

## Chapter 7

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# The National Curriculum as manifest destiny

Cathy Benedict and Patrick Schmidt

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So much of the education debate in this country is backward looking: have the standards fallen? Have exams got easier? These debates will continue, but what really matters is how we're doing compared with our international competitors. That is what will define our economic growth and our country's future. The truth is, at the moment we are standing still while others race past.

(Prime Minister David Cameron, Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg,  
The Schools White Paper 2010: 3)

The search for scientific bases for confronting problems of social policy is bound to fail, because of the nature of these problems. They are 'wicked' problems, whereas science has developed to deal with 'tame' problems. Policy problems cannot be definitively described. ... Even worse, there are no 'solutions' in the sense of definitive and objective answers.

(Rittel and Webber 1973: 155)

### Introduction

We open this chapter with two quotes. The first is a call to arms in no uncertain words and is intended to bring fear into the hearts of the *true* citizen of a great nation state. Clearly, not 'the' great nation state Britain could be but that is, of course, what '*really* matters' and what *counts* in terms of rhetorical provocation of political incitement. At least, it's what matters on the surface, as a rhetorical provocation of incitement. As the speech is uttered, indeed, as this is stated, the message is made clear 'through a logic that presumes the efficacy of modern democratic ideals' (Lyon, 1999: 3). One does not deserve the moniker 'citizen' if one cannot see how the educative system has failed its children and by extension its nation. Undoubtedly the need for reform is fierce and the time for 'urgent thorough going reform' (Gove 2010) – is now. Always now..

In the second quote, through their interrogation of the attempts that have been made at solving problems through the 'scientific management movement' and its modernist belief in efficiency, Rittel and Webber (1973) direct our

attention to those ways problems have traditionally been formulated and 'solved.' The term *wicked* is coined in the context of social policy and planning and is a direct attempt to highlight and challenge the failure to address the 'juncture where goal-formulation, problem-definition and equity issues meet' (p. 156). Political discourse and action does not result by accident or from fortuitousness. Rittel and Webber also suggest the possibility that 'failure' might also be connected to deliberative practices.

We do not mean to personify these properties of social systems by implying malicious intent. But then, you may agree that it becomes morally objectionable for the planner to treat a wicked problem as though it were a tame one, or to tame a wicked problem prematurely, or to refuse to recognize the inherent wickedness of social problems.

(Rittel and Webber 1973: 160)

While educational reform is a complex and nuanced endeavour, when analyzed historically it is not absurd to suggest that governments have often spoken of education and the educative process as a problem with a solution. Nor would it be absurd to suggest that education has been the basis for political platforms and used as a vehicle for the reform and redemption of the Nation-State. As such, while the creation of the National Curriculum, and its external establishment through hard copies and the at once pervasive and elusive presence of a website that hosts it, both suggest and reflect complexity. The presentation of the National Curriculum also makes indelible the impression that the British Government has 'not abandoned the hope that the instruments of perfectibility can be perfected' (p. 158).

### Perpetual clarion calls

The call to reform education is hardly new. Indeed, in the UK, every decade has produced a re-examination of the educational system: previous to the establishment of the current National Curriculum there were subsequent 'reform milestones' including the 'falling standards, in the early 1960s' and the 'economic downturn of the mid-1970s' (House of Commons 2008–09: 10). And while these milestones have often produced the instinctual effect of 'Oh no, not again,' Lawson's *et al.* (1994) depiction of a troubling view of the state of music education at the particular historic juncture of the creation of the National Curriculum articulates the recognition of diminishing programs, parent contribution for funding becoming more pervasive, lack of specialists, unequal offerings and time availability for music instruction, etc. The reality that government intervention and the establishment of pervasive policy delineating the imperative of music in schools has had a stabilizing effect – in terms of establishing and equalizing distribution – seems therefore undeniable. What remains more open is the next step. Being that education, in music and otherwise, is established as a right, in what ways is that right *de facto* implemented and developed? And to what effect?

At the core of this chapter is the belief that since the late 1980s, when the process of creating a National Curriculum began in the UK, the development of this endeavor has reflected a rhetorical progression much like those of revolutionary movements of the past. These movements or departures, that signal both a break from the past and revolutionary beginnings, have often been marked by what we can call the *manifesto*. Lyon (1999) examines the concept and construct of this idea by addressing the manner in which manifestoes are used in the creation of public spaces. One such very 'public' contemporary space is the delivery of the National Curriculum, whether through the website that houses it, or hardcopies that can be accessed, each of which we assert are not just simple platforms for the distribution of information, but rather sites of identity formation, including the construction of 'we' and 'them.'

We therefore build on Lyon's work by arguing that while the National Curriculum and extant documents are never referred to as manifestos, they function as such. We further her thinking and posit that – as a departure from more traditional or historical forms – the most recent iteration of the document has co-opted the rhetoric of the revolutionary discourse of oppressed populations, to underscore and further a particular ideological value system that provides the conservative discursive conditions under which support for the National Curriculum can exist. In other words, the National Curriculum is not a representation of the work a government develops alongside and on behalf of its citizens, but rather, a discursive tool in the actualization of political goals and ideological wants.

We further contend that politically it is important and significant that music educators attend to this so that a strong authorial voice may be developed and made present. If we choose to disregard development and reform intricacies of documents such as the National Curriculum, as well as the ways in which language is utilized, we cannot enter the process of maneuvering educative processes that address the concerns of arts educators. As a set of texts the National Curriculum is fixed and defined. Although it is ostensibly left open as to how one can 'teach' the curriculum, it is in essence a document that is taught (and subsequently measured)<sup>2</sup> and not a 'thing in the making, continuously evolving through our understanding of the world and our own bodies' experience of and participation in that world (Ellsworth, 2005: 1).

Curriculum, of course, always seems like good policy. At the micro level of the classroom, it provides needed guidance, and at the macro level of politics it offers a complete vision of the educational enterprise that can be *translated* into accountable aims. But is 'good' policy akin to quality in educational terms? Specifically, do systems such as National Curriculum skew the notion that 'schools are complex webs of human activity' where 'input-output models are inapplicable' (Orchard, 2002: 166)? Is the framework of structures such as the National Curriculum in fundamental contradiction to the jostling for space enacted by alternative and innovative practices? From these questions we argue, in the latter part of this chapter, that a lack of attention to *localities* as fully capable of curricular development is connected to a preoccupation with *improvement* that is defined as

capacity to perform acts rather than development of a *life in music* or dispositions toward *making up music*.

Serious critique of the Music National Curriculum is clear to anyone looking carefully at the literature. Lawson, Plummeridge and Swanwick (1994) reported the view of headteachers that 'in some instances arts presentations are being regarded as necessary public relations exercises within the context of an increasingly competitive educational service' (p. 5). Cooksey and Welch (1998) argued that 'the National Curriculum poses serious problems to teachers because of the assumption that pupils, regardless of age, stage of physical/emotional/cognitive/social maturation, and socio-cultural status will follow a univariate, linear paradigm of development' (p. 101). Kushner (1994) pointed out the manner in which a curriculum that failed to start from where pupils were, impaired their judgment and undermined their development. Our examination, however, focuses on the intersection between the political language (manifestos) with policy (the totalizing element of how that political language is transformed into policy) and then into practice – and their effects on the local capacity to develop curricular structures – which places the teacher as a full professional. And while government parties come and go, if we choose to disregard how documents such as the National Curriculum are developed and delivered, as well as the ways in which language is utilized, we cannot aid in the process of maneuvering educative processes that address the concerns of arts educators.

### Manifestos

This White Paper signals a radical reform of our schools. We have no choice but to be this radical if our ambition is to be worldclass. The most successful countries already combine a high status teaching profession; high levels of autonomy for schools, a comprehensive and effective accountability system and a strong sense of aspiration for all children, whatever their background. Tweaking things at the margins is not an option. Reforms on this scale are absolutely essential if our children are to get the education they deserve.<sup>1</sup>

(David Cameron Prime Minister and Nick Clegg Deputy Prime Minister)

In this section we focus on the force and impact of language and the structure of the National Curriculum. We consider the correlation to legitimacy that allows for reinforcement of that structure and how this limits those ways curriculum can be reentered, adapted and changed. We do so by viewing the National Curriculum and its extant documents as manifestos and contend that its website, as a 'commoditized infrastructure' (Van Dijck and Nieborg, 2009: 856) furthers a nearly indisputable discourse and ideology of global competition and the inevitability of market-based development.

Directly related and in fact predicated on this discourse, is a secondary discourse that focuses on: basics, privatization, 'a tighter, more rigorous, model of ...

knowledge', self-surveillance or 'blowing the whistle on weak schools,' and 'order' in classrooms (Gove 2010). This in turn presents a simplifying process of delineating education as a series of *problems* with *tangible* and, in-fact-quite-direct solutions which is supported by an over-focus on *measurable* results. All of which directly impacts pedagogy and learning to such an extent that methods of teaching, while seemingly neutral and apolitical, are influenced by rigour, order and measurement. Consequently, it is of no surprise then that the National Curriculum and the processes of Ofsted push teachers to teach to the curriculum. It would be then feasible to argue that:

those ... who choose methods of production which maximize profits will survive and flourish; those who make different choices will lose their capital and the social power it represents.

(Woods 2004: 47)

Most of us have never thought through what makes manifestos 'manifestos' but we probably have a sense of their purpose and intent; one usually recognizes them to involve a rallying call of revolutionary purpose. While there is certainly not one template for the manifesto, Lyon (1999: 2) suggests there are characteristics that delineate and designate the form of a manifesto that 'addresses and at the same time elicits an entity called the People'. Through the use of such characteristics as a rigid definition of 'we' and 'them', the formation of the universal subject, pronouncements of urgency in the moment, the use of 'highly selective' historical evidence that supports the need for reform, and an unmediated style of rhetoric that is designed to prevent interrogation or dissent, a manifesto names and demands allegiance.

In doing this, however, the manifesto also reduces the complex social context into a rigid structure that as Lyon describes:

... creates audiences through a rhetoric of exclusivity, parceling out political identities across a polarized discursive field, claiming for 'us' the moral high ground of revolutionary idealism, and constructing 'them' as ideological tyrants, bankrupt usurpers, or corrupt fools.

(Lyon 1999: 3)

What both fascinates and concerns us is that the manifesto to which we are referring is not one that emerged from the disenfranchised, or disempowered. The State isn't a marginalized group; there is little oppression which it needs to chronicle. It does not need to 'yield an alternative historical narrative' (Lyon 1999: 15), it *is* the historical narrative. As political winds shift ideological leadership comes and goes in such consistent fashion that it probably does not surprise any of us that with each re-visitation of the National Curriculum what was once valued becomes immediately suspect, and that documents developed through and based on research can, overnight, be repackaged as a 'straitjacket which stifles

the creativity of our best teachers' (Gove 2010). Throughout current documents the rhetoric of creativity, participation, social skills and social justice are unabashedly and 'intimately wedded to the rhetoric of capitalism' (Van Dijck and Nieborg 2009: 867) and unapologetically used to argue economic benefits. Consider the 24 September 2010 Press Notice for the announcement of the Review of Music Education document. (The following quotes are presented in order as they appear in the two-page document):

Research shows that quality music education improves behaviour, attention and concentration, and has a hugely positive effect on numeracy and language skills.

Evidence suggests that learning an instrument can improve numeracy, literacy and behaviour.

(Gove, Review of Music Education)

I am looking forward to delivering to ministers a report which outlines how we can ensure that every child in England benefits from a *world-beating* music education system.

(Darren Henley, leader of the independent review of music education; italics added)

Immersion in music can lead to improved social skills and educational success, with behaviour, wellbeing, confidence, team-working and concentration skills all proven to improve with good music provision.

(Minister for the Creative Industries, Ed Vaizey September 2010, Review of Music Education)

Hardly surprising, but menacing rhetoric, intimately connected to teaching methods that reflect a retrenchment that is tied to the most basic forms of functional literacy skills.

Providing a description and the underlying rhetoric of *The Schools White Paper*, or public notices of the *Review of Music Education*, or any of the other supporting documents, is fairly simple and straightforward. Providing a 'brief' description, however, of the National Curriculum or of the website – as one is an extension of and inseparable from the other – is virtually impossible (and if the music standards are to remain part of the UK educational vision, the National Curriculum will most assuredly be housed on a website). Simply considering the length of the hardcopies of the *National Curriculum Key Stages 1 and 2: Handbook for Primary Teachers* (188 pages) and *The National Curriculum Handbook for Secondary Teachers in England* (222 pages) is overwhelming.<sup>3</sup> Consequently we highlight the over-structure of the National Curriculum and its manifestation, in terms of the totalizing language that it presents, because as Rowe argues 'the sentences we form are the structures which create the world of meaning in which we live' (Rowe 1991). In different terms, the formation of a

language that is established and legitimized becomes the nature of a *social contract* in the face of which alternatives are restricted. The result might be 'a curriculum concerned with transmitting rather than receiving, centered around subjects, not the learner' (Bray 1998: 334).

Considering the work of Debord, Merrifield (2005: 60) reminds us of capitalism and the tautology embedded in what Debord refers to as spectacle: 'That which appears is good, that which is good appears'. In turn, we are reminded of one of characteristics of the manifesto: 'The syntax of a manifesto is so narrowly controlled by exhortation, its style so insistently unmediated, that it appears to say only what it means, and to mean only what it says (Lyon 1999: 9). Far from being a set of neutral documents or neutral site that simply presents content, the totalizing rhetorical persuasion of both curriculum and website deflects the complexity of education as a wicked problem and supersedes and perhaps deters efforts toward autonomy of local curriculum and the positioning of teachers as full professionals that can indeed engage with curriculum development. In the following section we address possible pathways to create a closer relationship between the requirements of the State and the needs of local insight, by proposing a shared agenda and a national models bank.

### **The locality in music curriculum design and development**

At the time of writing no National Curriculum exists in the US. There is, however, movement toward this end in the form and guise of the *Common Core State Standards Initiative*. Indeed, the Obama Administration has linked competitive education grants (including the 1.35 billion dollar budget for Race to the Top challenge funds) with the adoption of these standards. Consequently, over 45 States have voluntarily adopted the core English Language and Mathematics Standards as the basis for their State standards. While the core standards are only comprised of English and Mathematics, the arts education community is pushing forward its own agenda referred to as the National Arts Standards 2.0.

This push forward 'to be next' (Shuler 2010) in the US has historical precedence in the American 1995 National Standards movement. In the mid 1990s, the US music education community, led by the authority and direction of Music Educators National Conference (MENC)<sup>4</sup> presented its initial reaction to the movement toward Standards in the early 1990s, and contrary to the more collective engagement taking place in the UK, *ad hoc* committees were formed and charged with writing a document – de facto speaking for the music education field. The *National Standards for Arts Education* would be subsequently adopted by 21 States, with the remaining States modeling their own standards for the arts on that 1994 document. John Mahlmann, then CEO of MENC, nicely articulates the role of MENC in *streamlining* the process of establishing the National Standards and its *undeniable* benefits:

As a result [of the national standards], school systems *saved* almost a year of analysis and planning. More important, teachers and administrators found that the arts standards strengthened their advocacy of the arts in the overall curriculum.

(Mahlmann, Purcell, Salisbury Wills, and Hatfield 1996)

Schmidt (2011: 93) argues that through a limited participation process and as a representation of a vision sponsored by MENC, the National Standards became 'in the words of Mahlmann, a proxy for the investigation of needs and curricular parameters of whole States'. Thus, it was not difficult to argue that 'political and moral' rather than curricular foci became a priority and consequently 'efficiency [was] clearly placed in a privileged position over local inquiry.' A more cynical interpretation of Mahlmann's position would even argue that:

the National Standards and its ensuing policies have become not the manifestation of the will and agency of a constituency, but rather its substitute. In Mahlmann's words, 'the standards articulated a vision for arts education that many teachers had felt but had been unable to express.'

(Schmidt 2011: 91)

What seems interesting is that the pathway currently chosen in the US – parameters for a revision have been discussed without any national conversation – both mirrors the 'limited engagement' process of the early 1990s in the UK, as well as the aim to achieve over-articulation of unified scope and content. Thus, it is significant that despite the vast differences between the US and British realities, there are pervasive similarities in terms of a concern with language and advocacy, placement of music as core discipline, as well as qualification of teachers as agents of curricular delivery, and not development. Lastly, the *restrictive* role and value of professional judgment seems an impactful presence on both sides of the Atlantic, while serving – rhetorically and practically – as the main qualifier for curricular policy that is *obligated* to function in terms of external accountability.

We know, however, that external accountability neither needs to be paramount in the maintenance of standards of quality, nor must be in contradiction with strong local curricular design and development. Indeed, Gane (1996: 55) argues that, 'the value of a curriculum determined by teachers themselves with and for their pupils obviates the necessity for expensive external validators of standards'. Unfortunately, the author fails to address the interactive nature that local goals, program structure and curriculum development can (and perhaps ought to) have with macro, State-sanctioned, guidelines. Several models in education and music education articulate and support the manner in which such interactions can foster both autonomy and accountability; in fact they articulate the benefits of a co-dependence between the two (see Ball 2003; Schmidt 2009; Weaver-Hightower 2008).

Before moving forward, it is important to clarify that when referencing *localities* or *local engagements*, we are not equating it to the political re-dressing of a



conservative discourse that aims at smaller government. Of course, the Thatcherian liberalism of Cameron has its mirrored opposite on the left, whose zealous concern with the particular, unitary or the marginal often obstructs attention to macro conditions and necessities. At this political juncture, however, we are concerned with the normalization of rhetoric that seemingly uses communal potential for political gain. For example:

We plan to strip away these stifling bureaucratic burdens and offer local authorities the space they need to be more daring and imaginative in how they provide services and deploy resources to the benefit of every child in their area. In particular, local authorities will be free to develop new and innovative ways of supporting the vulnerable.

(David Cameron, December 2010)

Quite differently, notions of locally developed curriculum structures – fully conceptualized in context and with themes that connect curriculum to in-the-world realities – seem to be in synchrony with notions of standards of quality and considerations of range which ‘take into account musical activity across a variety of working conditions’ and can ‘only be acquired over time and are only revealed in time’ (Swanwick 1997: 213). While we do not share Swanwick’s concern with range as an experience of ‘musical styles,’ range could be differently defined in terms of varied ‘working conditions’ and thus inserted into notions such as *musical entrepreneurship*, which could work as an example of *vertical curricular design*. We exemplify what we mean by vertical design later on, but first it is important to articulate that this conceptual notion situates local autonomy as *the* agent leading the application of broader – indeed national – curricular guidelines. We would submit that modeling quality of engagement ‘in time and revealed by time’ requires a curricular understanding that goes beyond managerial elements and thus beyond the mere distribution of something prepared externally and *a priori*. Thus, we favor a notion of ‘shared agendas,’ where local – or teacher-driven – curricular engagements place managerial delivery and evaluation not as anathema but as element aiding in the operationalization of vertical design. In other words a notion of subsumed aspects, albeit part and parcel, of conceptual construction and design, implementation and assessment of curriculum.

Key in understanding and enacting an agenda that ‘shares’, and brings together, macro imperatives and micro needs, is modeling how local attitudes and values can become ‘explicit’ considerations as well as formal structures interfacing with the National Curriculum apparatus. Ball and Bowe (1992) in fact mused that the Curriculum Act in Britain could ‘exaggerate diversity of practice in the sense that teachers construct their own version of the National Curriculum in accordance with their individual philosophies’ (p. 339). While in retrospective we know that evaluation and the increased performativity of the State (Ball 2003) has prevented the unfolding of these ‘individual philosophies,’ we argue that an engagement

with local knowings, today, seems not only a significant but a necessary response to the overwhelming presence – virtual and real – of the National Curriculum.

At issue then is a central re-positioning of the question of effectiveness and accountability. A first step is to highlight and enforce differentiations between ‘assessment (informed but nevertheless *subjective judgment*) and evaluation (definition of a precise – and, therefore, presumably, indisputable – value)’ (Paynter 2002: 216; italics in the original). But that is insufficient. It is also necessary that we offer legitimate spaces where efficiency is more than ‘the manipulation of human beings into compliant patterns of behaviours’ (MacIntyre 2002: 71). This then points us to a larger, and perhaps systemic, problem, namely: the degree to which curriculum development and implementation is framed by limited and limiting conceptions of assessment/evaluative capabilities. Addressing this conundrum – for evaluation is necessary, but so is professional agency – requires a rethinking of how accountability is construed and the spaces it may generate for *professional* action.

### Possible futures and practices

Imagine for a moment that one of the initiatives connected to National Curriculum in Britain or the National Standards in the US, would be a focus on developing a *Portfolio* of program structures. A national data bank – a *models bank* to be more precise – charged with presenting examples of the processes that successfully *adapted* music curricula to the needs, interests and capacities of local constituents. The goal here is not to cater to ‘traditions’, grouping students based on ability, nor to vocational needs. The goal is to think of music in-the-world, manifested in pathways of study. For example a Key Stage curriculum that functions around the theme of *music entrepreneurship*, or a year-long focus on *music and digital media*, or studies framed from the stance of *music and communities of learning*.

While the National Curriculum currently offers ‘exemplifications for foundation subjects’ they retain a focus on delivery and remain atomistic in nature.<sup>5</sup> Differently, we are arguing for in-depth studies of thematic ideas or concepts that have a direct application and that students can recognize as a possibility into their lived world. These would serve as full examples of a structure of thought and practices that teachers could attempt to engender on their own, re-tooling their curriculum in relation to their local communities interests, while making use of the atomistic and managerial elements abundant in the current National Curriculum. The intent is to consider *vertical conceptions* of curriculum by which we mean fully developed understandings that thematically guide curricular connections between skill and action in the world. In other words, a curriculum that, designed by teachers, presents musical practices that have social, cultural or economic value and impact as the leading element in interconnecting skill development, theoretical underpinnings, and practical applications. A vertical construction of the curriculum would present critical reflection of musical practices in-the-world and would introduce different ways for musical and pedagogical tasks, actions, and conceptualizations to bring students to fully understand and experience said practices.

We suggest that there is a symbiotic relationship in the process of strengthening the National Curriculum by way of empowering professional action. One way to start would be to rethink the possible role of *portfolios* as aiding teachers to conceive curriculum in localized and vertical ways. As educational portfolio research demonstrates (Fullan, 2001; Herman and Winters 1994) necessary elements in this concept are the notions of internal validity as well as construct validity. That means that portfolios are assessed/evaluated departing from the standpoint of a coherent structural design developed by the proponent of the portfolio. Such structural design (vertical) must present an internal logic or cohesion that clearly organizes the elements of the portfolio according to central conceptions. Further, a well-conceived portfolio must connect to established external parameters and delineate possible applications of the work developed.

Portfolios are indeed part of the language of the National Curriculum, but framed as what we would call a collectors tool; the extent of the process is the atomist agglomeration of tips and good or best practices. While we are not opposed to these, in the absence of the larger, critical-thinking-based elements of a *portfolio* architecture, what becomes emphasized is dependence and compliance. Consequently, the State is not a partner to its *subjects*, but indeed plays the *pastoral* role of the protective patriarch.

So what can be done? Imagine then that a school's curriculum of study for music – year-long, focusing on Key Stage 4, with a theme based on what Paynter (2002: 217) called 'the immediacy of the [musical] experience' and supported by a national focus on portfolios; a school that decides that 'immediacy' is a valid, necessary, and appropriate theme for its community – would develop its own curriculum and form its own program while focusing on two elements: the internal cohesiveness of the program; and the external responsibility to meet curricular guidelines. Imagine now a fully-fleshed program modeled after the initiative that Savage and Challis (2002) present where a larger conceptual notion – in this case that of the development of a digital arts curriculum – is the guiding element or theme. Inside it, we find projects such as *Reflecting Others*, where 'the idea of representing oneself and others through sound and image' (p. 8) is a guide for pedagogical engagements as well as the skill-based requirements emphasized in the National Curriculum.

What we are suggesting is that, in time and through the proliferation of interactions between autonomy and accountability, a few things might occur: a) centralized government would be able to amass a *models bank* of programs developed in music which offer a complex picture of the ways in which school music can be structured; b) contrary to case studies, units or projects, models of how those structures are organized and conceptualized would be highlighted, without relegating the ways they connect to larger national guidelines; and c) these would provide examples of how each model frames music as action in-the-world, pertinent to the local context, placed in socio-creative parameters, and understood as clearly economically and academically viable sources of opportunity. The shift would be, in simple terms, to place content in service of learning

and experiencing *ways of being*. That is, what does the lifeworld of music entrepreneurs look like both locally and nationally? What are the differences? Why are certain patterns clearly present? Why might certain musical idioms be absent?

While this is merely an outline, we use it to highlight our initial comment: school curricula and programs in music, at the local level, do not need to 1) be at the mercy of constricting evaluation – in the US much instruction and curriculum structure has *de facto* been swallowed by teaching-to-the-test parameters; 2) become the *management* or implementation of State or centralized design; 3) relegate music teachers (and teaching labour in general) to enforcing or executing global – read universalized and impersonal – ideals and practices; 4) become a site for the delivery of factual knowledge.

Indeed we can have it both ways. The National Curricula or National Standards could become more porous guidelines while still reminding professionals of qualifying and necessary parameters in the education of school children of various ages. We could have global directories, but also amplify them and in the process make them more meaningful and humane through local adaptation.

### Concluding thoughts

While we diverge from a number of the outcomes articulated by Paynter, we are sympathetic to the notion that the music curriculum has at its basis, the conceptual notion of '*making up music*' (Paynter 2002: 219); to which we would add *making up musical lives*. Both notions, combined, lead then to the question: can teachers engage with practices fully committed to the idea of *making up music* or *musical lives* when they are not capable of fully *making up* their own curriculum? The question that perhaps precedes this one is: is there a necessary relation between fully understanding the capacities, needs and expanse of the curriculum one is teaching, and developing a complex manifestation of this same curriculum in practice? More specifically: is it possible for a teacher to model critical thinking out of an engagement with a curriculum that denies local insight, input or possibility for adaptation?

A discussion of the possible relationship – which we tend to dismiss – between larger policy frameworks and the impactful role of people's everyday agency, brings the frame of diverse democratic practices to the discussion of a National Curriculum or to National Standards in the US – and reminds us of Swanwick's statement that 'however the new structure is rebuilt we can be sure of one thing: in diversity is survival' (Peggie 1994: 181). Further, this discussion leads us to reconsider the impact and significance of language at a time when the public face of the National Curriculum, its website, is continually being redacted and changed.

Ranciere (2010) calls the 'paradox of democracy' – the relationship between democracy as a form of government in tension with democracy as a social practice. This tension arises, according to him, from governmental need for political legitimacy, usually constructed by means of policy directives that clearly 'resolve'

contentious social issues. Samuel Huntington's radical, and amply subscribed, assertion exemplifies this point:

Democracy leads to an increase in demands [by its citizens], and this puts pressure on governments, undermines authority and renders individuals and groups unresponsive to the necessities of discipline and sacrifice associated with ruling in the name of common interests.

(Ranciere 2010: 47)

That is the somewhat perverse logic for a pastoral representation of government, one which arguably could be placed at the center of the disposition toward a *National Curriculum* structure. At issue then, in the case of education, is how a call for democratic deliberation by one's peoples can 'entail an excess of political activity that encroaches on the principles and procedures of 'good policy, authority, scientific expertise and pragmatic experience' (p. 47). Is there no space for serious interaction between State and the individual?

We understand the challenges of a local emphasis on curriculum, particularly in the face of questions such as: 'given the real difficulties head teachers have in similar schools managing reducing budgets, and having colleagues with little musical experience, how can all children in their charges be given a real musical entitlement?' (Hitchcock, in Peggie 1994: 182). What seems worth considering, however, is that a school music program that concerns itself with the full fleshing of its ideals and their interaction with National *guidelines*, might be a fundamentally different program than one where the concern is how to manage an outside structure with no local interface, and no local professional demand other than that of *delivery*. Locality, as a central partner in educative enterprise, as we see it, is not about *private autonomy* in the sense of market directed liberalism. What we have argued is simply the fact that neither the left nor the right has attempted a model that asks for constructive accountability.

Since we began writing this chapter *Music Education in England – A Review by Darren Henley for the Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport* has been published. As Henley outlines recommendations he returns time and again to reinforce the need for music organizations to not only work together, but to work at the local level as well.

1.12 Where Music Education is delivered at its best, money from central government and Local Authorities is harnessed together alongside imaginative use of school budgets and exciting collaborations with arts organizations. The best Music Education comes about through partnership; no one teacher, performer, school organization, group or body has all of the requisite skills to deliver every part of a rounded Music Education to every child. Instead, when interested parties work together, with funding invested carefully to deliver the right level of expertise at the right moment in the education process, we see strong results.

(Music Education Review 2011: 5)

Indeed, the recently published national music plan 'The Importance of Music' provides the framework for hubs (2011, p. 3) which could be quite instructive in breaking down the often rigid structures of schools. This would be quite positive as long as it is not enacted in a market-driven, outsourced fashion which empties the still powerfully democratic role schools have to play in the lives of students and communities.

In closing, we return to Ranciere (2010: 54) who emphasizes that 'those who want the government of cities and states to be grounded on the simple and unequivocal principal of community' find contextually-based or locally driven practices such as those articulated here 'unacceptable'. To be clear, the notion of portfolios or *model banks*, where sharing and 'borrowing' can be done, is not aimed simply at presenting 'a perspective, sensitive and critical response to music of different styles in a cultural and historical context' as the National Curriculum currently suggests. Rather, the notion is more radical. It is to suggest latitude for exclusion of this universalist requisition, and trade it for in-depth structures, based upon full conceptions of *ways of being with and through music*. The proposition is that these actions would maintain a capacity to transfer learned knowledge to other contexts, provide less abstract or disconnected experiences, while exploring the plurality or webbing of musical engagements through the lenses of a particular thematic practice.

### Reflective questions

- 1 In what ways do you think the development of the National Curriculum has shaped the ways in which music education is viewed in the UK?
- 2 Consider how curriculum development may be tied to advocacy and policy efforts. In what ways might this impact on how an education in and through music has (and continues to be) perceived and developed?
- 3 Read several of the White Papers published over the years in the UK. How has the purpose of general education been addressed during each government and how has this shaped the goals established for music education?

### Notes

- 1 'Teaching to the test' in the UK has in many ways come to mean teaching to Ofsted.
- 2 The UK is not alone in expressing similar pronouncements. A cursory examination of several government websites suggests that the web provides the space to proclaim to the world that one is a serious player in the market-based economy and education is the vehicle for such competition.
- 3 This page-count does not include the 598 pages of the 12 *National Curriculum Subject Booklets* which 'set out the legal requirements of the National Curriculum in England for each subject and provides information to help teachers implement each subject in their schools,' nor the 368 extant publications that come up using the search terms National Curriculum (see the website of the independent UK book retailer, Langton Info Services, England: [www.langtoninfo.com](http://www.langtoninfo.com)).
- 4 As of September 2011 MENC has officially changed the name of the organization to National Association for Music Educators, or NAFME.
- 5 Examples can be found in the *Exemplification of Standards* (SCAA 1996).

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