future studies in education (SACE, 2015), the reason being that the participants had to be part of the South African Council for Educators (SACE) and were required to obtain a SACE number in order to be recognised as an educator within the country. It was found by the participants that the BMus degree was not sufficient to obtain a SACE number; only a temporary SACE number could be obtained that expires and a continuous reapplication process is necessary (SACE, 2015).

Full-time or permanent positions were satisfactory, stable and secure, and preferred by participants. Further studies for the participants were required to secure such employment within most instances. Further studies pursued by the participants included higher qualifications within music such as Master’s and Doctoral studies, qualifications in education, or studies in another field. In this thesis, studies in other fields included business-related areas and allowed the participants to still engage in music employment and musical activities on a freelance or part-time basis.

## 5.3 Trumpets and confessions

The phenomenological research approach was an effective means of letting the data speak honestly and accurately, and giving a voice to the lived experiences of BMus graduates from a work perspective. Thematic data analysis provided a valuable method to synthesise large volumes of complex data by creating meaningful subcategories, categories, and concepts (otherwise known as themes), as a means of organising data in a manner that is useful and makes sense.

Implementing phenomenological concepts such as ‘bracketing’ that involved a practice of acknowledging, explaining, and monitoring presuppositions and biases was valuable in capturing my personal experience with the phenomenon of being a BMus graduate in the workplace (see Addendum C for Vignette: My work experience as early career BMus graduate) and further presuppositions and biases (see section 3.8. Researcher’s role, bias and assumptions) regarding expectations for tertiary music curriculum. Upon reflection, I recognised that my understanding of the phenomenon changed after data collection and analysis. I could see my own experience in the workplace and with music education and training with a new filter of improved understanding. These processes of ‘bracketing’ did assist with capturing my experience on paper, and this did help me to focus on the experiences of the participants during data collection and analysis.

‘Phenomenological reduction’, which involved returning to the essence of the experience in order to obtain the “inner structure or meaning in and of itself”, ‘Horizontalization’ whereby all data is handled as having equal value, and ‘Imaginative variation’ by which data is viewed from various perspectives like “walking around a modern sculpture, seeing different things from different angles” (Merriam 2009:26), were all valuable phenomenological processes during the process of conducting this research.

‘Horizontalization’ was useful in the prevention of data getting lost. Phenomenological reduction combined with logical thinking was valuable for brainstorming sessions to conceptually organise the data. Imaginative variation was especially meaningful during the data collection phase of the research to understand the participants’ perspectives and during data analysis to see different meanings or angles on data.

Some limitations of the study included the size of the sample group, although the sample was sufficient for a phenomenological study with the intention being to arrive at an essence of the lived experiences of participants. More time in the field would allow for more detail and further mapping of musicians’ experiences in the workplace. However, on a thematic basis data saturation had been reached.

Unexpected results included one participant who voiced the view that the BMus degree did not cater for someone who is solely interested in performance. The degree was described as too diverse and included too many music subjects that made it difficult to practise for long hours and did not provide for enough performance opportunities as an outlet. The person was not concerned with sustainability within a music career, but rather wanted the opportunity to pursue a dream. I could not reflect this data accurately in the study, since the common or shared experiences of the participants from a work perspective were for a sustainable career within music. I did, however, reflect this data as ‘more music-making opportunities’, within the ‘more supportive music environment’ subcategory as part of the ‘learning deficiency’ category in the ‘Lifelong learning’ theme.

The themes identified within this research revealed the essence of the experience of the BMus graduates and answers the question what it is like to be a BMus graduate within the work environment. When critically assessing the study, findings provide clarity on the lived experiences of music graduates to inform future research, especially in combination with existing literature on the work experiences of music graduates (see Chapter 2: Literature Review).

## 5.4 Recommendations

My recommendations, based on NWU alumni feedback (see Table 3: Learning deficiencies), are that attention be given to incorporate a learning approach that integrates more practical application of knowledge (see Figure 22: Learning balance model), as well as contextual understanding of knowledge (see Figure 23: Contextual learning model).

Recommended strategies include incorporating more in-service training (including more experience teaching beginners, as well as learning from mentors) and more opportunities for music making in various contexts (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.5 Learning environment suggestions). Moreover, further recommendations are towards the establishment of a more supportive music-learning environment that nurtures a positive self-esteem and self-image through the acknowledgment of the diversity within individual strengths and talents (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4 Career preparation recommendations for music students).

I further advise that BMus students are made fully aware of the professional qualifications and procedures required to obtain full-time positions at a school, college, or university from their first year of study. In addition to this, offering career guidance on career options relevant to the real world of work, and providing assistance on subject choices to meet career goals. It is also important to acknowledge the significance of music teaching, as not being inferior, but a valuable musical skill that enables sustainability within a music career. In fact, it would be valuable if the BMus degree could be aligned with gaining a teaching qualification that recognises BMus graduates as educators.

The implementation of small business management skills requires priority, since BMus graduates are running businesses as both performers and teachers. Furthermore, I recommend music technology training related to teacher and performance environments, because this directly impacts and improves the quality of teaching and performance practice for the BMus

graduates in the workplace (see Table 3: Learning deficiencies). In addition, it is important to recognise the value of small business management skills and music technological training relevant to the real world of work as crucial to open doors for employment and launch entrepreneurial initiatives within music careers.

## 5.5 Implications for audiences

This study serves to inform an internal and external programme evaluation undertaken by the North-West University as a strategy and initiative to assess the viability of BMus graduate employability within the community and workplace, as well as the industry and labour market (IPE, 2014: 3-4). Here is a list of audiences specified for whom this research has implications:

- Government Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) within South Africa
- North-West University, Faculty of Arts and School of Music
- Educators providing tertiary music education, especially with reference to BMus degree studies.
- Music students and graduates, specially BMus students and graduates
- Music education researchers
- Phenomenological researchers
- Professional development training initiatives

## 5.6 Conclusion

It has become known through this research that musicians experience variety within career portfolios in order to experience financial sustainability (Bennett *et al*., 2012a:3-154). Variety within career portfolios that enabled a sustainable income within this study is summarised in Figure 21.


Figure 21: Employment case scenarios experienced by participants that enabled sustainability

It was also identified that participants experienced lifelong learning within the work environment in order to manage the variety and diversity experienced within career portfolios, which in return enabled the participants to generate a sustainable income.

To conclude, I would like to make suggestions towards lifelong learning strategies within music academia (Smilde, 2005:5-18; Smilde, 2012:110-117):

Firstly, I propose that during the process of teaching that the learning process be complimented with both content and context to improve integration of learning material. I developed a contextual leaning model to simplify this idea of not only teaching content, the ‘what’ of leaning, but to ensure that the 'how, why, when and where’ are all part of the learning experience.

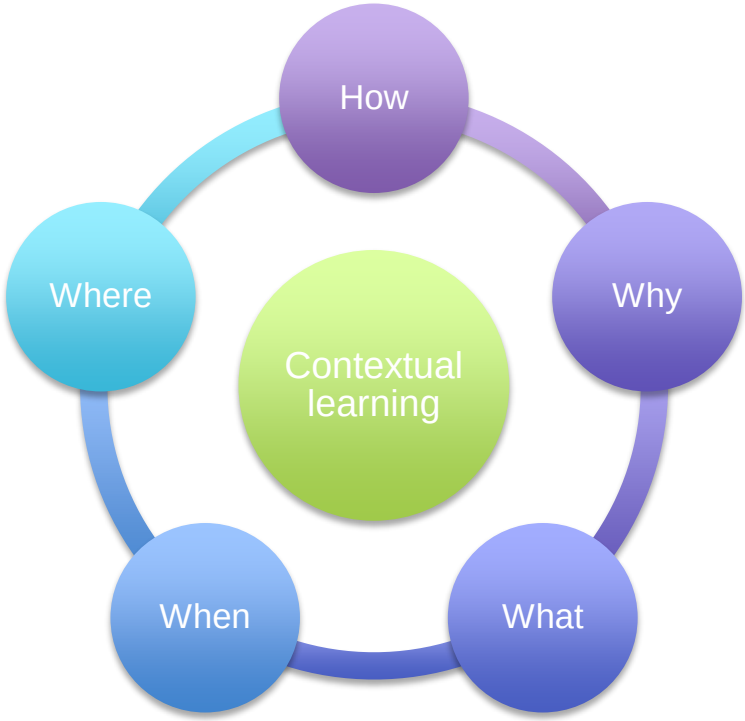


Figure 22: Contextual learning model

I recognise that a weakened learning model focuses on only content, or context, whilst a learning model that includes both content and context allows for a more complete understanding of knowledge and its application.

Secondly, I offer a learning balance between theoretical and experiential knowledge as model and means to train skills, which also improves the contextual understanding of knowledge and facilitates the practical application of knowledge.


Figure 23: Learning balance model

The experiential knowledge being applied to ensure that the theoretical aspects of learning are complemented with real world applications to facilitate skill competencies (see Table 3: Skills utilised and descriptions).

This research has enabled the researcher to identify the contextual learning model (see Figure 22) and the learning balance model (see Figure 22), which was summarised from the perspectives of the participants in this study, and added to this dissertation to present the needs for integrated knowledge voiced by the BMus graduates to assist with the transition into the work environment after studies.

Lastly, I further contribute two insights gained through a process of imaginative variation (Merriam, 2009:26). The first insight was characteristics of lifelong learners as being: teachable, changeable, applicable, adaptable, reflective, evaluative and assessable (see Figure 24).


Figure 24: Characteristics of a lifelong learner

The individual has a mind-set of being teachable and has a willingness to learn or change. A changeable and teachable mind-set initiates a response of being willing to apply new information, which results in an adaptable tendency. Thereafter, other processing involves reflecting on the application of the new information and evaluating its meaning or value. An assessment allows the individual to determine whether the change is beneficial or detrimental, or other deductions could be made about the meaning or value.

The second insight was that of an attitude of a lifelong learner, which involves the following aspects:

- Willingness to learn,
- Willingness to change,
- Willingness to apply new information, which
- Results in flexibility and adaptability.

By recognising the characteristics (see Figure 24) and the attitude of a lifelong learner our knowledge becomes enriched towards the lifelong learning mentality required within the workplace of the musicians of today.

## 5.7 Final remarks

In the context of the variety and diversity experienced within music careers, I agree with Gregory (2015:1) that it is time to heed to the call for nurturing a stronger workforce of ‘portfolio’ musicians as valuable contributors to creative and cultural industries in the economy and to celebrate diverse roles such as: “Teacher, community musician, creative workshop leader, music therapist, music administrator” to name only a few, as essential to the wellbeing of the community and in recognition of the employability potential of classical musicians.

It is clear that variety and diversity in the workplace constitute the most likely lived experience for music graduates (see Section 5.3.2), and for this reason lifelong learning is an essential requirement for sustainability within a music

career. I suggest further research towards lifelong learning as a learning approach, and more research into musicians' workplace experiences to be incorporated as a strategy to inform relevance and applicability of learning within music academia as means to ensure employability and sustainability of music graduates.

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# ADDENDUM A

**"The meaning of BMus studies for early career graduates: a phenomenological study"**

Dear Participant,

The following information is provided for you to decide whether or not you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with either the researcher or the North-West University.

The purpose of this study is to understand the work experiences of individuals who graduated with a Bachelor of Music degree (BMus). The procedure used will be a phenomenological study design. At this stage in the research, participants' perceptions of BMus studies and the establishment of career after studies will generally define the process of this study.

Data will be collected by means of interviews with participants that may include various sources of communication, for example email, face-to-face interviews or Skype calls and messaging, and additional social media may also be utilised for your convenience.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before or during the time of your participation. I would be happy to share my findings with you after the research has been completed. However, your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way, and only the researcher will know your identity as a participant.

Potential discomforts involved with the study include setting time aside for a lengthy interview and being audio or video-recorded. The expected benefits associated with your participation would be the information gained from the knowledge of your experiences that will provide valuable alumni feedback to inform BMus subject and programme design, as well as an opportunity to participate in a qualitative research study. When submitted for publication, a by-line will indicate the participation of all NWU alumni.

Please sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep.

Full Name: _____Date: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

*Ellré. P. Jacobs, Master's in Music (MMus) Musicology, Principal Investigator*

# ADDENDUM B

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
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Date: …….

Researcher: E.P. Jacobs
Student No: 24790257
Cell number: 082 968 8337

Title of study: **The meaning of BMus studies for early career graduates: a phenomenological study**

I, ……., give my permission that my responses in the interview may be used for the purpose of research in music education. I am fully aware of the nature of the research. I may withdraw at any time and my participation in this research is voluntary. All efforts to protect privacy, anonymity and confidentiality will be adhered to. I will comment on the validity of findings to ensure accurate and truthful representation of my account before publication of data. I understand that this research is for the……
…….....

……(Name of participant)

E. P. Jacobs…….(Name of researcher)

…… (Place)

# ADDENDUM C

## Vignette: My work experience as early career BMus graduate

After graduating with a BMus degree from the University of Pretoria, I accepted a position as cello teacher at a private school in Johannesburg. I was living in Pretoria at the time, which meant it was about an hour's drive to work - this not taking rush-hour traffic into account. After beginning work, the head of the music department at the school asked if I could teach additional instruments as she explained to me that there were not enough cello learners at the school. My main instrument at university had been cello; however, I was also a singer. I did advanced international vocal studies and exams with a private voice teacher, apart from my BMus degree. We decided that it would be a more viable option for me to teach both cello and voice at the school. After six months, I found that the time spent on the road became very problematic. Traffic was a terrible experience in the afternoons after work. I also had safety concerns, since I was driving through a dangerous rural settlement to get to and from work. Furthermore, some of my students at the school were not very committed to their instruments and were frequently cancelling their weekly lessons. A few students stopped their lessons entirely. This made my income very unpredictable. Administration, invoicing and following up on payments were also not managed by the school. Instead, they were the responsibility of the music teacher. For me this was a rather tiring experience, especially when payments were late. I started to make calculations in my head about the time spent on the road and weighed that up against the little income that I was earning from working at the school. Most of my income was spent on travelling, and the lost hours in transit meant less time to focus on my own musical development. It no longer felt profitable to keep my job as a music teacher.

After some contemplation of my work possibilities, I was reminded of an idea of teaching a pre-school music curriculum. This idea was introduced to me during my music education classes at university. I told my employer about my grievances and explained to her that I needed to discontinue my employment in the third term of the school year. I also told her about my idea to pursue pre-school classroom music teaching. She was very understanding of my situation and gave me a reference for someone whom I could contact to assist me. The lady was working as a pre-school classroom music teacher and offering someone the possibility of learning by

assisting in her music classroom. I proceeded to contact her and she invited me to join her whenever it was possible for me. She introduced me to Orff workshops, and later Colourstrings, for which I travelled to Austria to attend a short instrumental course. Through these experiences I also learned more about Kodaly, and was provided with valuable practical resources that allowed me to grow as a classroom and instrumental music teacher. In addition, I joined a network of music teachers who keep me informed about professional development training for classroom music teachers that to this day continues to add value to my musical experiences. I would have really appreciated exposure to these kinds of music pedagogy experiences during my BMus studies as I have drawn so much value from such training in the work environment.

After a few encounters as apprentice with the pre-school music teacher, I was invited to apply for her position at the school. She had been promoted to a new position as head of the music department. The school was based in Centurion, which was a little closer to home, but still a 40-minute drive away. I applied for this job and was appointed to the position the following year. Thus, in my second year after graduation I taught classroom music to learners aged three to five years. My employment was part-time and the title ‘specialist music teacher’ indicated that I had a BMus degree rather than an educational degree. It was during this experience that I became aware of the need to have a SACE number when taking up employment at a school. My BMus degree had not been sufficient to obtain this number, as it requires a degree in the area of teaching. A temporary SACE number expires after a year, however, can be obtained in the case of a BMus degree. Reapplication for this number is required annually, with no guarantee of obtaining it for another year. This is a rather tedious and bothersome process. The only way to obtain a permanent SACE number is to further your studies by acquiring a post-graduate certificate in education. I remember hearing rumours about this among my peers in the final year of my BMus studies, but the reality only struck when I was confronted with it in the workplace. I was not thinking that I would become a classroom music teacher back then. I still had other career ideals.

Being a pre-school music teacher came with its own set of challenges. The school had no music instruments, so I had to negotiate to obtain a budget for this. The previous teacher had used her own music instruments, but I did not have any. Fortunately, the school was eager to build its music resources and offered me a limited budget for the year for this purpose. I managed to make many plans to

acquire inexpensive instruments for the school. I enjoyed working with the little ones; however, the working conditions as a part-time teacher and teaching multiple classes had its disadvantages. Classroom management was a challenge. I had roughly 180 children and remembering all of their names was not easy. Furthermore, the little kids were frequently ill and as can be expected from little ones, they like to give their teacher lots of hugs with dirty hands and runny noses. My immunity was not coping with the extensive exposure to potential illnesses. Becoming frequently ill was jeopardising my continued study as a vocal performer. Laryngitis became an illness once a term. On top of this I had to use a loud teaching voice, which also put strain on my vocal chords. I was very aware of the importance of vocal health after instruction from my vocal teachers. I knew that I needed to protect my instrument, which meant that teaching at the school was becoming a threat to my voice. I felt like I had to make a choice. I decided to discontinue my work at the school the following year.

I had concluded that I would much rather work even closer to home. At first I went to several schools in Pretoria to hand in my CV, but received no response. I assumed that there were no vacancies or that they were not looking for my skills set. I later found out that the more experienced teachers held the cello-teaching positions. I also figured out through observation that the music departments of those schools were set up in a way that you required a specific skills set. To explain: a vocalist with piano accompaniment skills and choir conducting training was far more likely to get the position than a mere voice teacher like myself. I did not grow up in Pretoria and had no school history in the city. All I knew was the university. I did not know about the local schools or how their music departments operated. If I did, I would likely have known that my chances were very small when applying at those schools.

I resolved to focus my energy on a private music-teaching studio and earn my income through performance. This was possible for me at that stage, as I had started my own music business directly after graduation. This was at the same time that I was working at the previously mentioned schools. I had also already been teaching privately. My business was set up to organise live musicians for events. I had created different ensemble groups (duo, trio and quartet) with peers and orchestra friends. Our repertoire consisted of arranged music for ensembles. However, all the requested music was not always available and I used this opportunity to further develop my own arranging skills. One of my majors during BMus studies had been composition, which included a little bit of arranging. I remember being quite

disappointed that we did not have arranging as a subject, as one of my career desires at the time included becoming an arranger and film composer. I would also really have appreciated orchestral and choir conducting skills in combination.

During my third year after graduation I was working mostly from home, teaching cello, vocals and music theory. The other times I was performing by playing at weddings, university functions and corporate events. This sounded like the dream job, but staying home so much and having too few social encounters was leading to depressed feelings. I began to lack motivation. I experienced others as very busy and my perception was that no one cared. I think that living alone also contributed to my emotional imbalance. My family, my closest support system, lived a two and half hour drive away. My business was very successful, achieving an award for being one of the top live music suppliers in the wedding industry as voted for by brides. In spite of this, I felt like there had to be much more to life. I was still playing in orchestras as a cellist, but I was not getting the same joy from it as before. Performing had become work, something I had to do to survive. If I did not perform, I could not pay my monthly expenses. My income was uncertain and I could not plan financially. This was a surprise to me as I realised that I was considered successful, but still struggling to get by or become financially independent. I was also making many personal sacrifices like working on weekends, public holidays and other important days for family and loved ones. Saying no to a gig on one of these days could have meant the difference between making the month's expenses or not. I started thinking about ways to increase my income during the week, but by the end of that year my emotional wellbeing had become alarming. I was thinking suicidal thoughts, and considered it no loss if I did not exist. The way that my passion for music was being removed from the act of playing, because of the harsh financial realities was leaving me feeling despondent. When I looked at all the things that I thought I was striving for, they had all become meaningless. I no longer had any inspiration to continue pursuing the same goals. My introverted personality was not helpful either, as I was very independent, did not easily rely on others, and generally felt like I needed to solve my own problems within my own internal world.

It was at this point that I surrendered to my mother's suggestions to move back home. I also became motivated to further my studies at North-West University. My parents own a private school in the town where I grew up, which is not too far from the University, and they offered me a job there. For the last three years and until this day I have been employed at the school holding a position as performance art

teacher. I teach singing, dance and drama, taking responsibility for the school concert productions. The skills I am applying in the workplace now are not particularly derived in a relevant way from my BMus studies, but that is no surprise, as being a performance art teacher is also not one of the career outcomes for a BMus degree. I embraced the opportunity to explore other areas of myself and this has enabled me to earn a steadier income. I still run my music business in the city and continue teaching music privately. However, my income is no longer so dependent on performances and I can enjoy music as a passion once more.