



**A Journey Towards a Community of
Musical Practice Through Music
Generation Louth's *Introducing Strings*
Programme for Schools**

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Dundalk Institute of Technology

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MA by Research*

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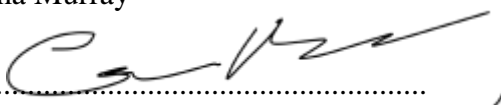
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Declaration

We, the undersigned declare that this thesis entitled *A Journey Towards a Community of Musical Practice Through Music Generation Louth's Introducing Strings Programme for Schools* is entirely the author's own work and has not been taken from the work of others, except as cited and acknowledged within the text.

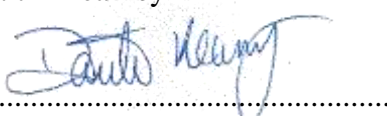
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Abstract

Introducing Strings is a large-scale performance music education programme established by Music Generation Louth in 2012 to widen access to musical participation and learning amongst children and young people in Louth. This study provides context for and presents a critical reflection of the development of the programme. It highlights key successes of the programme over its initial nine years and identifies a number of challenges that have emerged during that period. It determines the critical success factors that enable the programme to make a deeper impact beyond its function of being an economically effective model of performance music education.

The research presented herein follows the model of a work-based project and, as a researcher, I provide both an emic perspective and an applied ethnomusicology approach. Throughout the project, this research informed and influenced the planning and programming choices for the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, other whole class ensemble projects across Music Generation Louth. The learning has been disseminated across the Music Generation programme nationally and will continue to do so into the future. Themes that have emerged include musical enculturation and the development of communities of musical practice, partnership, performance, pathways for progression, pedagogy to include informal music teaching and learning, musical choices and continuing professional development for musician educators. This dissertation assesses the impact of one music performance education programme and its evolution towards achieving a community of musical practice in County Louth.

Keywords: Music Education; Access to Music; Communities of Musical Practice; Community Music; Whole Class Instrumental Tuition.

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Glossary

DEIS is an acronym for Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, the Department of Education's programme for educational inclusion.

Louth LEADER Partnership is a Local Development Company funded by the Irish Government under the *Rural Development Programme 2014 to 2022* charged with the delivery of a range of programmes whose aim is to support specific target groups with a view to making a positive difference in their lives.

Local Music Education Partnership (LMEP) is a locally based active and engaged steering group, advisory group or committee made up a range of experts and stakeholders, advising and guiding the local Music Generation programme.

Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) is the largest education and training provider in Louth and Meath, providing a broad range of education and training services to over 30,000 students and learners on an annual basis. They are the lead partner in the LMEP.

Music Development Officer, formerly referred to as **Coordinator**, is the employee with overall responsibility for leading the development and implementation of a local Music Generation programme.

Musician educators are musicians engaged for the purposes of delivering Music Generation's performance music education programmes for children and young people.

Performance Music Education is consistent with the terminology used by Music Generation. See for example *Possible Selves in Music* (Flynn and Johnston, 2016).

Whole Class Ensemble Teaching (WCET) usually involves a visiting music teacher from a music service coming into school and teaching whole class music lessons using a range of orchestral, band, rock, pop and world music instruments (see: [Whole Class Ensemble Teaching - The Music Partnership](#)).

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context, Aims and Objectives

In 2010, I was contracted by Louth County Council and Co Louth Vocational Education Committee (VEC) to conduct a scoping exercise on music education provision in the county. The purpose of the exercise was to collate information that would inform the strategic plan for a proposal submitted in 2011 to Music Generation for funding. Following a successful outcome and a recruitment process, I was employed as the coordinator for Music Generation Louth (hereinafter MGL). At the time of submission of this dissertation, I remain in that position, having engaged in academic studies on a part-time basis in parallel for five years.

One of the major projects developed from the early stages of MGL was *Introducing Strings*, a large-scale performance music education programme that sought to widen access to musical participation and learning amongst children and young people in the county. As the name suggests, *Introducing Strings* provides basic practical instruction to class groups on playing the full range of orchestral string instruments alongside musicianship and musical literacy training. Its framework is based loosely on the UK's Wider Opportunities Programme of large group or whole class instrumental and vocal tuition for schools, established by Youth Music and The Department of Education and Skills in 2002.

Introducing Strings is an adaptive, access music programme that introduces the range of classical string instruments – violin, viola, cello and double bass – to children and young people in large group and whole class settings. The programme aims to:

1. expand interest and participation in music making amongst children and young people within each school community;
2. develop musicianship skills and basic instrumental technique;
3. inspire children and young people about music making for their lives in the present and into the future;

4. develop musical performance skills;
5. develop creativity;
6. contribute to personal development.

In addition to these aims, it is evident that the programme enhances the musical life of each school through provision of high-quality music ensemble learning experiences for class groups. This research project aims to interrogate the effectiveness of MGL's *Introducing Strings* programme in achieving these aims. Through engagement with stakeholders, I will seek to assess if and how the programme has enhanced the life of each school, expanded access to musical participation amongst children and young people, and developed a range of musical skills and non-musical benefits amongst the children involved. It draws upon new research into music pedagogy practices from a variety of international sources, which have both influenced and provide comparative models for an evaluation of the programme. Through observational ethnographies and engagement with stakeholders, aligned with an emic perspective as an employee of Music Generation, this research project aims to ascertain whether the whole class/large group teaching approach has a deeper impact, beyond the rationale of being an economically effective model of delivery for music performance education.

This dissertation highlights key successes of the programme over its initial nine years and identifies a number of challenges that have emerged during that period. It provides critical insights into the teaching methodologies employed by the tutors and changes to the programme over the period, including a review of continuous professional development (CPD) activities. It is notable that the themes that emerge in this dissertation follow and correlate with aspects of Ailbhe Kenny's (2010) study of musicians as partners in education, which includes attention to the need for CPD. This was further developed in more recent work by Kenny with Edel Fahy (2021) that expands an understanding of partnerships to understand the need for 'brokers' in the context of the Creative Schools programme in Ireland since 2018.

Through the study, I determine the critical success factors that enable the programme to make a deeper impact beyond the classroom and enable the development of a community of musical practice in County Louth.

Situated within the broader development of Music Generation in Louth and nationally, and focusing on a single programme led by MGL, the research objectives of this dissertation are:

- to conduct a critical examination of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme underpinned by academic theory in order to inform and influence future pedagogy, curriculum and work force training needs;
- to determine what is best practice music performance teaching in the context of the whole class/large group instrumental and vocal tuition model to meet key programme aims;
- to document research findings to support critical reflections and recommendations;
- to disseminate research findings so as to contribute to the development of music teaching practice locally and nationally.

The last objective has been achieved both in academic and industry contexts. Aspects of the research have been presented in academic forums including presentations to the Creative Arts Research Centre at Dundalk Institute of Technology. I have also incorporated learning into the ongoing development of the *Introducing Strings* and the wider MGL programme.

1.2 Methodology and Approach

The research presented herein follows the model of a work-based project and, as a researcher, I provide both an emic perspective and an applied ethnomusicology approach. My role in MGL places me as an insider and self-reflection is a critical part of my role. The conclusions to this study involve a specific reflection on the evolving nature of that role. My engagement in academic studies, whereby my progress and findings are reviewed by academic supervisors, has aided the development of objectivity and involved discussions of alternative

perspectives from outside the day-to-day activities of my employment. However, I am at no time neutral. I have a job to do and am answerable to my employers and so the objectives of my position shape and are shaped by my research.

My role as researcher may be viewed similarly to that of an applied ethnomusicologist (Harrison, Mackinlay and Pettan, 2010), engaged in advocacy and directly influencing the musical culture. Applied ethnomusicology foregrounds principles of social responsibility and involves working with groups to find solutions to problems (ibid, p.1). Mirroring one of the core principals of Applied Ethnomusicology presented by Pettan and Titon (2015), my research may be regarded a music-centred intervention in a particular community, whose purpose is to benefit that community. The adoption of this approach, ‘extends the usual academic goal of broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding towards solving concrete problems and towards working both inside and beyond typical academic contexts’ (ibid, p.1). As initiator and manager of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme from 2012 to date, I have used existing documentation including lesson plans, surveys, reports, and quantitative data on participation along with my own reflections on observing sessions to inform this study. I sought and gained ethical approval from Dundalk Institute of Technology for targeted research to supplement this information for the purposes of achieving the objectives of this academic study.

Aspects of my study bear similarities to Michelle Finnerty’s (2008a; 2017a) studies of music in early years’ education in various school settings and Jessica Cawley’s (2013; 2020) studies of enculturation and Irish traditional music that focuses on learning experiences. Both researchers’ methods included the participant observer model, incorporating ethnography and a series of interviews with stakeholders including principals and classroom teachers, as well as musician educators and children. In Finnerty’s (2017) dissertation, the voice of the child is given prominence; my approach integrates the views of the children but incorporates the views of adult stakeholders more explicitly.

In the case of Cawley's (2013; 2020) studies, the researcher presents herself as an insider as she is also a learner of Irish traditional music. Although as a learner her role is different to mine, her positionality is similar to that within my own research where I am both working and researching inside the programme, requiring a reflexive approach. The participant-observer method is commonplace, allowing the researcher closer proximity to events and people as well as accumulating insight from personal learning experiences. Having been involved in musicking as part of the project (Small, 1998), my approach also aligns with the approaches developed by geographer Aoife Kavanagh (2020a), who highlights the benefits of engaged practice in the study of musical ecologies and places. Like Kavanagh's work, which builds in part from the music geography of Daithí Kearney (2009), my research highlights the connections and disconnections related to musical activity that exist in a place.

Understanding my positionality in this research project is critical. I have used ethnographic and reflexive approaches to carry out this research, utilising which I feel best suits my dual role as observer and participant in the programme and gathering extensive qualitative data. As well as managing the project, at times I have also taken on the role of musician educator, providing me with different perspectives. While data from all years informs the project, the main ethnographic documentation for the purposes of academic research has taken place since 2017. The climax of the research project involved a more intensive review in the summer of 2021 involving various stakeholders. Although the focus of the research of the project is specifically the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, the research recognises the broader ecosystem for music (see Titon, 2020; Mullen, forthcoming) in which the programme developed and, in particular, the development of Music Generation as a national programme for music performance education.

Research data for this dissertation was collated using the following methods and sources:

- field notes and reflections that I have collated from observing the programme in action during the research period from 2017 to date;
- data collection through desk research including the interpretation and review of qualitative/quantitative reports, videos, surveys; training opportunities made available to musicians; details of performances as well as additional associated events and initiatives that took place across the period 2012 to date;
- transcriptions of interviews and informal conversations conducted during the period May to July 2021 with five principals and six teaching staff from five partner primary schools;¹
- transcriptions from seven in-person focus group sessions conducted with classes participating in the programme during the academic year 2020/2021;²
- transcription of interviews conducted throughout July 2021 with five musician educators involved in the delivery of the programme during the academic year 2020/2021.³

Ethical considerations are important. In my role as line manager of MGL's musician educators, with overall responsibility for operational logistics and quality assurance, site visits by the coordinator are commensurate with normal work practices. I regularly observe the actions and engagement of children during sessions. While musician educators had the option to withdraw their participation at any stage from the research element at any time without consequence, it is difficult to distinguish site visits and observation sessions relating to the

¹ The group represented a mix of rural/urban, DEIS/Non DEIS/Mixed and advantaged locations across the geographical spread of the programme.

² This totalled 125 children, which included both boys and girls across a mix of age groups. Of these focus groups, one composite class group of 4th to 6th class children had participated in the programme for four and five years, one composite class group of 2nd and 3rd class children had participated in the programme for two and three years, two third-class groups had participated for two years, three second-class groups had completed one year of the programme. All of the groups were mixed with the exception of two 2nd class groups that were comprised only of girls.

³ Of these, three were specialists in upper strings; one of the three is from a Western art music background, one from a traditional Irish music background and one with a mix of Western art and Irish traditional music. One musician educator who is not a specialist in string instruments has a background in Western art and popular music, music technology and composition. The other musician educator has a background in Irish traditional music.

research project from managerial site visits. In all instances, the data is anonymised to protect the identity of individuals while aiding the development of an understanding that will benefit the stakeholders and contribute to scholarship in the area.

The research also involves the observation of children under the age of eighteen. I undertook the research in line with the child safety statements and associated policies of the schools, MGL Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB)⁴ and Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT). The researcher requested information and consent from both the children (recognising the voice of the child in the research) and their parents/guardians, as well as from the schools involved. I communicated information on the research to the musician educators and other stakeholders throughout the period of research.

In writing up this research, it was important to anonymise the data. In initial drafts, the schools involved were identified as A-M but these identifiers were removed in most instances in the final draft. It became clear that such identifiers, while perhaps providing insights into specific examples at a broader level, would allow the identification of schools, as well as individual principals, teachers and musician educators. Given the number of children involved and the nature of the data gathering, it was less likely that individual children could be identified but in all instances great care was taken to ensure that the identity of stakeholders was protected.

Themes that have emerged include enculturation and the development of communities of musical practice, partnership, performance, pathways for progression, pedagogy to include informal music teaching and learning, musical choices and continuing professional development for musician educators. The challenge of providing children and young people with meaningful access to music performance education was part of the initial motivation for initiating the programme and undertaking this study. This is inherent in many of these

thematic areas. In addition to extensive fieldwork, my study is informed by scholarly literature in the fields of music education and community music, as documented in my literature review.

1.3 Dissertation Structure

The dissertation comprises a literature review and overview of Music Generation followed by a report presented in three sections that seeks to examine the development, evolution and effectiveness of the programme in addressing access to music for all participants. I recognise the limitations of the programme and some of the challenges that have presented themselves. I also highlight the positive contribution of the programme to the community of participants who engaged. Informed by the overview of Music Generation presented in the Chapter 3, Chapter 4 ‘Ignition’ engages with how and why schools became involved in the programme, and the development of partnerships with schools to create communities of musical practice (see Kenny 2014, 2016). The chapter includes a recognition of the barriers and opportunities that are present in home and community environments. Chapter 5, ‘En Route’, engages with the evolution of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme itself, with a focus on curriculum and pedagogy, involving a critical reflection on instrument, repertoire and genre choices. This chapter critically evaluates the role of musician educators who not only brought prior skills and knowledge to the partnership but also engaged in CPD related to the delivery of the programme. Chapter 6, ‘Destinations’, reflects on the progression opportunities and the benefits that participants derived from the programme, as well as other outcomes of the programme. The plural, ‘destinations’, recognises that there must be more than one measure of success for a programme such as the MGL *Introducing Strings*. One of the findings of the research is the importance of performance at all stages of the process and, as a theme, it is integrated into each of the sections.

Throughout the duration of the project, I used this research to inform and influence the planning and programming choices for the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme and other

whole class instrumental tuition projects within MGL. Further dissemination of the research will extend its influence across the Music Generation network at a national level. The research has identified key pedagogical skills required for the effective delivery of whole class instrumental programmes and has informed musician educator training as part of MGL's ongoing continual professional development programme. It can be used as a model by other Music Generation partnerships across Ireland and will be used to inform and influence future curriculum choices and pedagogical approaches for *Introducing Strings* and other projects initiated and developed under the auspices of MGL. This research makes an important and original contribution to the area of music education, instrumental pedagogy and community music. It will act as a guide for programme development and pedagogues working in similar settings.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review is grounded in the scholarship of music education but, informed by the research questions related to accessibility and inclusion, also draws on the scholarship of community music and to a lesser degree, community music therapy. There is a particular but not exclusive focus on music education in Ireland, informed by scholars including Marie McCarthy, whose seminal text *Passing It On: The Transmission of Music in Irish Culture* (1999) provides not only historical context but highlights the multiple music narratives and recognises music as culture, as canon, as community, and as communication. However, Music Generation must be considered in an international context as it draws influences from both international scholarship and models of performance music education in other places. To this end, systems such as El Sistema and UK music hubs and services in are critically examined as comparative models. Critically, while the focus of music education is on performance, for this study, a critical examination of engagement in music is informed by Christopher Small's conceptualisation of 'musicking':

To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (which is called composing) or by dancing. (1998, p.9)

The concept of community is central to the vision of MGL. Acknowledging Ruth Finnegan's (2007) preference for 'musical pathways' in her seminal work on music in Milton Keynes, I have chosen to retain a focus on community to align with the policies and strategies of Music Generation. To this end, I engage considerably with Ailbhe Kenny's (2016) conceptualisation of communities of musical practice (see 2.5). Kenny's monograph provides a comprehensive overview of Etienne Wenger's 'Community of Practice' (1998) and other socio cultural theories of learning that include collaboration, participation, belonging, identity and creativity which are applied to shape insights from three case studies. Kenny's writing provides a signpost to other studies that have shaped her work and influenced mine by extension. These include a focus on musical identities (MacDonald, Miell and Hargreaves, 2002), creativity in

music education (Barrett, 2005), and the development of communities of musical practice within schools (Countryman, 2009).

My literature briefly engages with seven key areas. There is significant scholarship and media articles on the benefits of music education and this dissertation only allows for a brief consideration herein, focusing primarily on literature from the scholarship of music education. However, the perceived and accepted benefits underpin both the development of practices and the motivation for this study. As this dissertation focuses on instrumental music teaching, I point to some international literature and examples that are relevant, followed by a focus on comparative models for music performance education in Ireland and internationally. My theoretical framework draws on two key concepts – ‘communities of musical practice’ and ‘enculturation’ – both of which are examined to provide context for the analysis of fieldwork data. Pre-empting later chapters, I also engage with literature on the consideration of repertoire in music education, influenced in particular by the work of Lucy Green (2005; 2006; 2011; 2017), particularly in relation to her consideration of repertoire, identity and advocacy for considering approaches to teaching popular music. I draw on the examples of other studies within the scholarship of music education to consider the importance of stakeholder engagement and policy and strategy, both of which are developed further in relation to Music Generation and the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme in later chapters.

2.2 Benefits of Music Education

Whilst music education must be valued for the role it plays in the development of musical and artistic practice, the non-musical benefits for participating in active music making are regularly cited. Music Generation as a national programme states that its mission is to transform lives through music. This statement acknowledges the profound impact of active music making beyond the development of musical practice. It is therefore important to reflect on the non-musical benefits that participation in the *Introducing Strings* programme has yielded. Of relevance is Susan Hallam’s report for the Music Education Council *The Power of*

Music (2015) which provides an analysis of various research studies on the impact of active music making on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people.

At a time when there is an emphasis on literacy and numeracy in the Irish education system and internationally (Russell-Bowie, 2009; Gubbins, 2021), Hallam's (2015) report highlights that time given to music in the classroom and taken from other activities was not to the detriment of other learning but rather shows how music education can support development in these areas. Hallam's report validates theories that in-school musical training can impact positively on attitudes to school and attendance. Musical engagement can also lead to enhanced performance across a range of subjects that include spatial reasoning, mathematics, aural processing and listening, memory, creativity, general IQ and attainment.

In synthesizing the various research findings on the benefits of participation in music activities for the personal and social development of children, Hallam's report underpins many of the activities of Music Generation. In particular, the benefits cited by Hallam that were derived from group music making such as social inclusion, belongingness, development of self-belief, increased confidence and well-being mirror much of the findings from this research. The programming recommendations made in Hallam's report for achieving the most benefits from music making resonate with the research findings on MGL's *Introducing Strings* programmes as detailed in Chapters 4 and 5 as it has evolved and developed across the period 2012 to 2021. Hallam's recommendations include commencing music making at a young age and providing opportunities for engagement across a prolonged period of time; the importance of providing performance opportunities and the positive impact of receiving feedback on performance; the need for a broad curriculum that is highly engaging and includes playing, singing, musicianship, musical literacy, composition and improvisation; the importance of group music making; ensuring that groups relate to the musical choices made and have a sense of ownership; the importance of high-quality interactions between

facilitator(s) and group. Noteworthy is Hallam's claim that 'When teaching is poor there may be no benefits and negative outcomes' (2014, p. 18).

Music also has physical benefits and the choice of instrument is important, particularly in the context of the design and focus of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme that utilises both small and large string instruments. Drawing on the work of Ulugbay (2013), Mustafa (2021) highlights the role of music performance in psychomotor development:

The large and small muscle development of children who play musical instruments is supported. Instruments help develop concepts such as coordination, power and reaction speed, which are important in children's psychomotor development. The child's reaction to music with body movements, trying to create dance figures suitable for music, accompanying the music with his voice and recognizing his voice contributes to his cognitive and psychomotor development (2021, p. 47).

Thus, consideration of the physical characteristics of instruments and some diversity is important, even within a strings programme.

2.3 Instrumental Music Teaching

The *Introducing Strings* programme involves whole class ensemble teaching (WCET), which has been at the cornerstone of major developments in the UK since 2002/2003. Martin Fautley and Alison Daubney (2019a) provide background and context for the WCET programme in the UK, highlighting a desire for all pupils in a primary school equivalent context to have access to a free trial period of specialist instrumental tuition. Underlining the importance of research to assess the programme in the UK, in their editorial for a special edition of the *British Journal of Music Education* devoted to WCET they note the need to ask 'questions regarding the nature and purpose of music education' (2019b, p. 221).

Significant research has been undertaken on WCET by Fautley et al (2017; 2019) and Susan Hallam (2019) who provide reflection and reports on programmes in England. Hallam (2019) considers factors that contribute to success. These are listed in Table 1 and mirror themes that emerge in this study. Identifying another important factor and echoing the consideration of the influence of parents in my fieldwork, Anderson et al (2019) focus on parental attitudes, which

are examined further in the context of MGL *Introducing Strings* in Chapter 4. Stafford's (2016) paper, notably published in a journal for community music, points to a number of methodologies for WCET in Special Education, which highlights the potential to widen access in music education. It must be noted that the WCET model in the UK is aimed at primary schools and while Fautley et al (2019) indicate an impact on secondary schools, *Introducing Strings* engages with both Primary and Secondary Schools in Louth and, therefore, consideration must be given to the different contexts for development. The MGL *Introducing Strings* programme initially attempted to follow the typical UK music service model; whole class introductory year leading to smaller group tuition and instrumental hire. Repertoire chosen was standard classical strings tuition and materials developed by publishers in the UK for WCET. Typically, classes of children from 2nd class upwards engaged in a weekly forty-five minute session delivered by two MGL musician educators. Instruments were provided to the school on loan by MGL so that every child had access to a stringed instrument (violin, viola, cello, double bass).

Partnership working between providers and individual schools
Support from the senior management team
Involvement of school staff and professional development opportunities for them
Flexibility to meet the needs of schools
Complementing existing provision and the musical life of schools
Musical learning prior to the commencement of WCET

Table 1 Factors Contributing to the Success of WCET (Hallam, 2019).

In the context of WCET, Fautley et al (2019) consider attitudes to staff notation and assessment in their report on the English context. Further factors identified are continuation (understood as the number of children who continue on playing), ensemble playing, teaching, staff attitudes, curriculum aspects of success criteria, financial matters, graded exams and

music medals, and links with the National Curriculum. My research does not consider all of these in detail but there are parallels. In relation to ‘curriculum aspects of success criteria’, surveys by Fautley and Daubney (2019) considered singing, composing, and instrumental technique. Initially, the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme focused on the latter but, as evident in Chapters 4 and 5 there was a broadening of activities, including the adoption of different teaching approaches and a greater engagement with creativity leading to more potential to consider singing and composition, as well as the potential use of technology in the case of MGL. The MGL *Introducing Strings* programme does not aim to deliver the Irish music curriculum; it focuses on providing music performance education and the MGL musician educators do not replace the classroom teacher. Neither does the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme engage with graded exam curricula, although all of the musician educators are familiar with different systems and may be influenced by them in their approach to repertoire.

A number of methodologies are evident in the teaching practices of the musician educators in Louth, reflecting to varying degrees the examples provided in relation to the English model. In an early stage, the developing team explored the Charanga Music School and engaged with these resources.⁵ Fautley and Daubney (2019a, p. 14) note that Charanga have produced a spiral curriculum that seeks to place an emphasis on teaching music in a manner that is more than ‘learning and memorizing songs, or the technical aspects of playing an instrument’ (Fisher, 2008, p. 5). Hart (2017) identifies Charanga Music School as ‘one of the most effective and popular software resources currently used in primary school’, which is also evidenced in a report by Devaney and Nenadic (2019) on the experiences of trainee primary teachers in England.

⁵ Charanga is a UK provider of digital teaching and learning support for music education and the technology partner for more than 70 local authority music services and their music education hubs in the UK.

Despite early engagement with Charanga, as discussed in Chapter 4, there has been greater engagement with established teaching models and approaches such as those inspired and developed by the Swiss music teacher and composer Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865–1950) and Hungarian composer and pedagogue Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967). Both can inform teaching practices that seek to engage and create enjoyment for participants. The influence of both individuals remains prominent. Anderson notes:

The methods of the Dalcroze approach to music education—eurhythmics, solfège, and improvisation—have had a profound influence on modern music education. In particular, the overt training in kinesthetic abilities, and the assertion that the relationship between music and movement is an intimate one, is at the heart of Dalcroze’s approach to instruction (2012, p. 27).

Although Cuskelly (2021) points to a simplification of the work of Kodály, it is also evident that his influence is international and Sheridan (2019) provides both insights into his philosophy and how it has been developed in the USA.

While there are numerous studies engaging with both pedagogues, most relevant to informing both this dissertation and the desire to engage with these methods include DeVries (2001) re-evaluation of common Kodály practices from the perspective of a general classroom teacher who incorporated these methods into her own practice. While my focus is on the musician educators employed by MGL, I am cognisant of the need to involve the classroom teachers, as examined in Chapter 4, and to present music education as something that is not wholly dependent on specialist music educators in order to develop a community of musical practice.

As noted by Kenny (2016) in the context of communities of musical practice, the measurement of success or failure of a project is not solely defined by the level of acquisition of musical skills. She notes: ‘The paradigm shift for education rejects a mass production of skills in favour of a customised vision of learning where personal engagement and identity transformation within communities are developed’ (2016, p.18). Rather the quality of the experience where social and musical interactions are of equal importance and a sense of value, belonging and shared passion across all levels of the school community. Equally

important are the social interactions, relationships, connectivity, sense of shared enterprise, belonging, identity and passion amongst the members – children/young people, teachers, school principal, musician educators, coordinator, parents and the wider school community context.

2.4 Comparative Models for Music Performance Education

Introducing Strings is one of a number of whole class group strings programmes for schools in Ireland. Within the Music Generation initiative, no research in this area has been forthcoming but similar schemes are now emerging in Counties Sligo, Offaly, Westmeath, Carlow and Dublin amongst others. Research in this area will be particularly useful nationally as whole class teaching becomes increasingly prevalent.

2.4.1 NCH Primary Strings Project

Beyond MGL, The National Concert Hall Primary Strings Project has, since 2007, introduced over 20 schools to this type of instrumental tuition. Dorothy Conaghan's 2014 report, *National Concert Hall, Primary Strings Project 2007–2013*, summarises its activity, impact and key findings. Similar to Kenny, she identifies effective partnership and a sense of shared enterprise between musician, school staff and parents as critical to the success of programmes. Of particular note is the finding that, '[e]xcept in rare circumstances, it was found that it is the responsibility of the school principal to initiate, fund and manage an instrumental programme' (2014, p. 7). The role of the principal in the context of MGL *Introducing Strings* is explored further in Chapters 4 and 5. Conaghan also notes: 'When asked about how they would teach a class the majority of instrumental teachers said they tend to teach the way they were taught themselves, or cite an influential pedagogue' (*ibid.*). My research on the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, documented in particular in the context of Continuing Professional Development, reveals a development from these approaches, which were also evident in Louth at the beginning of the process.

2.4.2 Sing Out With Strings

An evaluation report on the Irish Chamber Orchestra's outreach programme *Sing Out With Strings* by Dr Ailbhe Kenny and Dr Gwen Moore of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick was published in 2011. Key findings focused on the embedding of music in the culture of the school; personal, social, and academic development with reference to self-esteem, confidence and concentration; and social change through involving parents, developing a sense of community pride and social unity and developing links with the University of Limerick (UL). A further evaluation report was carried out in by 2015 by Dr Áine Mangaoang. Similar to Conaghan (2014), Mangaoang identifies the importance of engaging with parents and families through performances and regular communications so that music becomes part of the child's life outside of school and for musical enculturation to take place. This is particularly important where there is an absence of a musical role model within home environments. These reports highlight the value of regular evaluation of music programmes with a research agenda.

The Irish Chamber Orchestra's *Sing Out with Strings* programme has provided free weekly music sessions for children in Limerick's inner city since 2008. According to their website:

Evolving from a creative response to the City's Regeneration programme and inspired by the El Sistema programmes, *Sing Out with Strings* collaborates with national schools to provide over one hundred hours of weekly singing, song-writing and string instrumental sessions for every child to experience as part of the school curriculum (<https://sows.ie/home/about/>, accessed 18 November 2021).

In terms of scale, *Sing Out With Strings* teaches 300 children every week and indicates that over 1000 children have engaged in activities to 'write their own songs, perform at events in prestigious venues and festivals around the county and beyond making music an integral part of their lives' (*ibid*). The potential for musicking to engage communities is very evident in the narrative presented by the organisation and in reviews of the group.

2.4.3 El Sistema

Sing Out With Strings draws inspiration from the Venezuelan El Sistema model founded by Dr José Antonio Abreu. He proposed utilising music and participation in an orchestra as a tool

for enabling children in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, who are often restricted by their circumstances, to develop valuable life skills that would help them to grow as musicians and successful people (Uy, 2012; Baker, 2016; Booth and Tunstall, 2016). El Sistema Venezuela has nurtured international musicians such as Edicson Ruiz and Gustavo Dudamel and the world-renowned Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra. Other Sistema inspired projects in Ireland include St Agnes' Music Crumlin and the St Ultan's Music Programme in Cherry Orchard, Dublin.

Venezuela's El Sistema network and Sistema-inspired programmes around the world have captured the imagination of music educators and social policy makers during the last few decades. Noting that the 'idea of offering music education to every child has been deemed a necessity by various authors since as early as the seventeenth century, music education today still is not recognized as a crucial factor in the child's development', Susić (2017) points to the success of El Sistema in Venezuela in widening access to music education. There are now 287 Sistema and Sistema inspired programmes in 56 countries around the world from which a large body of academic research has grown (Baker, 2016; Booth and Tunstall, 2016). Much of this research has been collated for dissemination by Sistema Global, an organisation dedicated to connecting, encouraging, and inspiring El Sistema teachers and leaders internationally. Sistema Global's first literature review released in 2013 has stimulated much discussion and critical debate concerned with the fundamental principles and pedagogies within Sistema-inspired contexts.

Eric Booth (2009), an influential leader in arts education in USA and Senior Advisor to the movement developing El Sistema inspired projects around the world, provides a relatively short overview of the programme based on a week-long visit to Caracas, Venezuela, meeting those involved in El Sistema, watching rehearsals and classes, and discussing with the wide range of people involved to ascertain the details of its operation's critical success factors. Booth notes how everyone involved in the programme is clear on the mission and purpose of

the programme being the development of the individual and the musician. In the philosophy of El Sistema, both are intertwined and those involved describe it in a personal way through stories, images showing a deep level of reflection and understanding.

One of the most significant impacts of El Sistema, particularly in Venezuela itself, relates to its association with social transformation (Sušić, 2017). Booth notes that those involved in the programme leave with a sense of self-esteem, achievement, confidence about taking on challenges, and a deep sense of being valued and loved. The structure and approach of El Sistema not only is an effective model for social transformation but also produces quality players with the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra being compared to the prestigious Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, with whom a number of El Sistema graduates have gained employment. As is repeatedly evident, concepts of community recur throughout my study and are also evident in the studies of El Sistema. In a Swedish context, Lindgren et al note that ‘there are different ways of constructing social inclusion within El Sistema’ (2016, p. 65), placing an emphasis on community and the relationship between students and teachers. While my ethnographic efforts do give consideration to the voices, stories and experiences of children, a focus on how music education can interrupt the structures of the school community is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Booth describes El Sistema as a multi-level structure, starting at community level with the Nucleo, where activities take place after school. As children develop skills and grow, they move through a series of more senior youth orchestras at regional and national levels. Unlike MGL’s *Introducing Strings* programme, which draws on a variety of musical genres in its delivery, repertoire choices with El Sistema and El Sistema inspired programmes focus on the classical genre. Participation can start as young as two or three years, but most typically starts at 5 or 6 with choir. First instruments are recorder and percussion; choir continues for everyone whilst they learn instruments. First instrumental group lessons integrate singing and playing. The ensemble or orchestra is the focus; many sectional rehearsals and individual

classes also feature. Often it is the one teacher that delivers sectionals and individual lessons so that mistakes are caught and rectified early. The pedagogical approach outlined by Booth describes El Sistema as disciplined yet relaxed; because of the frequency of attendance (6 days a week, 3/4 hours a day), there is room to relax and have fun. There are frequent opportunities to perform - to other groups, to each other, in concert and this develops performance and confidence. Students are eased into full use of notation over a number of years and it does not become a barrier to playing. Everyone is valued and the individual is cared for and noticed, and treated as an asset.

While El Sistema has inspired many variations around the world, it is important to understand local differences and adaptations. Anna Bull (2016), for example, notes:

While the Venezuelan program runs separately from schools, in dedicated music schools or núcleos (Baker 2014), the UK programs are targeted directly at schools in disadvantaged areas. Music tuition often takes place on school premises rather than in dedicated venues, and in some programs several hours a week of curriculum time is devoted to it (In Harmony Liverpool 2015, p. 123).

As with Bull's examples, *Introducing Strings* also takes place in schools but is not focused solely on disadvantaged areas. While the involvement of school principals and teachers in the development of the programme is detailed in Chapters 4 and 5, Music Generation operates independently of the school structures, aspiring to create a community beyond the schools.

2.4.4 UK Instrumental Music Services

The influence of developments in music education in the UK on Music Generation have already been indicated. Hallam and Prince's research into UK Instrumental Music Services (1999/2000) revealed a number of findings that correlate with the experience of MGL and this research into the *Introducing Strings* programme. Their research describes how the UK's LEA led Instrumental Music Services follow an adaptive model, similar to Ireland's Music Generation programme. In calling these services adaptive refers to the way they adapt and respond to local needs and community contexts. Localisation and adaptation is evident in MGL's strings programme, where the repertoire, genre and ways in which the programme is

delivered within the school is negotiated and decided to best fit each context. By way of example, in two Louth schools, repertoire choice is focused on traditional music reflecting the personal tastes and preferences of the principal and matching the musical culture that prevails outside of the Music Generation programme and evident in the other musical activities of the school (see Chapter 5). Whilst typically *Introducing Strings* starts with 2nd class groups and entails the delivery of a forty-five-minute weekly session for each class group using the full spectrum of classical stringed instruments, there are modifications to the model in order to best suit each context. For instance, composite classes in smaller primary schools require smaller groups and shorter sessions to cater for different year groups with differing levels of experience. Smaller classes in a number of DEIS band one primary schools require shorter sessions. Progression routes within schools vary also; in some primary schools, children continue to participate within the WCET model through to 4th, 5th, and/or 6th class. In contrast, in one school, a selection process based mostly on interest and motivation, determined the group of children to participate in the programme from 4th through to 6th class. At post primary level, again there were variations. In one school, the 1st year music group was selected to participate in the strings programme. In another, those who had participated in the strings programme at primary level were provided with the opportunity to continue. A key aspect of the development of engagement in music education centres on motivation. The need to motivate participants in different ways that meet the diversity of participants involved is informed by the work of Hallam (2002). Noting different personality types and situations, Hallam states: ‘the extent to which an individual is motivated to pursue musical activity will depend on the interactions between their characteristics, self-concept and goals and the characteristics of the immediate environment, including cultural and historical factors, the educational environment and the support they receive from family and peers’ (p. 233). Thus, it is necessary to consider all of these factors in the development of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme.

Hallam and Prince's (2000) research identified the interpersonal skills of the musician educators as a critical success factor superseding musical expertise and musicianship. They found that music educators who were enthusiastic, motivated and flexible achieved greater outcomes in terms of progression and sustained engagement. Within the MGL strings programme team, the majority had developed as musicians through the system of Western art music. This approach was the dominant style of delivery of the strings programme in its initial phases with a strong focus on instrumental technique and use of standard tutor book repertoire. There was little deviation in terms of approach and repertoire from school to school. This 'old school approach' was shown to fail in a number of schools where attempts had been made to provide progression routes into further instrumental study. I present further consideration of teaching methods and quality in Section 5.6 on Continuing Professional Development.

2.4.5 Musical Futures

Musical Futures provides another comparator for Music Generation. Established in the UK, it seeks to support teachers to teach music 'in a way that helps them to engage and enthuse their students' (<https://www.musicalfutures.org/who-we-are>). The pedagogical approach involves the musical culture of the participants, an aspect that is explored in Section 2.6 with regard to repertoire. The core values of *Musical Futures* outlined in Table 2, are similar to those of Music Generation but there are a number of differences that can be identified through comparison with the information presented in Chapter 3, and further contrasted with those categories derived from Fautley et al (2019) presented in Table 5 in Chapter 6. Most importantly in the context of this study, it is the consideration of repertoire and the musical culture of the child that both differs from and can inform this study. The three teaching models outlined in *Musical Futures* is also worthy of consideration when critically reflecting on the approaches to teaching in this study. Notably the learning model of 'Just Play' aligns somewhat with the approaches that have been developed in the *Introducing Strings*

programme, while the ‘non-formal teaching’ and ‘informal learning’ models mirror some of the desired developments identified in the findings of this dissertation. ‘Just Play’ identifies the teacher as a musical leader engaging the whole class in large group music-making using a variety of instruments with an emphasis on ‘sound before symbol’.

Inclusive – everyone takes part at their own level
Absorbing – learning is practical and hands-on
Relevant – starts with music that learners engage and identify with
Sociable – it is collaborative and with friends
Informal – led by learners with teachers/leaders modelling, guiding, supporting
Varied – learners perform, listen, compose, improvise, work on a range of instruments and voices, use technology, explore a range of genres and styles
Progressive – music learning experiences are high quality, authentic where possible, and with clear progression routes
Respectful – all learners, no matter what their ability or experience, are treated as musicians, and are supported to learn and develop

Table 2 Core Values of Musical Futures. Source: <https://www.musicalfutures.org/who-we-are>, accessed 18 November 2021.

Musical Futures established pilot projects in Ireland in 2016 (<https://www.musicalfutures.org/musical-futures-news/musical-futures-ireland>). Gwen Moore (2018) has published a report on these pilot projects of the *Musical Futures* approach conducted in two secondary and two primary schools, the launch of which was preceded by a seminar that aimed to establish a network of academics, teachers (primary, post-primary, instrumental teachers), principals and policymakers. Notably Rosaleen Molloy, National Director of Music Generation, participated in a panel discussion chaired by Moore at the event. As well as enhancing music learning, Moore addresses access and opportunity, peer learning and social development, confidence and motivation for both teachers and students that resonate with this study. Moore also identifies some of the challenges experienced by

those involved in *Musical Futures*, including access to instruments and suitable spaces, and the abilities of students, which recur in this study.

2.5 Communities of Musical Practice

My research and my approach to my role with MGL are significantly informed by the work of Ailbhe Kenny (2016) and, in particular, her scholarship on communities of musical practice (CoMP). Kenny uses a qualitative collective case study research approach to examine how musical communities are developed and sustained. The research claims to offer fresh perspectives on how communities make, learn and share music, focusing on roles, behaviours and identities as they manifest through musical and social interactions. Three government-supported musical communities in mid-West Ireland were chosen for Kenny's (2016) study which took place over a nine-month period (October 2010 to June 2011). The case study choices provide a range of musical genres, age profiles and contexts: Limerick Jazz Workshop, an adult amateur jazz ensemble; The County Limerick Youth Choir; and the Online Academy of Irish Music. Kenny collected qualitative data on the groups through observation, participant logs, focus groups, interviews, examination of online discussion forums and social media posts.

Finnerty (2008) highlights the importance of connecting music education in primary schools with the wider communities. Similarly, Kenny (2016) emphasizes the importance of making music as a collaborative, situated learning endeavour and the power of such communities of musical practice as a rich education resource and sustainable model for musical participation. The research narrative describes how members of these three distinct musical communities engage in collective music making which is at once both musical and social. They interact, encounter new situations and characters, they learn, negotiate, interpret the rules, 'in so doing make meaning of their experiences to inform (and potentially transform) their individual and collective identities' (Kenny, 2016, p. 128).

Key characteristics of CoMP practices that emerge from Kenny's research are identity (collective and individual), collective knowledge (built up through shared collaborative experiences) and belonging (which forms and sustains CoMPs). Kenny's findings reveal these three characteristics to be mutually dependent in sustaining each community's practices.

Kenny sets out a number of recommendations for practice include:

- providing opportunities for group music making, where membership and participation promoted;
- promoting and valuing socio-musical relationships and interactions where collective and individual identities nurtured (takes time, energy and challenging within a scheme as large as MGL strings programme);
- employing formal, non-formal and informal approaches to teaching and learning of music;
- challenging members musically to sustain participation and progression;
- appreciating differing levels of participation and collaboration;
- linking educational institutions with community initiatives to increase opportunities for overlapping and complementary CoMPs;
- fostering positive values and attitudes towards musical engagement as well as skills acquisition to foster life-long COMP participation.

The focus on the importance of the social aspect of collective music making in developing and sustaining musical engagement has resonated with my own reflections on the Music Generation programme since it commenced in 2011. Where the three dimensions of COPs (as

defined by Wenger (1998) and used by Kenny – mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire) are present or emerging, the greater the likelihood of success.

2.6 Enculturation

One of the aims of Music Generation is to develop a culture of music performance education in Ireland. Once established, this would allow for a process of enculturation, whereby children would normally engage in and value music performance learning. Melville Herskovits defined the term enculturation as: ‘The aspects of the learning experience which marks off man from other creatures, and by means of which [...] he achieves competence in his culture [...] This is in essence a process of conscious or unconscious learning’ (1948, p. 39). Similarly, ethnomusicologist Alan Merriman defines enculturation as the ‘process by which the individual learns his culture, and it must be emphasized that this is a never-ending process continuing throughout the life span of the individual’ (1964, p. 146). In simple terms, musical enculturation therefore refers to the transformative process of the individual in developing a musician identity. This again reflects the key findings of Moore and Kenny (2012) in relation to *Sing Out With Strings*.

The scholarship of Lucy Green is seminal in understanding the importance of the links between music education and music as lived experience (Green, 2005), and the connection between learning, teaching and musical identity (Green, 2011). Engaging primarily in an English context, Green recognises the growing diversity amongst learners, that is also relevant to Irish education. Nevertheless, in Ireland, Irish traditional music remains a prominent focus of many music education activities, as it has been since the early years of the independent Irish state (McCarthy, 1999). Focusing on Irish traditional music, Cawley (2013, 2020) draws on multiple frameworks and theories from ethnomusicology, music education and Irish traditional music to examine the enculturation process of the individual within Irish traditional music’s community of practice. Although her focus is often on the role of the family in music learning, the patterns of enculturation that emerge in Cawley’s study can provide useful

insights into how MGL's string programme is organised and delivered as part of a local ecosystem of musical enculturation.

Similar to Finnerty's (2017) study of children in early years, Cawley asserts that enculturation for the most part takes place outside of school settings. This may be because at the time of research there were few opportunities to engage in performance music education within the school day. Music Generation was only in its early stages of development. The prevalence and importance of music programmes within schools is growing, particularly since the commencement of the Music Generation programme. Primary schools provide good environments for musical enculturation to happen. However, the pressures of delivering core curriculum subjects means that it is challenging for teachers to find time for music making.

2.7 Repertoire

This study recognises the importance of the consideration given to repertoire. The MGL *Introducing Strings* programme initially focused on Western art music education and pedagogy but has not maintained this focus. More broadly, as evidenced in Chapter 5, there has been greater consideration of genre across the various activities in the county. McCarthy (1990; 1999) has highlighted the particular role of Irish traditional music in the Irish education system, influenced by cultural nationalism, while other studies have reflected on the role of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in the development of community-based Irish traditional music education (Henry, 1989; Fleming, 2004; Kearney, 2013; Stoebel, 2015). The familiarity with and prevalence of Irish traditional music in many of the settings encountered in this study, highlighted the potential for a greater integration of this music into the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme.

Aspiring to a greater consideration of popular music, Green (2017) advocates not only for the inclusion of popular music in music education but also a greater consideration of how popular musicians learn (see also Allsup, 2008; 2011). In her studies on music education, Green

(2006; 2017) places an emphasis on popular music and critiques conservative models for music education associated with Western art music pedagogies. She calls for greater diversity not only in the repertoire but also in the approaches to the repertoire. Similarly, Finnerty (2017; 2019) engages with the musical culture of the child's own experience to consider effective approaches to encouraging engagement with music in education.

In a critique of social action programmes for working class children in British music education schemes inspired by El Sistema, Anna Bull questions the focus on classical music, which she argues 'is consumed and practiced by the middle and upper classes' (2016, p. 120). Bull challenges researchers to give greater consideration to class; something that is grappled with in the development of MGL programming. However, it cannot be assumed that divisions of class in the UK as outlined by Bull can be applied directly to the experience in Ireland.

Engaging with a post nationalist perspective and in recognition of a need to respect all musical traditions, Patricia Shehan Campbell advocates for engagement by music educators with ethnomusicology and highlights opportunities for intercultural learning (2002, 2003, 2011). By exploring music from around the world, musicians learn about cultural differences and develop empathy and respect for others. In her Keynote Address to ICTM Ireland Annual Conference in 2019, Shehan Campbell prescribed ethnomusicology as an antidote to a Trumpian world of division and hatred. This mirrors approaches within community music that seek to address social issues (Higgins, 2012).

It is evident that repertoire can significantly impact on the successful attainment of educational goals and affect the development of a community of musical practice that extends beyond the experience of music in schools. Musician educators on the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme sought out different resources and explored resources procured from the Charanga Music School in the early stages before later creating and sharing their own as part of the MGL CPD programme. Other musician educators and scholars have similarly explored

resources and resource development for different types of music. The Irish Chamber Orchestra's *Sing Out With Strings* programme is one comparable initiative with sample resources now available on its website. Finnerty and Kearney (2011) developed a classroom resource for learning about Irish traditional music informed by their research into music education, which could be utilised alongside school visits by Irish traditional music performers or in conjunction with or preparation for music performance learning.

2.8 Stakeholder Involvement

An understanding of stakeholder involvement must look beyond the classroom occupants – the children, classroom teacher and musician educators – to include many others who have varying degrees of influence on the culture and learning experience, most notably school principals and parents. Various stakeholders are recognised to differing extents in academic studies of music education and also include other music educators, programme coordinators and policy makers. The interconnectivity of and recognition for each of these stakeholders is important. In his study of El Sistema, Booth (2009) notes how it is connected at every level; with parents, students, peers/mentors and at a higher level with government policy and arts planning. Similarly, Finnerty (2017) highlights the importance of connecting music communities in and beyond school while Moore and Kenny (2012) highlight the importance of connecting with parents and the wider community, pointing to the success of the end of year concert.

In a study of music education provision in the UK, music educators surveyed by Hallam and Prince (2000) indicated the impact of their teaching in schools was maximised where the school teaching community head teacher, music teacher and staff were wholly committed to it. From my study of MGL's strings programmes, the experience too has been that school support is a critical success factor. In relation to the role of principals and classroom teachers, Hallam notes 'research on instrumental music services in the UK where teachers reported that the support of the head teacher and class music teacher were crucial in the extent to which

their instrumental teaching could be effective in a school' (Hallam, 2002, p. 20). Hallam (2002) also notes that, although not essential, family members play an important role in motivating young people to learn music and points to research that indicates the importance of peer encouragement amongst young boys.

In the study by Hallam and Prince (2000), music educators suggested that parental support was less important than school support. This may reflect the challenge for instrumental music services in establishing ways to connect with parents as activity takes place during the school day. Whilst success of delivery is important, and the influence of parents within the environment of the school is limited, it is important to say here that parental and family support is hugely important in the musical enculturation process. The MGL *Introducing Strings* programme continually has found ways to connect with parents by inviting them to performances at school, inviting participation to out of school projects and more recently creating collaborative video performances that widen awareness and understanding about Music Generation. For children who are not from a musical background, it is important that a music-rich culture is created within schools in order to start the musical enculturation process. One other point to consider is the fact that as children grow older and seek more independence, there can be a tendency for them to rebel against their parents and the community of practice within the school will be crucial in sustaining musical engagement.

While adults are often the focus of studies, children remain the primary stakeholders in music education programmes. In an Irish context, Finnerty's (2008; 2017) studies place the voice of the child at the centre of learning about musical experiences in and outside of school. She focuses on the musical worlds of the child and the factors that inform their musical desires and preferences. American music education scholar Allsup (2002; 2003) engages with band culture in schools in the USA and 'band culture' in particular. He critically considers the development of democracy and varying approaches including improvisation to encourage engagement. Children have a critical role to play in the design and development of

programmes and it is necessary in this dissertation to consider and critique the extent to which they are involved.

2.9 Policy and Strategy

As outlined in Chapter 3, Music Generation may be viewed as a response to failures and frustrations related to music education in Ireland, which conflicts with the perception and reputation of Ireland as a musical country. While some of the policies and strategies that inform the establishment and early development of Music Generation are considered in Chapter 3, a brief consideration of national policies for the arts are also informative. In particular, four Government publications place and contextualise the philosophies and activities of Music Generation within a wider strategy for arts and culture. *Project Ireland 2040* places an emphasis on wellbeing, equality and opportunity.⁶ Within this programme is a sectoral plan, focusing on culture, the Irish language and national heritage including investment in local arts and culture infrastructure nationally.⁷ Separately, *Culture 2025* is an overarching policy framework launched in January 2020 ‘to ensure a unified and coherent approach to cultural policy across government and to planning and provision across the cultural sector’.⁸ Another significant policy development was the *Creative Ireland Programme* (2016), which includes objectives targeting access to music for all children. The programme requires each local authority to prepare a creativity action plan, the content of which can overlap with a county arts plan. The programme is structured around five pillars, including (1) enabling the creative potential of every child, (2) enabling creativity in every community and (3) investing in creative and cultural infrastructure.⁹ A flagship initiative of the Creative Ireland programme is *Creative Schools*, which underpins the aim ‘to enable the

⁶ Project Ireland 2040 <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/09022006-project-ireland-2040/> (accessed 13 September 2021).

⁷ Web site: <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2019/12/FINAL-PLAN-FOR-WEBSITE.pdf> (accessed 15 September 2021).

⁸ Culture 2025: A national cultural policy framework, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, gov.ie - Culture 2025 (www.gov.ie) (accessed 20 October 2021) (p.4).

⁹ Creative Ireland Programme is at Creative Ireland - Creative Ireland Programme (accessed 13 September 2021).

creative potential of every child'.¹⁰ Creative Schools is led by the Arts Council in partnership with the Department of Education and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and is informed by the Arts Council strategy, *Making Great Arts Work* (2016–25).¹¹ The aims and activities of Music Generation, including the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme align with many aspects of these documents but operate in parallel. At a local level, it is important to recognise that policy makers and practitioners have a role to play in fostering these powerful communities of musical practice across at national and local level (Mullen, forthcoming). Borrowing from Kenny (2016), consideration must be given to:

- capitalising on local resources and expertise to shape and inform CoMPs;
- developing flexibility to tailor the support required by differing CoMPs, to be available at local level;
- increasing local control for CoMPs in policy to achieve a closer policy-practice partnership which is mutually informative;
- providing funding and support mechanisms that take a long-term view of CoMP development to provide stability and sustainability.

My research is informed by a series of Annual Reports compiled by Music Generation and a recent statistical analysis compiled by the organisation (MG, 2020). While these reports, policies and strategies are critical to the organisation nationally, presenting its philosophy, highlighting successes and underpinning applications for sustained funding, my dissertation focuses on the local level and the experience of stakeholders engaged with Music Generation through its programmes in County Louth. Nevertheless, both the activities that I coordinate

¹⁰ <https://www.artscouncil.ie/creative-schools/#:~:text=Creative%20Schools%20is%20a%20flagship%20initiative%20of%20the,of%20Tourism%2C%20Culture%2C%20Arts%2C%20Gaeltacht%2C%20Sport%20and%20Media>. Accessed 03 December 2021.

¹¹ <https://www.artscouncil.ie/arts-council-strategy/>. Accessed 03/12/2021.

and manage, and my research and findings, are informed by these documents, demonstrating a desire for a closer policy-practice partnership which is mutually informative.

An important study is *Possible Selves in Music* (Flynn and Johnston, 2016), which is a summary of a research partnership between Music Generation and St Patrick's College Drumcondra. This document provides context for music education in Ireland and the emergence of Music Generation. It presents aspirations for the organisation underpinned by an 'ecological model of partnership'. The *Possible Selves* report places the experience of the child at the centre of its philosophical design, emphasising for the distinctiveness of the MGL model in its diversity of approaches and genres. It identifies three broad modes of music education, namely dialogical, participatory and presentational. The MGL *Introducing Strings* programme fits largely within the dialogical mode, it is evident from efforts in and beyond this programme and including CPD involving musician educators, that there is a desire to utilise and develop other modes as part of a broader effort towards enculturation and the establishment of a community of musical practice in the county.

Chapter 3: Music Generation

3.1 Music Generation

As indicated in the introduction, my involvement with Music Generation dates to 2010, preceding the establishment of the network of local music education partnerships across Ireland, of which Louth was one of the first three established in 2011. This chapter seeks to provide context by presenting the background, history and evolution of Music Generation. Drawing upon the detailed and regularly updated website, www.musicgeneration.ie, as well as a series of annual reports, strategy and research documents, it details the ethos and philosophies of the organisation, the structures that centres on partnership and presents the organisation's engagement with quality assessment. The aim of the dissertation is not to duplicate all of the information in these documents, which are listed with links in Appendix A, but rather to draw on salient details that provide context for the current study.

Music Generation was an initiative of Music Network, co-funded initially by U2, The Ireland Funds, and Local Music Education Partnerships. The Department of Education and Skills provided public funding from 2014 on a phased basis. The impetus for the programme was underpinned by several pessimistic reviews of music education in Ireland. The *Deaf Ears?* report (1985) commissioned by the Arts Council of Ireland stated that 'The young Irish person has the worst of all European musical 'worlds' (Herron, 1985, p.41). Several other studies and academic engagement have questioned how best to enhance musical education in Ireland (Moore, 2015). Music Network began its investigations into the potential for a national system of publicly supported local 'schools of music' in 2001, the same year as Frank Heneghan's (2004) monumental *Music Education National Debate (MEND)* report was published. This report, in itself a response to *Deaf Ears?*, presented a number of findings on and recommendations for music education in Ireland that stretched across a wide range of areas.

Music Network remained an important actor during this period and published a report entitled *A National System of Local Music Education Services* in 2003 that included a feasibility study that recognised significant geographical disparities in the provision of music education across Ireland. This led to a pilot programme initiated in 2004 by the Department of Education and Skills with City of Dublin VEC and Donegal VEC. The pilot adopted the key recommendations of the Music Network report for implementation, which included the establishment a Music Education Partnership (MEP) in each location. In the Report of the Evaluation of the Music Generation Partnerships in Donegal and Dublin (Thompson, 2009) it was deemed that the Music Education Partnership (MEP) model was a workable and replicable framework for the development of music education services across other areas and other art forms. Its success had played an important role for Music Network in securing the philanthropic funding from U2 and the Ireland funds to bring about the establishment of Music Generation in 2011. Within the landscape of music education at the time of (2010/2011), the Donegal model therefore was clearly an important and influential reference point for devising new regional plans. Whilst the Music Network report explicitly recommended that each local music education partnership would offer a twin stranded service that included music curriculum support, critically, Music Generation's purpose from its initiation was to 'complement and enrich – but not replace – the mainstream music curriculum provision of the formal education system' (Strategic Plan, 2016–2021).

3.2 Mission and Values

The *Introducing Strings* programme at the locus of this dissertation is guided by the overarching mission and values of Music Generation. The Music Generation mission statement reads:

Through access to the breadth of high quality performance music education, our mission is to transform the lives of children and young people, enabling them to develop their creativity, reach their full potential, achieve self-growth and contribute to their personal development within a vibrant music community (*Music Generation Strategic Plan 2016–2021*, p. 9).

The seven values outlined by Music Generation are: Access, Inclusion, Creativity, Quality, Sustainability, Partnerships, and Diversity. All are considered in this study but developing ‘access’ and ‘sustainability’ are foregrounded, as is a conceptualisation of ‘quality’.



Figure 1 Music Generation: Values. Source: Music Generation Strategic Plan, 2016–2021.

The *Music Generation Strategic Plan, 2016–2021* expands on these values, stating that it:

- values a child/young person centred approach;
- is committed to nurturing the innate creativity and musical potential of children/young people;
- believes in the power of creating agency for children/young people in their musical journey;
- is committed to enabling transformation in children/young people, ultimately leading them to develop their future possible self through music.

(p. 11)

The plan outlines three strategic priorities – growth, sustainability and quality. My research on the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme engages with all three strategic priorities; to consider how to ‘[n]ourish growth in terms of depth of provision; how to ‘develop, strengthen and sustain the infrastructure for performance music education’ and ‘how to achieve the highest quality of experience for children/young people in performance music education’. Engaging in academic research achieves some of the actions under Strategic Priority 3, namely related to ‘to invest in research with a focus on articulating quality and sharing best practice across the diversity of performance music education’ (p. 20). The MG strategic plan recognises the importance of musicians’ contribution to performance music education and their locality through performance, mentoring and education. One of the difficulties with this document however is the neglect of the co-ordinator role, which is partly addressed later by Music Generation in its *Guidelines for Music Education Partnerships* (2019) and in my research with a particular emic focus.

Although initially preceded by my study, the publication of the *Music Generation Quality Framework Toolkit* (Zeserson, 2019), provides a valuable parallel to this study. The document recognises the need for ongoing reflexive practice, setting out five steps for review.

Key differences to this study lie in the selection of the area for review. I selected the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme as the researcher in the early stages of the academic programme of study in consultation with the supervisory team. I designed and led the study, with guidance from my supervisors, rather than developed with the team of musician educators, although the study would not be possible without the cooperation of my colleagues and other stakeholders. Nevertheless, there are similarities in the methodologies and evidence gathering and I hope that, following the review of evidence collated as part of this research, the findings will inform decision-making and action planning. Of critical importance is an understanding of what constitutes ‘quality’. In this dissertation, this is informed my literature review, which recognises the diverse ways in which the impacts of musicking (Small, 1998) can be assessed.

3.3 A Partnership Model

Music Generation operates through a devolved model of delivery by Local Music Education Partnerships (LMEPs) under the leadership of Coordinators/Music Development Officers. LMEPs are established as Advisory Groups which comprise of ‘local experts, individuals and organisations that champion and guide the development of the Music Generation programme in their area’.¹² Each partnership is led by a Local Authority or by one of sixteen regional Education and Training Boards established by the Education and Training Boards Act 2013 to replace the previous thirty-three Vocational Education Committees (VECs) established in 1930.

In May 2019, Music Generation published *Guidelines for Music Education Partnerships*, providing information on the background to Music Generation and outlining the structure, roles and responsibilities within the partnership model. Further exploration of the potential of ‘a partnership ecosystem’ is explored in *Possible Selves in Music* (Flynn and Johnston, 2016), a hugely informative research study conducted in partnership with Music Generation.

¹² <https://www.musicgeneration.ie/what-we-do/partnership> (accessed 1 February 2022).

Under the LMEP model, as detailed in the 2019 Guidelines, my role may be identified as that of the Music Development Officer (Coordinator),¹³ defined as ‘the key executive ‘engine’ of the local Music Generation programme’, with ‘a central role in directing and leading the delivery of the ambitious plans for performance music education in each LMEP Area’. The 2019 *Guidelines* state:

In the early stages of a Music Generation programme the MDO plays a key role in interpreting the Framework Plan goals, taking ideas, shaping them and turning them into action and quality programmes. The MDO is responsible for the management, supervision, programming and finances of the Music Generation programmes and must work in a catalytic way to energise partnership working. The Music Development Officer liaises regularly with the MGND on all matters relevant to the LMEP’s activities. [...] Ultimately, it is the role of the Music Development Officer to lead the local programme with support of the LMEP and in particular the Chair. It is also important that the Music Development Officer has the appropriate freedoms to make decisions within the framework of accountability to their employing organisation and to the LMEP (pp. 11–12).

It is significant that my involvement predates this definition of the role by eight years and much of my experience does not directly correlate with the recent developments. While regular consideration of my role is important in the process of evidence gathering and subsequent review, in the conclusions of this dissertation I return to reflect on my role, informed by the recent work of Edel Fahy and Ailbhe Kenny (2021) on partnerships in music education and, in particular, their conceptualisation of the role of ‘broker’.

3.4 Establishing a Louth Music Education Partnership

Louth was amongst the first counties to establish a partnership under Music Generation. Prior to this, I was commissioned by Co. Louth VEC and Louth County Council to undertake a scoping exercise to map music education activity in the county. The purpose of the research was to inform the strategic planning for a new county music service for which funding from Music Generation, Ireland’s then new national programme for music education, would be sought. The scoping was carried out from February 2010 to March 2011 and looked at the broad landscape of musical activity within the county as well as surveying performance music education activity within schools and in community settings. The findings revealed Louth as a

¹³ As I was appointed before a change in titles in 2019, contractually my position is that of ‘coordinator’ and I use the term ‘coordinator’ throughout this dissertation when referring to my role within Music Generation Louth.

music-rich county, home to a wide range of amateur musical groups, high-profile music festivals and high calibre musicians, many of whom derived most, if not all of their income from their professional music practice. This was testimony to the excellence of local teachers who had nurtured, mentored and inspired many fine instrumentalists and singers over several generations.

Beyond opportunities to engage in music making at school through the delivery of the music curriculum, the main opportunities for children and young people to learn music in Louth were identified as follows:

- musicians offering tuition through his/her own private music teaching practice;
- several private music schools providing classical and popular vocal and instrumental tuition;
- branches of the national organisation Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and Scoraíocht Lann Léire, a local organisation based in Dunleer, providing affordable tuition in the traditional genre;
- two Brass Bands in Drogheda and Ardee Concert Band providing affordable tuition in recorder, wind and brass instruments with the opportunity to participate in ensemble playing;
- the Dundalk-based Cross Border Orchestra of Ireland (CBOI) providing an outlet for young people to play in an orchestral ensemble offering attractive high-profile performances within Ireland and further afield.
- a number of primary and post primary schools with visiting peripatetic music teachers providing instrumental tuition to students;

- Dundalk Institute of Technology offering undergraduate and postgraduate opportunities in music.

As defined in Louth County Council's Local Economic and Community Plan 2018–2022, Louth is the smallest county in Ireland. However, it is the second most densely populated county in Ireland, with two of the largest towns in the country, Drogheda and Dundalk. Apart from these two major urban centres, the county also contains a number of substantial towns and villages including Ardee, Dunleer, Clogherhead and Carlingford. Considering the geographic profile of Louth, accessing the range of music tuition opportunities available could be regarded as being relatively easy. However, a number of other barriers were preventing children and young people's access to musical participation and learning. Affordable lessons were available in a limited number of locations. The majority of music teaching and learning was taking place through individual lessons, the expense of which acted as a significant barrier to participation. Whilst peripatetic instrumental teaching was taking place in a number of schools, the cost of the tuition was largely passed on to students. A survey of a group of TY students carried out as part of the scoping exercise (2011) identified the cost of music education as a significant barrier to participation. This survey also showed many had attended music lessons as children but had given up because they found it boring and the music they were learning to play did not match their own musical tastes. The organisations that offered affordable group lessons also provided opportunities for ensemble playing. The opportunity to play in an ensemble and for music making to have a social dimension was limited for those attending individual lessons. The opportunity to engage in musical learning as a young person in Louth largely depended on whether you came from a background where musical engagement was valued and whether you had adults who could afford the time, commitment and money to support musical education as an extracurricular activity. These findings of course were not exclusive to Louth but indeed mirrored the music education landscape across Ireland at the time. The ad hoc nature of music education provision reflected the fact that

Ireland lacked a much-needed publicly funded system for music education prior to Music Generation's formation in 2010.

From the outset, the Louth Music Education Partnership wanted to establish a model of music education provision that would provide equity of access. The programme portfolio for MGL outlined in the initial strategic plan involved three main programme strands: Afterschool Tuition Hubs, Performance Groups and In-School Access Programmes. It was planned that tuition and rehearsals would take place in a range of settings across Co. Louth including, but not limited to, pre-schools, primary schools, secondary schools, youth clubs and four regional music tuition centres to be established at Bush Post Primary School, Cooley; Ó Fiaich College, Dundalk; St Oliver's Community College, Drogheda; and Scoil Uí Mhuirí, Dunleer.

3.4.1 Establishment of Afterschool Hubs

By September 2012, one year from the commencement of the implementation stage, five after-school music hubs were established in Co. Louth VEC, Dundalk; St Oliver's Community College, Drogheda, Bush Post Primary School, Cooley; Ardee Community School, Ardee and Scoil Uí Mhuirí, Dunleer. The after-school provision model alluded to in the plan was similar to that of the Donegal Music Education Partnership model established in 2005. The Donegal MEP led by Donegal VEC (now Donegal Education and Training Board) had established a modus operandi that was successful in widening children and young people's access to music learning based on a partnership funding model. Within two years, Donegal VEC had established nine centres of learning across the region, reaching 600 students and engaging thirty-two musician educators (Thompson, 2007).

The annual report for Music Generation Louth in 2013 detailed 398 children and young people participating in the after-school programme in that year with 91% participation in the urban centres of Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee. An analysis of participation in the after-school programme of hub lessons as part of a strategic review in 2015 showed that the

proportion of individual lessons being delivered was increasing year on year at the same time as the proportion of group lessons was decreasing. Despite considerable promotional and marketing efforts, it had proven difficult for MGL to attract sufficient interest amongst children and young people of similar age groups and learning experiences to create workable group classes and new performance ensembles. With the sanction of the LMEP, there was a reallocation of resources in 2016. The after-school music hubs in Dunleer and Bush ceased. A new focus on popular music using informal learning approaches inspired by the *Musical Futures* model was launched with the aim of building enrolment figures to enable the aspired group teaching model to flourish.

3.4.2 Performance Groups

The scoping exercise in Louth (2010–2011) revealed a strong tradition of classical violin playing in North Louth that was nurtured by the teaching and musical educational practice of Father Brendan McNally (1933–2017). Working as curate in the parish of Lordship and Ballymascanlon in North Louth area of Ravensdale during the period 1963 to 1976, McNally provided lessons free of charge to children of the parish. Discussions with former pupils identify that his selection process involved:

- assessment of their musical aural skills using Arnold Bentley’s Measures of Musical Ability, a musical aptitude test first published in 1966 and used widely amongst children of primary school age;
- assessment of their hands and suitability for string playing;
- a commitment from parents/guardians to provide the instrument (and to support attendance at lessons/rehearsals and home practice).

McNally moved to the Redeemer Parish in Dundalk in 1976 and later to Tallanstown in 1987, where he also influenced local children’s access to and participation in music. He continued to teach the children from Ravensdale, as well as taking on new children from other

communities. Alongside instrumental tuition, McNally's students attended weekly string orchestra rehearsals with frequent performances, within Louth and beyond. The group also accommodated young string players taught by other teachers. The ensemble became the focus for a community of musical practice to the extent that in 2010, former members and past pupils came together to form the Fr McNally Chamber Orchestra. A high percentage of this group had been inspired to make a career of playing violin, either through professional playing and/or teaching. By 2010, many had remained in Co. Louth and built up their private music teaching businesses, bringing on a new generation of string players in the North Louth area. The Chamber Orchestra became an ensemble-in-residence at Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) and in May 2011, DkIT formally recognised Fr McNally's accomplishments in relation to music teaching, and the recital room in the Carroll Building was dedicated to him and named in his honour in an event presided over by President of Ireland, Mary McAleese.

In considering the strategic programming priorities for the MGL programme, it was evident that the missing ingredient from McNally's exemplary model of music education practice for this new generation of young string players was the opportunity to participate in ensemble. In April 2012, Music Generation Louth's piloted a string orchestra programme, as part of its first series of workshops and activities that took place during Easter holidays using Co. Louth VEC's Ó Fiaich College, Dundalk as a rehearsal venue. Registration was open to all young strings players in the area to join and targeted young players of primary school age with a minimum of one year's playing experience. Further string orchestra workshops for this cohort took place at Ó Fiaich College during summer 2012. In September 2012, the programme had gained considerable support to make it viable to commence weekly rehearsals at *Ceol Oirghialla*, Section of Music, DkIT, a member organisation of the Louth Music Education Partnership. The orchestra programme aimed to develop ensemble performance skills and provided a much-needed social context to sustain young people's musical engagement

through teenage years. As detailed in the strategic review of 2015, the programme at that point had expanded to cater for three levels of players involving seventy-two young people. Membership was predominantly made up of children and young people in the north Louth area attending individual lessons with former Fr McNally pupils, several of whom had joined MGL's panel of musician educators in 2011.

From its establishment until 2020, the MGL string orchestra initiative was led by local professional violinist and teacher Jayne Graham, a former Fr McNally pupil. Under her direction, the ensembles achieved high standards of training and performance, with local concerts organised twice yearly as well as performances at Dublin Castle (2014), the National Concert Hall Dublin (2014 and 2016) and Armagh Cathedral (2018). Alongside the development of the string orchestra groups, other ensembles developed under MGL included Harp Ensemble (2014), Nós Nua Louth Folk Orchestra (2017), Young Voices Louth Choir (2018, 2019, 2020) and a cross border schools traditional orchestra initiative (2018, 2019 and 2020).

The third strand of the MGL plan was In-School Access Programmes. The initial strategic plan envisaged that school activity would be rolled out on a phased basis, following the establishment of the regional afterschool hubs. The rationale for this was to give time for a number of unknown practicalities around programme delivery in schools to be ascertained. At the time of planning (2011), Music Generation's place to deliver programmes in schools during the school day had not been fully established. Aside from reservations at the time regarding the legitimacy of delivering in-school programmes, there was also uncertainty of how the required partnership funding could be attained to make school programming financially viable. However, the demand from schools for programmes to be available sooner and the necessity of such activity to generate income to meet the required financial targets led to a deviation from the plan. From year one of MGL, a range of whole class/large group initiatives were offered in addition to the Introducing Strings programme. These included

Music Matters, an early years programme rolled out initially in partnership with Louth County Childcare Committee to twelve preschool settings (2012–2014) and to infant classes in ten DEIS schools supported by Louth Leader (2013–2015); *Let's Sing* choral and musicianship programme (2013–2015) reaching twelve schools annually along with recorder (four schools) and ukulele (four schools) programmes (2014–2021). Small group instrumental tuition programmes were also established in four schools with tuition taking place during the school day; fiddle (2013), violin (2014) harp (2016) and fiddle (2019). Figure 2 represents the initial framework model for the MGL programme in 2011. The size of the circles are relational – the bigger the circle therefore the bigger the programme in terms of investment in human hours and subsidy. The arrows illustrate the intended relationship between the three. Schools programmes were expected to generate registration for after-school lessons at MGL hubs. Those attending the after-school lessons were expected to join MGL ensembles. An additional arrow depicts the registration option for children and young people learning music outside of MGL to join ensembles.

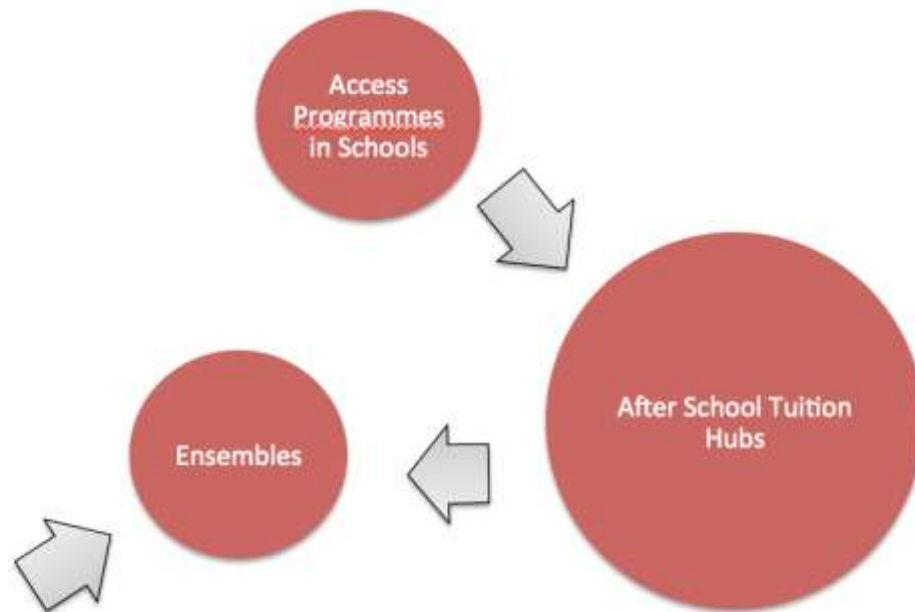
MUSIC GENERATION LOUTH PROGRAMME MODEL 2011

Figure 2 Initial MGL Programme Model

An aspect of the philosophy that this dissertation seeks to interrogate is the interconnection between the three circles in the model. Through analysis of both statistical and ethnographic data, I will examine how the circles connect to each other and if indeed they should try to connect to each other; what are the possible reasons for disconnections and to what extent it matters if they connect or not. There is a desire for progression through pathways (cf. Finnegan, 2007), from school to centre to ensemble, but some participants who are receiving their music education outside of the system may enter directly into ensembles. It was envisaged at the outset that the MGL programme would create opportunities for children from different socio-economic and geographical backgrounds and musical levels to share musical activities with opportunities to engage with professional musicians and composers together. This initial model bears resemblance to UK Music Services at that time and to the Donegal

Music Education Partnership model. The evidence as played out in the period (2012 to 2020) however shows that the circles in the diagram have very few connections.

Following participation in the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, a small number of children registered for instrumental lessons available as progression routes at their school or at MGL Afterschool Hubs. A small number joined the string orchestra programme. Despite the availability and affordability of lessons as well as providing access to instruments and the opportunity to join an ensemble, uptake was low and dropout rate high. My engagement with various stakeholders indicated that the reasons were numerous but three, child-centred reasons were prominent. Firstly, children missed learning with their school peers and found the environment socially challenging. Secondly, children were disappointed that the musician educators delivering the after-school tuition at hubs were different to those they knew from working with them in school. Thirdly, the change from musical participation as a fun and easy group activity to being more serious and disciplined requiring solitary home practice affected motivation. Significant parental involvement was required to ensure development through practice and sustained engagement. Without a musically supportive environment at home, it was unlikely following this model of progression, that engagement could be sustained. In 2018, a scholarship scheme was set up that awarded each partner school with two places for the annual MGL summer camp at DkIT. This initiative built awareness about the range of after school opportunities that MGL offered. Several awardees from schools participating in MGL *Introducing Strings* went on to register for additional courses with MGL. Choices were not exclusively strings focused.

While the MGL philosophy focuses on participation, there must be opportunities for the development of excellence, and a quality review must consider different measures. The larger groups provide social contexts to share the enjoyment of music, which can be a motivation for further development. Benefits of engagement beyond individual lessons include a widening of perspective and breadth of musical knowledge, a deepening of the social aspects of musical

learning for the individual, developing different musical skills such as ensemble playing, and sight-reading. The challenge for teaching and learning in the large group context is the development of instrumental technique.

My critical reflections informed by stakeholder engagement provided a critique of the model. A well thought out pathway for progression focusing on excellence on strings and a trajectory of learning beyond the classroom experience is required. When the circles connect, it is an indication of the success of the philosophy in which music happens in many different contexts and they are willing to commit time and money to make music a part of their lives. However, this may also be a potential negative or challenge as a parent may fear that it will demand further financial and/or time commitment. A lack of understanding amongst stakeholders, particularly parents and children, of what level of commitment is required may influence involvement in musical activities, particularly if time and financial costs are not clearly articulated. In Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this dissertation, I provide insight into the establishment of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme in schools, the challenges faced and current issues around sustainability and development.

Chapter 4: Ignition

4.1 Background – Fuel for the Journey

As detailed in Chapter 3, MGL was established in 2011 following a scoping exercise that I conducted over the preceding year. The results of a survey conducted in 2011 as part of the strategic planning process for the MGL programme demonstrated strong support amongst local primary schools for in-school programmes. 53% of all primary schools in the county completed the survey. A summary of the results of the survey, which was included in the Louth Music Education Partnership’s strategic plan that was submitted to Music Generation as part of the funding bid application in 2011, is presented in Figure 3.

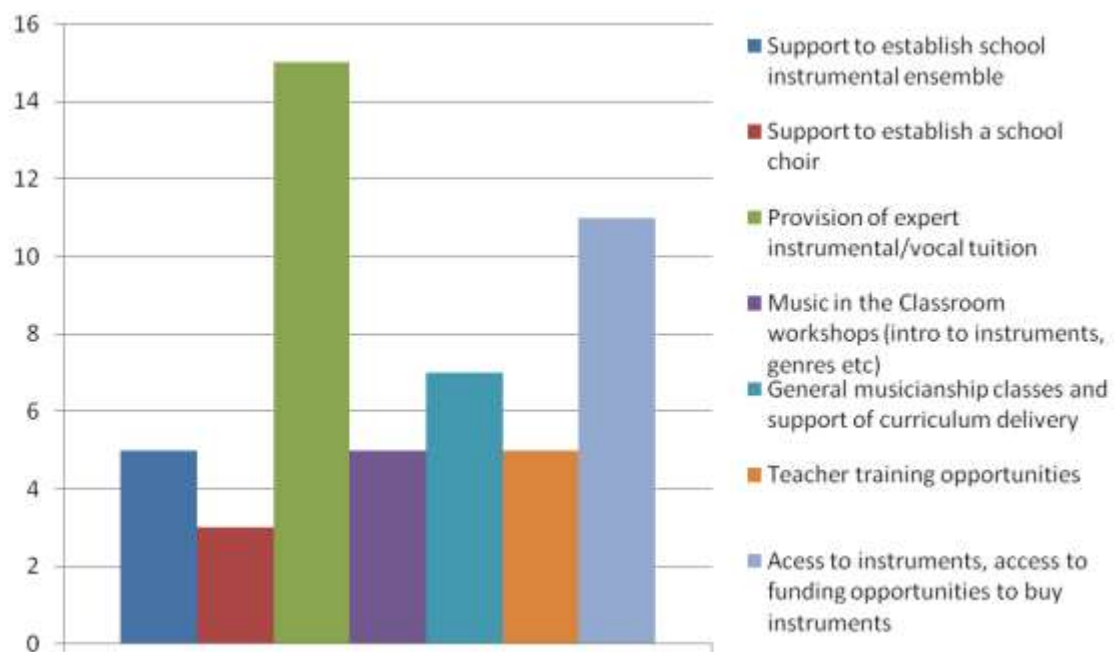


Figure 3 2011 Survey Results. Source: Submission Document (Murray, 2011).

Despite this strong support from schools, the initial plan for MGL (2011–2014) mapped only a gradual roll out of schools’ programmes from 2013. The initial focus was on establishing a programme of afterschool music tuition at four regional centres covering the geographic

spread of the county and establishing a junior orchestra. Several reasons are identified in Chapter 3 for the initial focus on after-school activity in phase one.

In the context of the MGL programme in 2012, a school strings programme made strategic sense. Aside from the growing trend towards whole class strings ensemble teaching at the time, there were several practical influencing factors. The expertise to deliver a whole class strings ensemble programme was available within the MGL team for delivery, the programme had the financial capacity to purchase instruments and the high number of string players on the MGL panel of musician educators gave potential for the project to grow, if successful. Furthermore, a whole class strings programme fitted well within the architecture of the Louth programme at the time. Potentially, interest generated from participation in the whole class strings programme in schools would lead to registration for more specialised strings tuition at Music Generation's four Afterschool Hubs, which in turn would lead to participation in the recently established junior strings orchestra, described in the next section.

As one of the first three counties to get Music Generation programme underway, it felt especially important to be seen to deliver something new, innovative, of high quality and high impact. Expectations about what the Music Generation programme would deliver were high and the success of the early programme played a key role in securing Music Generation's later expansion to other counties. It was important to look beyond traditional models of tuition and create musical learning opportunities that were in step with current trends in music education at the time. With regards to programming for schools and its position within the local music education sector, MGL's role sought to complement existing provision and address gaps in provision. It was important that it did not simply create programmes that schools could deliver easily on their own but rather provide something that needed expertise and resources not readily available.

In the context of the establishment of regional centres and after-school activities outlined in Chapter 3, it is valuable to consider the reasons that accelerated the start of *Introducing Strings* in 2012, ahead of all other primary school activity. The development of MGL's *Introducing Strings* programme was influenced by five sets of factors, defined in Table 3. The legacy of the aforementioned Fr McNally meant there was a core community of available strings specialists and a positive attitude to string ensemble playing amongst a significant cohort of people in the county. It was also identified that string instruments were accessible and allowed large-scale participation without issues of hygiene associated with sharing brass and wind instruments. An awareness of the WCET model within Ireland was growing in the immediate years leading up to Music Generation's commencement in 2011. A number of high-profile strings programmes in primary schools were established during the period 2006 to 2008 and had gained attention within the arts sector and in the media. St Agnes Primary School, Crumlin started its violin project in 2006 offering free instrumental tuition, music theory and participation in performing ensembles. The National Concert Hall *Primary Strings Project* (PSP) was established in 2007 by Music Education Consultant Dorothy Conaghan and the National Concert Hall Education Department. It sought to assist schools in the setting up and development of string tuition programmes within the primary school curriculum framework. In 2008, with seed funding from the University of Limerick, the Irish Chamber Orchestra established its El Sistema inspired *Sing Out with Strings* programme, the aim of which was to play a key role in the regeneration of Limerick. In January and February 2010, RTÉ 1 broadcast a four-part documentary *Music Changes Lives*, by Mind the Gap Productions, featuring the music project based in St Agnes' School, as well as St. Ultan's Cherry Orchard from the National Concert Hall programme. The series followed the stories of children who played in the orchestra, and explored the richness music had brought to the lives of those involved. Also in January 2010, St. Agnes' Children's Youth Orchestra performed at the National Primary Schools principals Annual Conference in City West Hotel, Dublin.

Principal Sr. Bernadette made a presentation on developing music in schools and in May, the Orchestra performed as guest artists in the 2010 Drogheda Arts Festival, extending the influence to an audience in Co. Louth.

Factor	Explanation
Comparative Models	El Sistema, Wider Opportunities
Availability of Teachers/Artists	Many local strings players; Fr McNally Orchestra.
Fashionability	Influenced by preceding musical activities; diversity of instruments/sounds
Scale	Desire to engage large numbers, quickly

Table 3 Factors influencing design of MGL programmes.

In addition to these influences from within Ireland, it is worth noting Louth's proximity to the border and the strong influences at the time from Northern Ireland's music education sector as part of the UK's network of music education services. The impact of the UK's *Wider Opportunities* pledge in 2001 brought about a rapid expansion of WCET programmes across music services in the UK, including Northern Ireland. This was a cost-effective approach to providing access to musical tuition. This was not new to UK; the pioneering work of Sheila Nelson and the Tower Hamlets Project in 1980s could be regarded as the precursor to the wider opportunities strings programmes that emerged under the wider opportunities scheme (Nelson, 1985).

The global influence of the Venezuelan project El Sistema as a vehicle for personal and social transformation led to the creation of the *In Harmony* orchestral programme in 2008 across

three locations Norwich, Liverpool and Lambeth (South London). Independently, also in 2008, Sistema Scotland in Stirling was established. As outlined in Chapter 2, the El Sistema approach recognises that the traditional model of one-to-one instrumental teaching and requirement for home practice was not best suited to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Sistema philosophy is one of total immersion. Participation in ensemble and engaging in regular musical activity with peers within school and outside school fosters musical cultures within communities and leads to both personal and social transformation.

From the outset, the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme sought to ensure access to at least four different instruments. The decision to offer mixed ensemble rather than single instrument was based on the following:

- offering mixed strings ensemble potentially provides a richer, more satisfying musical sound experience for participants;
- offering mixed ensemble potentially widens access to playing instruments that otherwise would be cost prohibitive;
- offering a wider choice of instruments caters better for students' personal preferences, physical attributes etc. and therefore will be more effective in addressing access;
- offering mixed strings ensemble widens the learning experience provided, showcasing rarer instruments and potentially sowing seeds of interest to develop a new generation of such players;
- a number of musician educators on the MGL panel had experience in delivering a mixed strings access programme with a nearby music service in Northern Ireland. They were willing to share their expertise and knowledge so that a similar programme could be established in Louth.

The MGL *Introducing Strings* programme offers schools weekly mixed instrument, whole class sessions delivered by two MGL musician educators, most typically one a specialist in lower strings and one a specialist in upper strings. Ideally, musician educators facilitate sessions in a large space such as the school gym hall with adequate space to cater for a range of musical activities, games and group singing to develop general musicianship as an integral element, complementing the development of instrumental technique. Delivering a mixed ensemble programme poses a number of challenges. With a group potentially playing up to four different instruments, the risk is that the learning process is slowed down to give time for explanations and demonstrations for each section. An important challenge relates to keeping the group engaged whilst specifics of instruments are being taught to sections. A mixed ensemble requires a larger investment in equipment as lower strings instruments are more expensive. In order to cater for the variety of instruments, it is necessary to provide two musicians to deliver the programme making it a more costly model of delivery and posing challenges for scheduling. It is also recognised that team teaching requires specific classroom techniques to best utilise the skills on offer.

4.1.1 String Orchestra Programme

Parallel to *Introducing Strings*, MGL's *String Orchestra* programme was initiated in 2012. The initial activity was an Easter and summer camp in Dundalk open to all young musicians who had reached Grade One level of string playing. In September 2012 the String Orchestra became established as a Saturday morning programme rehearsing in the Carroll Building at DkIT during school term time. The initial group comprised of twenty-five children, mostly female and from the Ravensdale catchment area, the geography perhaps reflecting the legacy of Fr McNally. The programme expanded in 2013 to two groups, with the second group aimed at children with playing experience of one year. In 2014, a third group was formed and participation across the three groups reached approximately 70 children. Alongside musicking

with the orchestra, participants attend individual instrumental tuition provided by private music teachers and progress through the graded examination system.

Orchestra conductor Jayne Graham, has been an influential figure in the development of both the MGL String Orchestra and *Introducing Strings*. Prior to Music Generation, she had already established a strong reputation for her expertise in violin teaching locally. After an introduction to music with Fr McNally, Graham trained at Guildhall, London. A qualified music teacher, Graham spent many years working with musical services in the London area. Her experience, reputation and personal commitment to nurturing this new generation of string players in the area has been vital to the programme's success. The presence of other teachers of these instruments in the county has also been critical to the success of the programme.

The model for the MGL *String Orchestra* is one example within the portfolio of MGL programmes that demonstrates how MGL works alongside providers in the local music education sector, to enrich and deepen the musical learning experience. The emergence of two additional string groups has brought about an increasing diversity amongst the young people involved; the ratio of male musicians has increased and there are now many musicians from other parts of Co. Louth including Ardee, Dundalk and the wider expanse of north Louth and Monaghan. My research has revealed that many participants in the MGL *String Orchestra* have parents who have musical backgrounds and almost all have parents who are very actively involved in their child's musical education.

4.2 Establishing a Team

As a first step towards getting the MGL programme underway, forty-five musicians representing a diversity of instruments and musical genres were recruited onto a panel in November 2011. In accordance with contractual procedures as laid down by lead partner organisation Co. Louth VEC (now The Louth and Meath Education and Training Board),

musicians on the panel could be considered for teaching engagements as and when opportunities arose in the MGL programme.

The wording of the recruitment advertisement was quite broad and did not focus on any one music genre or style:

Co. Louth VEC, on behalf of MGL, seeks to form a panel of vocal/instrumental/musicianship/ensemble music tutors to deliver music tuition throughout the county for children and young people up to 18 years. Musicians practicing in ALL instruments/vocal styles and genres of music, including music technology, are welcome to apply. Applications are also welcome from those specialising in the teaching of practical musicianship and/or leading musical ensembles.

Nevertheless, the recruitment process highlighted the existing strengths and weaknesses in the musical ecosystem of Louth with an imbalance in applications from different instruments and genres.

The terms and conditions offered, which will be considered again in later parts of the dissertation that examine the sustainability of the model, were specified. This was to be a fixed-term contract based on an hourly rate of €36.76 per hour. The number of hours was described as ‘various, as and when required’ noting: ‘Tuition and rehearsals may take place within school hours and outside of school hours, during weekends and school-holiday time’.

From the outset, group teaching was referenced, with the job description noting:

It is envisaged that instrumental and vocal tuition will be delivered in small groups. However, it may also include one-to one, larger group and whole class tuition.

Furthermore, the recruitment process placed an emphasis on a high standard of and experience in musicianship and/or leading ensembles in addition to an appropriate qualification in music/music teaching/music education. The recruitment process also indicated a desire for ‘[e]vidence of commitment to continuing professional development in the area of music teaching/music education and/or conducting’. This final point is particularly relevant for later discussions on CPD in Chapter 5.

Of those appointed, a high percentage (27%) were strings players. Most of the strings specialists appointed (75%) were either Louth-based or of Louth origin, reflecting the strong tradition of string playing in Louth. Due to Louth's proximity to the border, three of the string players recruited in 2011 worked with the Southern Education and Library Board's Music Service in Northern Ireland. Two had extensive experience in delivering whole class mixed strings programmes which had been developed in response to the UK's *Music Manifesto* and *Wider Opportunities* programmes.

4.3 School Recruitment

The MGL *Introducing Strings* programme was first set up as a pilot in three primary schools in North Louth running across eight weeks across the period April to June 2012. All three schools had made contact with MGL in the early stages of its set up in 2011 and were subsequently invited to take part in the pilot. Each school paid a contribution towards the costs. The subsidised financial model tested at pilot stage subsequently has remained in place to date with only modest increases in costs passed on to school to offset the increased hourly rate of pay for musician educators. Schools recoup the charges through a variety of means. Eight of the fifteen participating schools used grant allocations to fund the cost charged by MGL, the remaining seven schools passed on a small weekly charge to the children in full or part, to cover the costs. Two of the first three schools continued with the programme in September 2012 and one further urban primary school in north Louth joined the programme in September 2012, initially for one term only but then extended participation across the academic year.

In one school, anticipating continuation, for the final eight weeks of the academic year, the older participants in this school made way for participants from second and third class. This allowed for transition. In two of the three schools, the following year, the continuation of in-school activities was complimented by the development of progression routes. One school facilitated an after-school programme and another school accommodated small group

instrumental tuition during the school day; instrument rental was organised. One of the schools participated in a nearby music performance competition. While the after-school programme and small group classes followed conventional pedagogies for teaching stringed instruments, the potential of using resources from Charanga to create an enjoyable learning environment with accessible repertoire was encouraged by the coordinator. Training on the use of Charanga for the team of MGL musician educators was organised.

A series of performance roadshows was organised in 2013 with funding provided by the Arts Council. Performances for a targeted group of DEIS primary schools by a quartet of string musicians from the MGL panel in February 2013 instigated interest from two further urban primary schools located in South Louth. These school commenced the programme in September 2013. Further expansion is detailed in Chapter 5.

4.3.1 Motivations for Involvement and Benefits Identified

By 2014, a philosophy and approach had developed in MGL, which was summarised in the publicity information that was circulated to schools to recruit further participants (figure 4). Interactions with stakeholders, and principals in particular informed the campaign and communications. Many of the points made at this time remain relevant to this day. It is informative to reflect on the motivations cited by schools for participating in the programme in the context of the publicity information circulated in 2014.



INTRODUCING STRINGS

TARGET AGE GROUP: 2nd/3rd Class
DURATION: 30 weeks (October 14 to June 15)
DELIVERY: Whole Class
SESSION TIME: 40- 45 Mins

As part of our portfolio of initiatives for primary schools we have developed a very successful introduction to orchestral strings programme, aimed at 2nd and/or 3rd class children.

The Introducing Strings programme provides grounding in musicianship through singing activities and musical games; it also gives children an exciting opportunity to play a range of orchestral stringed instruments – violin, viola, cello and double bass in a whole-class environment. The sessions are delivered by a team of two tutors (with expertise in both upper and lower stringed instruments).

A set of stringed instruments is provided on loan to each participating school for the duration of the programme so that every child has his/her own instrument to play during the sessions.

The aim is very much to have fun playing the instruments and to spark an interest in musical learning through an ensemble approach. There is no pressure to practise or drill outside the session; the instruments remain in the school for the duration of the programme and are not taken home by the children.

Introducing Strings is ideal for schools that may be interested in setting up an orchestra and offering a progression route within the school for further instrumental learning after the programme has finished.

It also works equally well for schools that would like simply like to engage with a service that can enhance the delivery of the music curriculum and offer their students a new, positive musical learning experience.

Figure 4 Promotion for *Introducing Strings* from 2014. Source; MGL

The MGL *Introducing Strings* programme offered a unique opportunity for children to play a range of instruments not typically found in schools. It provided children with a musical ensemble experience that would allow them to enjoy music making with their class peers. Access to such instruments and the expertise required to deliver a whole class mixed strings programme was beyond the scope of most schools. No other providers at the time were offering schools the opportunity to participate in such a programme. Whilst many of the

schools had established active music programmes, the uniqueness of the strings programme delivered by professional musician educators had the potential to further engage, inspire and educate children in music beyond what schools could provide on their own. This correlates to the findings from the primary school survey in 2011 referred to previously, which showed that primary school principals were most interested in accessing expert musical tuition. It also reflected the fact that the school had identified a skills gap in being able to effectively deliver music education programmes. Notably, teachers lack confidence and skills in delivery the school music curriculum. As one principal stated: ‘Not every primary school teacher is fully equipped to teach it. You might be brilliant at something else’. Nevertheless, as stated in policies and strategies, Music Generation does not seek to replace the role of the classroom teacher and each teacher has an important role in nurturing musicking. Several principals stated that they hoped that the development of projects with Music Generation would facilitate or enhance the acquisition of new music teaching skills amongst the teaching staff of the schools and expressed the difficulty for many non-specialists in delivering the primary school music curriculum. It was hoped that the experience might develop confidence and encourage them to take on musical projects with their own classes (see also, Kenny, 2020). This was envisaged as a legacy of Music Generation and can impact positively on the sustainability of Music Generation programmes.

Whilst there were clear differences in the levels of musical activity and expertise within schools, it is evident that all principals involved valued the place of music in education and believed in providing a holistic education. One school principal commented that the school system was heavily weighted towards literacy and numeracy and that there was a lack of importance within the curriculum in music and the arts. Similarly, another principal said she felt that music was still on the margins and the curriculum was already overloaded stating: ‘I love seeing children who might absolutely take to this and be one of the best in the room. And you can clearly see how much they love it [...] It just gives an opportunity to show strengths

that they might not get in normal classroom situation; it is a big confidence boosting thing for them as well’.

A range of other benefits beyond the development of musical skills were cited, mirroring many other studies (Levitin, 2006; Sacks, 2008). Several principals and teachers described the therapeutic value of playing music. Reflecting on the work of Gordon Shaw and Frances Rauscher, who describe preschool children’s’ brains as like a plastic, Flores argues that playing an instrument, especially the piano establishes a connection between the brain and body, affecting both the soul and the physique (Flores et al., 2008). During my fieldwork, responses reflected academic studies. One parent interviewed said, ‘Knowing how to calm himself down through music, that is what I want’. A special needs teacher in one school said she felt the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme was therapeutic; the children sometimes protested about participating but their enjoyment was evident by the fact that often after a session they continued into the schoolyard for break time singing the tunes (see also Finnerty, 2018). She explained that for some children with special needs, playing stringed instruments could be physically challenging, requiring core strength and strong fingers to hold instruments and create different pitches using fingers on the fingerboard. At the same time, the physical demands of the instruments were helping the children develop both fine and gross motor skills (cf Mustafa, 2021).

Music also has a role to play in the development of memory skills. One parent interviewed commented that her son’s memory had improved as a result of playing music in the programme at school. Two principals also mentioned the positive impact of music participation on focus, cognitive development and academic achievement with one stating:

The benefits of children learning a music instrument are undisputed. Children learn to concentrate better at school leading to improved outcomes across all curricular areas notably literacy and numeracy. Learning an instrument is above all a joyful experience for children.

Placing an emphasis on enjoyment is an important consideration in developing an underlying philosophy for the programme and this is explored further in Chapter 6.

Experts have long studied the impact of music on child development. The first work in this area is an experiment called the ‘Mozart Effect’. Undoubtedly, this research, which was published in the journal *Nature* on October 14, 1993, became popular in a short time and immediately showed its effects in society (Başer, 2009). While more recent studies have questioned some of the findings of the original study, it remains influential. Music education is of great importance for children to have a more successful education life. As children are more social and more confident thanks to music education, it affects all school and exam performances. School administrators, teachers and families should provide opportunities for social and musical activities to children as much as possible.

4.4 Barriers To Musicking

Many principals and teachers interviewed identified the barriers that prevented children’s participation in music outside of school. Regardless of the socio demographic profile of each school, a range of similar factors presented.

4.4.1 Instruments

One principal felt that the cost of tuition and instrument purchase was a key factor in deterring children’s musical involvement outside of school:

I think that our children might now have the opportunity for music. We are a DEIS school, lessons are expensive, instruments are expensive. It is definitely something that our children would not get to experience if they weren’t here.

For the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, schools are provided with the loan of a set of stringed instruments (violin, viola, cello and double bass) representing the ‘classical’ string orchestra. This allows every child access to an instrument to play during each weekly session but typically children are not able to bring the instrument home. In the period 2012 to 2017, children were allocated an instrument most typically according to size i.e. the double bass allocated to tallest child, the smallest violins are given to the smallest children. The opportunity to choose and swap instruments was introduced on a phased basis in 2017, following feedback from teachers and children. Experience has shown that lower stringed

instruments (double bass and cello) are often also more accessible to children with dyspraxia and autism than upper strings (violin and viola). Such factors are also taken into consideration when allocating instruments to students.

In the early years of the programme from 2012/2013 and 2013/2014, instruments were shared between schools. In part this was due to limited budget. Also, given that stringed instruments are expensive, as coordinator with responsibility for the allocation of resources, I wanted to be sure that the programme would have a life span that would justify significant additional investment. As funds became available, additional instruments were purchased in 2014/2015 to accommodate the expansion of programme to new schools. Additional instruments were required also to support progression. In one school, a robust system to accommodate progression was established. Children were selected to continue the programme after 3rd year and were provided with instruments that they could take home. This required a significant further investment in instruments. The instruments were purchased by Music Generation and the school paid an annual rental charge.

The extent of home practice varied widely from child to child. Overall, however, in comparing the level of progress and development made between groups with/without instruments at home, there is little difference. This suggests that further consideration and planning is required between the coordinator, musician educators, the school and parents/guardians to instil the motivation for and discipline of regular practice. Models such as DIT's Ballymun music project could be explored whereby the children attend breakfast club and daily instrumental practice facilitated by the musicians, prior to the start of the school day. The logistics of scheduling this alongside the significant additional cost of tuition would need to be assessed. A financial analysis would need to compare the cost of instrumental rental versus cost of additional tuition as part of the decision-making process to find a viable solution.

Instrument storage needs to be considered and arranged with schools by the coordinator so that set up time and movement of instruments to and from the workshop space, whether hall or room, can be minimized. In one school, the 6th class students were tasked with moving the instruments and setting up the hall for the strings session with the 1st/2nd class. In another school, SNA staff assist the musician educators in moving the instruments and setting up the space. With a minimum of thirty instruments allocated to each school, and with an average of ten schools participating in the programme annually, there are typically over 300 instruments in circulation during the school year to manage and maintain. Stock keeping, maintenance, repairs and transportation falls to the coordinator and the small administrative team. Often, as part of performance arrangements for larger schools where instruments are shared amongst classes, instruments are borrowed from another school to allow for whole year groups to perform collectively. In 2012, recognizing the additional management burden of instrumental programmes, the lead organization Co. Louth VEC (which merged with Co. Meath VEC in 2013 to become Louth and Meath Education and Training Board), provided additional support to the MGL programme by purchasing a van. An inventory and instrument borrowing database facility was acquired in 2014 to store instrument details with instruments each given unique codes for the purposes of tracking. The stock of string instruments in Co. Louth is a critical asset to the programme and a limitation on programme expansion. It is worth noting that, according to Music Network's 2021 report, nationally, string instruments excluding guitar/ukulele and traditional instruments, account for the third largest element of the national instrument bank.

4.4.2 Time and Convenience

In her doctoral studies on musicking in Irish towns, Aoife Kavanagh (2020) engages with Michel Foucault's theory of rhythm analysis, considering how music activities 'fit' within the everyday rhythms of the lived experience. Looking outside the strings programme and to my role in managing MGL's afterschool hubs, I have noted also many occasions where parents

have wanted their children to take part in music, but the additional effort and logistical childcare challenges presented in getting them to and from after school music lessons has been prohibitive. Those in rural locations have additional travel time and transport issues to overcome with the majority of music tuition provision concentrated in the urban areas of Ardee, Dundalk and Drogheda. It is also evident that children now have an array of afterschool activities to choose from; it is often not simply possible to find time to attend music lessons and then also find time for regular practice. One parent interviewed stated:

It is so accessible in school. No one is left out. I saw children, you would never put them with music or performances or anything like that and they were as involved as the kid beside them, getting involved, as happy doing it.

Aside from the above economic, geographic and logistical factors, attitudes towards music and the level of musical activity within the home environment were cited as influential factors by several teachers and principals during interviews (cf. Cawley 2013; Pitts 2017).

4.5 Enculturation

While there is a desire to develop enculturation, this cannot be achieved in the classroom or school space alone and is heavily influenced by attitudes to music education in the home. The influence of the home is intertwined with that of the school, and musical learning takes place in many settings, as has been richly documented by researchers working in Ireland (Finnerty, 2017a), the USA (Campbell 1998, 2002), England (Green 2002), Australia (Barrett 2015) and around the world (Green 2011). Children begin school as already sophisticated musical learners (Harwood and Marsh 2012), whether they have been fortunate enough to join in with songs, games and a wide repertoire in the home (Barrett 2015), or have instead learnt that music is ‘not for the likes of us’ on grounds of class, education or religion (Custodero, Britto, and Brooks-Gunn 2003).

The development of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme must consider the holistic experience of music in a child’s life and the potential for music and music education to be a lifelong experience. As Pitts notes:

Musical life histories, therefore, begin in different circumstances, and will end in many different ways too: the constant challenge for those who teach and research in music education is to consider how musical opportunities can remain open to all learners, throughout their lives – and what role school music plays in supporting or inhibiting that aim (2017, p. 164).

Reflecting on case studies focused on Sheffield, England, involving infant schools, audiences for live classical music, and adults who had lapsed in their participation in music, Pitts continues:

These case studies and my related research on lifelong engagement in music demonstrate the familiar truth that access to musical participation begins in childhood and is shaped - but by no means guaranteed - by the encouragement, opportunity, attitudes, and skills that children encounter in their schools and homes. More challengingly, the research also suggests that such provision is not in itself sufficient, and that sustained, forward-looking musical opportunities are essential in connecting formative music-making with future possibilities: in other words, an awareness of routes into lifelong musical engagement is essential to finding them (2017: 167).

Noting different contexts for music learning, Pitts highlights differences between ‘self-taught pop musicians’ as highlighted by the work of Green (2002) and ‘teacher-directed orchestras and bands’ as examined by Mantie and Tucker (2008). Several of the adults interviewed as part of my research study expressed their childhood musical learning as somewhat negative experiences and it is necessary to overcome negative perspectives that may influence a younger generation.

For the most part, music teaching and learning in Ireland has followed traditional approaches until recent positive developments instigated by Music Generation across the past decade. Many stakeholders in my research reflected an underlying belief that to participate successfully in music one has to have a degree of natural inborn talent; that it is not enough to enjoy playing music but rather one has to excel through natural talent, perseverance and practice. One class teacher, talking about her musical background and experiences as a child said:

I wouldn't say I was a musician. I play guitar and I got grade four in piano but I wouldn't be so good. When I was young and went to lessons and you got in trouble if you didn't practice, that was really the off-putting part of it.

Some parents whose children are involved in the strings programme may have had similar negative experiences of learning music. That being the case, it is unlikely that they would be

predisposed to prioritising music for their children, particularly since there is now such an array of extracurricular activities for children to join. Reflecting a common scenario, one teacher who was interviewed stated ‘I hated it. I was made to practise. I wanted to give up but I’m so glad I didn’t now’. This demonstrates a need for the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme to find progression routes and pathways beyond the classroom that will create sustained engagement.

One principal had observed that parents who were musicians were more likely to encourage their children to be involved in music, both within and outside school:

I’m aware of maybe two or three families where a parent is a musician and I think that activity leads on to children taking part in music themselves.

A classroom teacher similarly noted:

If you are brought up in a house that didn’t do music, it’s not going to be something that you are going to be pushed towards. There are a few doing music but it is obviously coming from their parents.

Interestingly, 13.5% of the children interviewed as part of this study (110 in total) reported that they had a parent at home who played music. The percentage is considerably higher than that cited by Lucy Green (2002) who estimated that only c1% of the adult population of the UK was involved in amateur music making. Finnerty (2017a) addresses similar factors in an Irish context, examining approaches to music for children in ‘early years’.

Being from a house that “does music” can be interpreted in two ways. One interpretation would be where those in the family are active musicians and playing music is something that happens at home with close and extended family members. As an example of this, one parent interviewed said her husband played guitar and she described how he would show the children chords and play together at home. Alternatively, being in a house that “does music” could also mean coming from a family where music making is valued, encouraged and supported by a non-musician or several non-musicians within the family community such as parents, guardians or extended family members. As an example of this, one parent and special

needs teacher interviewed said that she had not had the chance to do music as a child but was passionate for her child to have music in his life because she was aware of the many benefits it brought to child development. She was proactive in ensuring he had musical experiences, investing time, energy and finances to register him for a wide range of musical opportunities that were available.

Similar to findings by Cawley (2013; 2020) in her study of enculturation of traditional musicians in Ireland, there are examples across the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme where both musicians and non-musician parents and guardians have been proactive in encouraging their children's musical development and supporting their progression to instrumental lessons. Interviewing children, I became aware also that some households had several children taking part, or who had previously taken part, in the strings programme. This was most noticeable in two schools where the programme had been running for six years or more and where the programme had expanded across several school year groups. When asked if anyone else at home played an instrument and hearing the children respond listing their siblings as playing cello, violin etc, I became acutely aware of the interplay between the school and home environment in creating a new set of households who now "do music" and where siblings had developed a sense of musical identity. Within the school community of households, the programme was sowing the seeds of attitudinal change towards music and creating access that potentially would impact future generations. In speaking about her motivation for getting involved in the programme one principal provided the following insight:

What I want is for the children when they grow up to understand about playing an instrument and to be open to giving their own children the opportunity to play music.

A principal (of one DEIS primary school) expressed the view that parents often lacked confidence because of low self-esteem to get their children involved in something that is unfamiliar to them. This led to a lack of engagement in other areas of life, not just music. For

this principal and several others, the main motivation in getting involved in the strings programme was to enrich the children's lives with an opportunity that they would enjoy and that they would not otherwise experience.

One parent gave useful insight into how the programme had helped her as a non-musician support her child's musical engagement.

Q: Would you have sent your children to music anyway?

A: Maybe but not having any background in the instruments, it is hard for parents to get involved. I don't think she would really have wanted to do it, if she hadn't had the experience at school.

The social context that the school environment provides therefore is motivational and is an important factor in nurturing musical interest and engagement. The school environment is also hugely influential in nurturing musical enculturation. Experiencing a school that "does music" and where you have had a rich learning experience playing music with your peers, will influence your choice in participating in music as you get older. This is particularly pertinent as children get older and become independent thinkers making choices with less parental influence. Thus, schools can be identified and understood as communities of musical practice.

4.6 Communities of Musical Practice

While I have outlined some comparative models in Chapter 2, at the start of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, there was little information or clear plans for how the programme would be structured beyond year one. While I had a responsibility for designing and delivering the programme, it was critical that this was informed through engagement with other stakeholders. One school principal of explained:

At the start, for MGL you could see it was a learning process of how it was going to work, how it was going to fit in best. Learning how best to develop [...] When you started chatting with me, it was more collaborative. When we chatted, the project evolved.

This differed from previous experiences in some schools, as described by one principal who stated: 'Previously there was no collaboration, the musicians just came in and did their thing

and we just handed over, they were the experts'. As coordinator, I have had to take a proactive approach to deal with the challenges of maintaining delivery of the programme with a changing team and sustaining a connection with the other stakeholders. As much as time affords, amongst other duties, I take on the role of community development leader, facilitating communications with schools, teachers, families and musicians to navigate how best the programme might fit within each school context. In this section, I consider the relationships, roles and responsibilities of each of the adult stakeholder groups involved in classroom delivery.

4.6.1 Musician-Teacher Partnership

Artists can contribute significantly to education. Kenny (2010) advocates for a greater consideration of musicians as partners and calling for more research in this area, addressed in part in this dissertation. Reflecting philosophies in community music that recognise the benefits for all involved in community music projects beyond the direct participants (see Higgins 2012), critical consideration must be given to the classroom teachers and their relationship with the musician educator. This relationship and the developing role of the classroom teacher can have very positive impacts on the community of musical practice that is established and the sustainability or legacy of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme in the school.

Similar to projects outlined by Kenny (2020), in the early stages of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, there was emphasis on building a teacher-musician partnership. Classroom teachers were encouraged to take an active role in sessions, to act as role models for the children's own participation and learning as well as dealing with supervision. The desire for teacher participation was communicated in a number of ways. In my role as coordinator in setting up the programme in schools, I discussed the role of the teacher with principals; it was then left to the musician educators to actively encourage class teachers to participate as they established the programme in each school.

The level of active participation from teachers varied greatly across and within schools. Crucial to ensuring a teacher's participation was the musician educators' interpersonal skills in establishing a positive relationship. Additional factors included attitudes and interest in music, confidence to try something new as well as the teacher's relationship with his/her class. In one of the schools, the teaching principal learned enthusiastically alongside the children. She had a strong musical identity and outside of programme time, she took the initiative of leading instrumental sessions herself to give the children further opportunity to play. As principal, she had obviously played a leading role in establishing the programme in her school and her active involvement demonstrated her personal commitment to music and to the programme. In two schools that joined the programme in 2013, workshops took place prior to commencement so that class teachers could get a first-hand experience of how the programme was delivered and had a clear understanding of their role as active learners as well as having responsibility for supervision and discipline. Musician educators at these schools indicated that participation from teachers in the programme was high; those who participated less or who took a more passive role on the margins had not attended the sessions. Challenges around time, scheduling and payment of teachers to attend such sessions meant that it was not feasible to roll out similar workshops across other schools and other years.

The attitude and engagement of each classroom teacher is important to the success of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme in each sub-setting of the classroom or age group. One principal explicitly commented that teachers' enthusiasm for the programme was mixed and this was reflected in each one's level of involvement during sessions. At this school I observed one teacher fully engaged in playing an instrument and assisting with the children. The teacher of another group by contrast entered the room with the children, stayed out of the activity and used the time to catch up on correcting and paperwork. Such mixed scenarios were commonplace across all schools. Feedback from the musician educator team across the

years showed that at the start of the programme, teachers tended to be involved but as the year progressed, without being reminded, their involvement often waned.

Where classroom teachers were musicians, this was often seen as an opportunity but it also presented challenges. In the early years of delivery in one of the schools, two members of the school teaching staff were strings players. In this instance, they took on the role of being the second musician educator. Similarly, a teacher in one of the post primary schools where the programme was delivered to first year music classes, the music teacher was a string player also and she took the role of being the second musician educator for the delivery of sessions. The model was not sustainable however as, in the case of the primary school, the programme expanded and required a full day of delivery in the school to multiple year groups. The teachers could not be released from their regular teaching for this extended amount of time. Scheduling time for the MGL musician educator to co plan with the class teachers was problematic. The model reverted to being delivered by two MGL musician educators at the primary school in 2017/2018. As a positive development however, the teachers became the music liaison team for Music Generation and remained strongly involved in performance planning and recruitment for additional programme initiatives within the school.

Observing sessions across several schools across the years, the positive impact on the learning environment of the teacher's active involvement in sessions was noticeable. The children could see that their teacher was valuing the experience, which encouraged their participation. The teachers could also learn the basic instrumental technique required and have an understanding to be able to assist with the delivery. Their involvement in the experience meant discipline issues could be dealt with swiftly and unobtrusively so as not to negatively impact the learning atmosphere.

The teacher/musician partnership manifested in several ways in different school settings as part of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. In many instances, teachers were involved

in cueing and taking charge of playback of backing tracks or accompanying on piano. Some teachers assisted with tuning and set up. Teachers assisted children with technical aspects of playing such as bow placement, bow hold, finger positions, posture as the musician educators took charge of delivery. In some instances, teachers took on the role of conductor, helping the children follow the musical visual aids on display on flip charts or on whiteboards. Some teachers engaged in leading a section of instruments or leading the children in song whilst the musician educators dealt with string technique. The classroom teachers' knowledge of the children was important and informative. Teachers were able to advise the musician educators on issues such as instrument choice related to the particular needs of students.

Overall, the musician educators valued the engagement of the classroom teacher. As one musician described:

My ideal is [x], she is among the students playing viola; she's completely present, not spectating but involved. She will also supervise and correct if they aren't paying attention.

Another musician educator described how a class teacher might not be playing an instrument alongside the children but nevertheless could be involved in a less obvious way and still contributing positively to the success of a session.

If the teacher is fully present, it shows a respect for the activity and for the instruments. If he/she is doing discipline, then I can get on with the delivery.

Contrary to this was her experiences when a teacher was fully involved to the extent that it may negatively impact on the learning dynamic. The personality of the teacher and their demeanour greatly influenced whether teacher involvement was making a positive or negative contribution to the experience.

It works if they are backing you up; if they start taking over, and over correcting, that can be very problematic. For instance, sometimes you are focused on bow hold and the next week you decide to shift the focus to something else. You might have the teacher looking at the bow holds and correcting everyone. This takes away for the teaching point of the session.

The dynamic between teacher and musician educator is delicate. One teacher said she understood that for the musician educator, it might be a daunting prospect to come into a

classroom and take over. The relationship between the classroom teacher and musician educator is not always positive. At worst, a negative dynamic can build between musicians and teachers. One teacher reported: ‘They came in and took over the room and they didn’t tidy it afterwards, they just left. That was annoying teachers’. As observer of the programme over the years, I have noticed that musician educators at times felt it was not their place to coerce teachers to participate. Also, principals had limited success in influencing their staff to participate if the willingness was not there to start.

Sometimes the perceived disinterest was due to other reasons. Several of the teachers interviewed indicated that they were unsure of their role during sessions. As one described:

We don’t know that you want us to be involved. I’m never sure if I should. I don’t want to interfere.

As the programme and relationships developed, a greater level of mutual understanding was achieved. Some teachers recognised the importance and benefits of being engaged in classroom activities led by the musician educator. As the teacher described:

A few years ago, I had a student who had autism. The musician suggested that I learn to play alongside her. I had been doing Music Generation for several years. That was a game changer for me. I was then enjoying it too and was delighted with myself. It also meant that I could go around and I could help.

The richest outcomes have developed where a musician educator has been working within school settings over an extended number of years. This has allowed the musician educators to build positive working relations with school principals, teachers and children and collectively, to build a musical culture within the school. From my experience in organising the programme and observing sessions in schools over the years, it is clear that when the team of musician educators is in school delivering consecutive sessions, there is little time for them to get to know the teachers outside of their classrooms. Often also, due to scheduling, musicians may be moving from one school to another within a day so that even the opportunity for a casual encounter with staff and principal is limited. There is little time for them to absorb the

culture of the school and to acquire knowledge of the socio-cultural environment to inform appropriate planning and delivery.

The consistent presence of the musician educator can have an impact beyond the classroom and MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. In one school for example, where the same musician educator team had been resident for a period of more than four years, it was obvious that the programme was operating at a semi-independent stage. The school engaged the MGL musicians directly outside the programme to further expand the children's musical learning experiences. In collaboration with the musicians, the school had successfully applied to participate in the National Concert Hall/RIAM school orchestra initiative in 2018. An ambitious collaborative performance with school orchestra and choir was organised to celebrate the opening of the new school building. During a set up meeting with the school principal, she explicitly expressed how much they valued the work of the two musicians and made it clear that she wanted them to continue at her school. In terms of sustainability of the programme the scenarios described above are ideal. Similarly in another school, the same musician educator had been resident across a three year period and had successfully built up relations with the school community. The principal described how the musician felt part of the teaching staff: 'She fitted in really well, she was part of the staff'. A teacher in the school described how it was easy to work with the musician, intervene and make suggestions because she knew the musician and got on well with her. As a special needs teacher in the school, she had a particular expertise and knowledge of the children's needs and so her contributions were invaluable. She advised on suitability of instruments and also gave advice and appropriate visual aids amongst other contributions. Without paying attention to relationship building, the richness that can come collaboration and the chance to build a community of musical practice within schools is lost.

In instances where there were changes to the musician teams, within the constraints of time and other commitments with the role of coordinator, I become more deeply connected with

the school to sustain the programme and the relationships that had been built. In one school a traditional musician was assigned to with the intention of integrating the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme with the musical life of the school which featured traditional singing and tin whistle. During their first academic year in the school, I worked alongside the musician assisting in the delivery of the sessions. As I had known the principal and the school for a number of years, it felt easy to start discussions on repertoire ideas, performance opportunities and to start the process of collaborative working. As a full-time employee of the MGL, I had time to dedicate to communications and bespoke repertoire planning not available to part time musician educators working across multiple schools. As the principal commented:

You have become part of what this school does. I'm sure some think you are one of the staff.
Music Generation has become part of the culture of the school.

The research has proven that programme delivery is not enough to build communities of musical practice within schools. Where musical activities have been integrated into the lived experience in the school, regardless of the standards of music achieved, I argue that the programme has been a success.

Amongst the challenges to achieving this measure of success is the ability to retain musician educators. These issues can centre on terms and conditions for employment. Difficulties in retaining musician educators within the programme for extended periods of time has resulted in frequent changes in musician teams within some schools. To illustrate this, in two of the schools involved, ten musician educators worked in each school during the period of 2012 to 2020. Such turnover challenges both the development of the musician-teacher partnership and the development of a culture or community of musical practice in the school.

To overcome the challenges that this has presented in terms of maintaining and developing programmes in schools I have had to take a proactive approach. It has proven important for me as coordinator to remain fully connected to the work on the ground so that relationships can be maintained with children, parents, teachers and principals. Thus, beyond the musician-

teacher partnership, the coordinator is also a partner who is critical to the success of the programme. He/she is the cornerstone of the school partnership and must be involved to ensure that there is a shared vision, recognising that the school and MGL are equal partners. This requires time for discussion and reflection that, to some extent, was facilitated to a greater extent by my research for this dissertation.

4.7 Conclusion

Building on concepts of enculturation outlined in Chapter 2, this chapter considered the impact of the wider lived experience on children's engagement with music and the need for a holistic consideration of the place of music in the lives of children. This chapter outlines how and why the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme began, noting some of the factors that influenced its origins. It provides some brief insights into the *String Orchestra* programme, a parallel programme that could potentially provide pathways for students to move beyond the school setting. In developing a programme of this nature, it was necessary to recruit both musician educators and schools to facilitate the programme. The recruitment of musician educators highlighted the resources available in the area, which included many potential strings specialists. Participating schools acknowledged both advantages and challenges to being involved but by understanding what motivated their engagement as well as the challenges, the programme can be developed to meet the needs of stakeholders. The main barriers to musicking, both in and beyond the schools included access and cost of instruments as well as the time required for commitment to engaging in musical activities at a time that was convenient to the family and community members.

The overarching rationale for schools wanting to participate in the programme was to address the barriers as detailed above by providing access to musical for everyone. Schools liked that the programme provided an opportunity for everyone to play music, to get to experience something that they would not otherwise have in their normal life. Having established processes for working with the schools and stakeholders, I was able to withdraw from my

weekly engagement in the programme and hand over to the musician educator to continue and further build. My role as coordinator continued to evolve and ongoing communication with stakeholders remained critical shaping the evolution of the programmes facilitated by MGL, including the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. In the early stages of the programme, the musicians were rolling out a similar curriculum, pedagogical approach and repertoire across all schools but gradually, as illustrated further in Chapter 5, greater attention was given to adapt the programme to meet the needs of each setting.

Chapter 5: *En Route*

5.1 Moving Towards Expansion and Change

In this chapter, I review the in-school activities developed by MGL with a particular focus on the initiatives related to the development and evolution of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. Following on from Chapter 4, this chapter begins by reflecting on how MGL expanded the *Introducing Strings* programme from 2014. It draws on different examples that highlight important factors and stakeholders in this process. In reviewing the schools, a number of themes and observations are critical to informing an understanding of the development and evolution of the programme. There is a particular focus on issues relating to infrastructure and consideration of repertoire and genre in exploring what is both possible and desirable. This is informed by literature previously critiqued in the literature review.

In considering stakeholders, I pay particular attention to the role and responsibilities of the school principals, classroom teachers and parents. This echoes the experience of Finnerty (2008) who highlights the impact of these stakeholders on the potential success of music initiatives in schools. In moving to focusing on learners, I present a critical reflection on the development of motivation in music education and critically consider how participants in the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme were motivated to develop their musicianship and continue to engage with the programme. Related to this, a key aspect that emerges from the study is the benefits of group music making and the social aspects of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. Another important factor of the learner experience is the role of creativity and how to promote/enhance creativity through teaching philosophy and approaches to facilitating learning.

It is evident from reflections that while programme development was an important factor in the success or failure of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, the experience and expertise of musician educators was also critical. This is addressed in the second half of the chapter in relation to the continuing professional development (CPD) of the tutors. Field notes

from each of the schools also highlight the importance of developing new approaches or adapting pedagogies to meet the needs of different contexts. I have already noted that musician educators engaged in an exploration of Charanga in the early stages of development but this was not sustained. As different musician educators joined the team, they brought particular skills in pedagogical approaches, such as those of Dalcroze and Kodály.

5.2 Expanding Introducing Strings

As detailed in the previous chapter, the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme was initiated in 2012 with the intention to provide positive music learning experiences in schools that in turn would feed registration for the afterschool programme. While three schools participated in the first phase of the programme in 2012; this expanded to five in 2013. Following an open call, the programme expanded to ten schools during 2014/2015. In total, fifteen schools have participated in the programme over the past eight years.

The sustainability of the programme was not supported by a long-term plan from the beginning and this evolved during the course of my research. Developments were informed by feedback from stakeholders. This was acquired in different ways but was often dependent on my engagement as coordinator with various stakeholders. In one example, the principal conducted a survey amongst students and parents to determine whether to continue the programme. They reported: ‘Recently we sent out a letter requesting feedback on the Music Generation programme. The response rate was extremely high and the responses were overwhelmingly positive (97%)’. However, the programme was not sustained in all schools due to a range of factors. Over the period 2012–2019, five of the fifteen schools discontinued participation in the programme.

In May 2014, as had been broadly outlined in the initial three-year strategic plan, MGL undertook a general call out to all schools inviting expressions of interest for participation in a range of programmes. Given that diversity was a core value of Music Generation, it was also

important for the Louth programme to broaden its portfolio beyond strings to provide tuition in a range of instruments and musical genres to cater for a wide range of age groups and musical interests. The call indicated new programmes included whole class recorder and singing alongside strings (newly entitled *Introducing Strings*) as well as small group tuition in a range of instruments (strings, guitar, harp, flute, clarinet, brass and uilleann pipes). Of the seventeen applications received, five schools (four primary, one post primary) applied to participate in the strings programme, each commencing in September 2014.

From this point, expansion of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme slowed. In part, this was due to the partnership financial model that had been established, which could not accommodate continual growth. Expansion could only be made possible through increasing the costs passed on to schools. Any increments in charges could only be made slowly so as not to jeopardise the viability from each of the existing schools' perspective of continuing with the programme. The programme also did not have the financial resources available to invest in additional instruments for further roll out. Over the next three-year period (2015–2018), only two new schools joined the programme. In both instances, this was to provide progression routes for children transferring to new schools. One additional urban primary school joined the programme in 2015 to provide a progression route for children from a partner junior school transferring to senior primary school. Similarly, one urban post primary school joined in September 2018 to offer a progression route for children transferring from a nearby feeder primary school.

As well as introducing the programme in new schools, some schools also discontinued programmes. One school withdrew in 2016 because it had ongoing difficulties in recouping fees for the programme despite parents indicating their support. Changes in principalship in two schools resulted in withdrawal from the programme (2012 and 2018). In two schools, MGL made the decision not to continue due to lack of appropriate facilities and progression routes available within each setting. This provided the opportunity for two new primary

schools to join the programme in September 2019. COVID-19 significantly impacted on MGL programmes during 2020 and 2021, the significance of which is beyond the scope of this study.

A total of fifteen schools have participated in the programme across the period 2012 to 2021; five in north Louth, five in mid Louth and five in south Louth. Eight of the fifteen schools had DEIS status. Six of the thirteen primary schools are rural. Three of the primary schools had 120 students or less; six primary schools had between 200-300 students; four primary schools had between 300-500 students. The two post primary schools involved were urban, co-educational with DEIS status. Only two schools were single gender (girls). Each of the schools involved had a different pre-existing musical profile and extant musical resources. Four schools had principals who were musicians. In these schools, the range of musical activities reflected their own personal musical background and skills. In two of the schools for instance, the principals, who had particular interests in traditional music, taught tin whistle to class groups. In another school, the principal was a classical pianist; she led choir and had taught guitar as an afterschool activity for a number of years. In another school, the principal led a traditional music group. As confirmed by one principal:

If a musician is in a leadership position in school, there is more chance of music in the school.

Surveying the range of musical activity all schools, ten of the schools had staff members (principals and/or teachers) who led music initiatives such as choir, and after school instrumental lessons. In one school, one teacher taught violin after school and in another, one teacher taught guitar. As a progression from class group tin whistle, visiting two musicians from outside the MGL programme were providing small group tuition during the school day in a range of traditional instruments in one of the schools. Only two schools claimed not to have musical expertise within the school team to lead musical initiatives beyond the delivery of the music curriculum. The two post primary schools involved in the MGL *Introducing*

Strings programme also hosted MGL's after school music hubs, with registration open to the general public. The hubs offered afterschool music classes for children and young people in a range of musical styles and instruments.

5.3 A Question of Genre

Genre was also an important consideration and, echoing the work of Lucy Green (2002; 2017), popular music was increasingly integrated into the repertoire even though the programme was initially envisaged as an opportunity to develop Western art music and follow in the tradition established by Fr Brendan McNally. Nevertheless, there is also evidence that there was not a desire to abandon Western art music and the principles of learning that had been established, with one principal making reference to one of the popular music activities stating:

Classical is complex but at the same time I would hate to see it dumbed down, that we are only singing and playing this month's pop charts – so ideally, I'd like to see a mix of genres but not just pop.

Irish traditional music too became prominent in some schools, with one school principal noting the connection between music and identity and others signalling the popularity of the genre amongst some of the pupils, who may have been engaged in Irish traditional music outside of school.

As previously highlighted, enculturation is an important aspect of musical learning (Hannon, and Trainor, 2007) and it is believed that the younger children are exposed to new things, the more receptive they will be in adulthood (Hensch, 2016). By denying children exposure to various genres of music, concentrating instead on popular music that they are familiar with, there is less chance that the children will discover and explore the range of musical cultures that exist. A 2020 national report by Music Generation details that when programmes that were paused as a result of the pandemic are excluded, most Music Generation programmes nationally operate a mix of genres (50%) followed by modern (25%), traditional Irish (14%), classical (9%) and jazz (2%) (MG, 2021, p. 22). Notably, 'the largest genre in national,

regional and local collaborative projects is traditional Irish (44%) while one-off and shorter programmes have a higher focus on modern music (38%)'. The MGL *Introducing Strings* programme was initially engaged in the teaching of Western art music and sought to build on a rich local heritage that stemmed from the pioneering work of Fr Brendan McNally. By facilitating exposure to Western art music at a young age when children are most receptive, the hope is that it will lead to further musical discovery and lifelong interests. This may also reflect the personal experiences, musical tastes of the individual stakeholders including principals, classroom teachers and parents. It was hoped that embedding Western art music in child's education would dilute its perception as a niche and exclusive artform and instead instil a lifelong passion for music. In Louth, it has been recognised that there was a need to explore and incorporate other genres in order to address accessibility and broaden appeal. In 2018, team meetings included discussion regarding more use of repertoire and songs from Irish traditional music, drawing on experience from one school and replicated in six others. Reflection on the positive attitudinal change amongst participants of the MGL *Pathways Project* (2017) with its partial focus on popular music led to a number of CPD sessions that term also focusing on creating string arrangements of popular music. These approaches echo the work of Lucy Green (2002; 2017) and Randall Allsup (2011), whereby the choice of repertoire is influenced by the learners.

The choice of genre may also be influenced by the incorporation of the Kodály method, which favours the use of folk music (Choksy, 1981, p. 2). Kodály chose folk music as the vehicle through which to teach children. In doing this, however, he had reasons other than simply his love for it. Drawing on Choksy (1981), Lee asserts that Kodály 'felt that as a child naturally learns his mother tongue before foreign language, he should learn his musical mother tongue – that is, the folk music of his own country – before other music (2011, p. 32). The parallel growth in popularity of Irish traditional music in Louth, spearheaded by the success of the Comhaltas branch in Dundalk in competitions and the staging of *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann*

in Drogheda provided further context. The musician educators who also had expertise and experience in more than one genre of music also influenced the repertoire choices.

MGL has recognised the significant Irish traditional music culture in the county and the identification of an Oriel region largely defined by its linguistic and musical heritage (see also, Kearney, 2021). The *Reimagining Oriel* project (funded by Arts Council/MG partnership), exemplifies the specific engagement with local traditional musical heritage project and, in particular, the work and research of local singer Padraigín Ní Uallacháin (2003). The project reflected the growing sense of regionalisation in the county's Irish traditional music scene in the first two decades of the twenty-first century (Kearney, 2011, 2012, 2018, 2020). In 2015, a CPD workshop for MGL musician educators was arranged as part of *Reimagining Oriel*, a project which brought together Irish traditional music and creativity through composition. It was facilitated by local musician Zoe Conway, who had experience as a performer of both Irish traditional and Western art music; Barry Hynes a recent graduate of the BA (Hons) Applied Music programme at DkIT who had experience in popular and Irish traditional music performance; and composer Elaine Agnew. Activities included the composition of songs and simple tune types such as polkas using chime bars for creative breaks during strings sessions. Thus, a connection was made between traditional music and local heritage and creativity.

A sense of tradition or historical musicking in a school was a factor in the choice of repertoire and musical activities. During fieldwork, one principal expressed an interest in reviving a tradition of classical string playing in his school that had been established in the 1970s but which had since disappeared. Whilst he recognised the importance and value in incorporating popular music that was familiar to the children, he also highlighted the importance of broadening the children's experiences and exposing them to music that they might not otherwise experience in their normal lives. Similarly, the principal of another school said that one of the reasons for applying to participate in the programme was to give the children

exposure to classical music, which she acknowledged would be rare or non-existent for them outside of the school environment. These comments betray a bias on the part of principals but also point to a desire to engage with attitudes to ‘quality’ that include consideration of repertoire.

The question of genre raises other issues regarding pedagogy and approach also. During a CPD session for MGL’s musician educator team facilitated by Katherine Barnecutt in August 2019, an important discussion on the use of notation versus aural approaches to teaching and learning music in the context of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme.¹⁴ Musician educators held opinions based on their own experience and it highlighted differences in the approaches most often used by different genres. It is important to consider the experiences of the children involved in the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, some of whom may be learning music in other contexts also and engaging with different pedagogical practices. Some children demonstrate greater ability for aural over notated learning and, in the context of group teaching, there is potential for a diversity of approaches to engage as many children as possible to the best of their abilities.

Where classroom teachers are already or also involved in the provision of music performance education, there are opportunities to explore links and collaborative potential. In one school where a classroom teacher was engaged in teaching the Irish songs and tin whistle the MGL musician educators developed bespoke musical parts on the stringed instruments on this repertoire. This highlights partnership in action and engages with the repertoire of the school rather than an externally prescribed repertoire, supporting ongoing music education initiatives and strengthening the relationship between classroom teachers and musician educators.

Experiences from fieldwork highlight the need to adapt to each situation. This process of adaptation is required by all parties; musician educators can adapt to the existing music

¹⁴ Katherine Barnecutt is a musician and Education/Outreach officer at the Irish Chamber Orchestra.

culture of a school but principals and classroom teachers must also be flexible. One principal acknowledged:

A big thing is that you have to be prepared to be open and to be flexible. For the staff there is an inconvenience, particularly if space is limited. Also, you have to be prepared to give up time to the project.

Once again, this highlights the importance of communication for the successful development of the programme. Similarly emphasising the importance of collaboration, another principal indicated how a change in approach to repertoire signalled a more wide-reaching change in the programme in a school:

Previously there was no collaboration. Until the turning point in 2017 when we moved to this new approach and with more focus on traditional music and singing there was no collaboration. The musicians just came in and did their thing and we handed over because they were the experts. They were just doing their job, that was reflected in the music. Then when you were in the school regularly and started chatting to me it became more collaborative. When we chatted and the collaboration started, the project changed. The children got a lot more from it and, based on broader measures of success, more was achieved.

The example also reinforces the acknowledgement that where a principal and teacher have an interest in music, much more can be achieved. Developing a working partnership and way of collaboration with schools/teachers is about building relationships. This again reinforces the earlier observation that collaboration is difficult to achieve if the musician educators frequently change. There is always a challenge in matching the right musician to the school; in the case of rural schools, it can furthermore be challenging to contract musician educators to teach in rural locations due to contractual and pay issues around travel. One principal commented:

There has been an evolution of the project over the past eight years. At the start there was a learning process of how MGL was going to fit in best to schools, trying to figure out how best to develop programmes within schools. There was an emphasis on Western art music at first with the children learning tuition pieces aimed at developing instrumental technique. Sessions were very repetitive. Children were trying to opt out in 4th class because they did not enjoy it and found it boring. Even amongst the adults in the school, there was a sense that they were sick of hearing the same tunes repeatedly. The classical emphasis was just a bit lost on them I think. A lot were trying to opt out in 4th class because they didn't like it.

When musician educators adopted a different focus involving traditional tunes and linking with song singing, the children (certainly the older classes) got a lot more from it. Associations were made with local culture, place identity and language.

These issues return again to concepts of enculturation and links with the lived experiences of the children. As one principal noted:

I think for children classical music can be quite irrelevant because they are not exposed to it. They don't have the love of it because they are not exposed to it.

The MGL musician educators played an important role in developing the programme, including identifying repertoire, to help make more connections. In one instance, a musician educator researched particular songs and tunes from the area and brought that to the programme in the school. The emphasis moved to Irish traditional music and the musician educators involved subsequently in the school also had experience in Irish traditional music and so they fitted in really easily. One of the subsequent musician educators noted that a lot of the ground work had been done and so she also found it easy to step in to continue to the programme.

5.4 Stakeholder Involvement

5.4.3 Coordinator role

The MGL coordinator has a significant impact on the evolution of a programme in a school. Understanding the role of coordinator can be informed by recent work by Fahy and Kenny (2021) on the role of the broker, albeit that the coordinator for MGL has more responsibilities. As coordinator, my role is to drive the artistic and developmental vision for the Music Generation programme in Louth. The programme is under the management and governance of Louth and Meath Education and Training Board requiring that I report to an advisory group, the Louth Music Education Partnership, quarterly. I am responsible for recruiting, leading, motivating and managing a team of musician educators in the design, development and delivery of a range of performance music education initiatives of high artistic and

educational standards in response to local need and context. I plan and manage, on an ongoing basis, a range of professional development and training supports for these musician educators to ensure the highest possible quality of experience for all children and young people who participate in the programme. I am required to monitor, evaluate and report on the activities of the programme to stakeholders.

It is critical that Music Generation develops a profile that attracts stakeholders to support and participate in programmes. I am responsible for raising public awareness of Music Generation locally through media and marketing campaigns and for generating participation in the range of programmes on offer. I am responsible for strategic partner development, building close working relationships with a network of stakeholder agencies, organisations, groups and individuals within the public, private, community and voluntary sectors, both locally and nationally. I have overall responsibility for leading and managing the administration of the programme. This includes asset management, procurement, database management and record keeping, budgeting, fund raising, financial management and compliance with all LMETB's HR and finance public sector processes and procedures. An important aspect of my job is risk management, which includes the safeguarding of all children and young people involved in the programme.

The Music Generation coordinator has to articulate expectations for the programme clearly to musician educators and empower them to take that responsibility. One musician educator noted: 'When we started, we had a meeting with you and that was brilliant because you gave us direction, although we knew from the quality framework induction training and from doing the job interview what the values and aims of the strings programme were'. They must also communicate these expectations to the school. The *Pathway Orchestra* project was the first time that I connected more fully with participants and their families within a school programme in my role as coordinator. Following the project, a new musician educator was appointed to work in one of the MGL *Introducing Strings* school in September 2017. An

experienced primary school teacher, she was bi-musical with experience in both Irish traditional and Western art music. By necessity, I partnered with the musician educator for the year working with her at the school. In my role as coordinator, it was easy for me to open up discussion with the principal about repertoire and linking the classroom music to what the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme was doing. By making this connection, we found children that had dropped out were then interested in re-joining the programme again with the changes that had been implemented.

The following Christmas, there was a successful concert in the school and this was followed by performance at a local music festival and a music competition during the 2017/2018 academic year. This was followed by an opportunity for the children in the senior classes to participate in a new MGL *Schools Trad Orchestra Collective* in Summer 2018 for a performance at *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann*. This out of school project strengthened the children's interest and engagement, connecting school activities with a wider community of exposed them to the wider community of Irish traditional music by participating in the Fleadh. The programme at the school continues to thrive and it highlights the importance of building relations with each school community through discussion and clear communication with the school principal. It also highlights the importance of carefully matching the musician educator to the school and the need for the coordinator to create links between stakeholders.

5.4.2 Principals and Classroom Teachers

The importance of the development of the relationship between the musician educator and classroom teacher was highlighted in Chapter 4. More consideration is given here to the role of the classroom teachers and principal, particularly as the programme expanded and developed after the initial phase of development. The role and input of the principal and classroom teacher varied across the schools but, in all instances, had a significant impact on the establishment, development and sustainability of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. Principals and classroom teachers bring their own experiences, knowledge and

cultural preferences to bear on the programme and, working with them, can enhance the delivery of the programme and create a programme that is adaptable to the school community.

Kenny (2010) describes how authentic learning happens within the context of a community of musical practice. Based on Wenger's 'community of practice' model she describes the criteria that defines a community of practice. The first of these is 'mutual engagement' (Kenny, 2014). Applied to the context of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, it defines the extent to which students, music facilitators teaching staff are actively involved in the music making. Amongst the schools involved in the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, two rural schools school demonstrate a strong example of mutual engagement where both the teaching principal and the children were all actively engaged in the music sessions delivered by the music facilitator(s). The second criteria is 'joint enterprise' (Kenny, 2012; 2014). In the context of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, this describes the level of mutual understanding and degree of partnership between stakeholders to enable the realization of the programme within the school. A feeling of joint enterprise must exist between the principal, the teacher, the music facilitators, the coordinator, the children and their parents. In some of the schools, there is a strong sense of joint enterprise; there is an availability to meet and discuss, flexibility to address challenges, an openness to suggestions, with activities being refined/discussed with everyone, not just the principal. From the experiences, some of which are detailed further below, challenges and problems are best solved together, whilst joint enterprise only between coordinator and the principal, not with the teaching staff, leaves the facilitator in a challenging situation.

In developing a sense of joint enterprise, it is important that stakeholders remain constant. Where music facilitators had remained in the same school, naturally the sense of joint enterprise is strongest. Where facilitators vary from year to year, the sense of joint enterprise is weaker; with each change, it feels like starting again and places more demands on the coordinator to manage the changeover so that the programme can continue without any

impact on quality or progression. Changes in principalship can greatly impact the sense of joint enterprise and the programme.

5.4.3 The Role of the Principal

One school provides a particularly interesting example that highlights the role of the principals and classroom teachers. As a DEIS 1 co-educational school with an enrolment of less than 100, the school engaged in the original pilot programme and went on to continue with the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme up to and including this period of research. As with the other schools involved in the pilot study, the principal had made contact with the VEC expressing interest. As a classically trained musician, the principal's motivation was to have a school orchestra. They were familiar with the St Annes model in Dublin and aspired to develop or establish a similar model in this school. An initial conversation with the principal in April 2012 explained that the intention was to run the programme as an introduction to the instruments with an expectation that the children would then enrol for lessons at a MGL after school hub at a nearby post-primary school. The principal commented at the time that they did not think the children at the school would be likely to make that leap but was enthusiastic nonetheless. In addition to the positive attitude of the principal, there was a strong parents' association supporting the principal in getting the programme started. The retirement of this principal in 2014 led to a change in the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. The new principal was an enthusiastic traditional musician and although the programme continued without much change until 2016/2017, there was a notable drop off in the smaller group lessons that had been organised to offer a progression route from the whole class programme.

The shift from Western art music to Irish traditional music within the musical life of the school was gradual and evident in other activities. In 2014/2015 a small number of students from the school participated in the MGL project *Reimagining Oriel*. Children from the school met with a group from another nearby school at a nearby community centre for sessions with Zoe Conway, Elaine Agnew and MGL musician educator Barry Hynes. There was no

integration with the strings programme and neither the school principal nor children attended a performance at Foy Centre at the culmination of the project. In 2016/2017, an Irish traditional musician joined the team with the intention of integrating more with the musical life of the school and bringing traditional repertoire into the mix. This ambition was not fully realised during that year but nevertheless a change was noticeable. As one teacher in the school reflected: ‘They were trying to branch out and change from the old system, change is always hard. When traditional music was introduced the children got more involved, they started to come in. Before it was, I felt, old school. Come in, here’s your music, that’s it, concert, go.’ The school also participated in the MGL *Pathway Orchestra* programme that same year. With funding by the Arts Council Music Generation Partnership, a group of children from the school attended workshops at mid-term and Easter, coming together with children from other schools to work on making arrangements and composing. This was a positive experience for the children involved and from this point, a teacher at the school also noted the change.

This example can be compared directly with another school, where there was also a change of principal early in the delivery of the programme. The new principal had a strong interest in Irish traditional music and not Western art music and was initially reluctant to commit to anything beyond an eight-week taster programme, similar to other activities offered to pupils in the school such as swimming. However, feedback gathered in a survey from parents at Christmas resulted in the programme continuing although the school was not willing to accommodate or promote progression routes (neither after school nor during school). Under the guidance of the MGL musician educators, the children made significant progress on the instruments and enjoyed participation in the programme but there was a noticeable lack of support from the school. The school was invited to participate in an additional workshop and weekend public performance opportunity as part of a local festival in 2016. A large group of children from the school opted to take part and the event was well attended by their parents

and extended families but there was no school staff in attendance, although as it was a weekend event, this could not be expected of the staff. As a mixed urban school, by contrast to the DEIS 1 school cited previously with strong parental support, there was discontent amongst some parents whose children did not want to participate in the programme and who did not want to pay. Although there is no quantitative data, anecdotal evidence indicates that many children progressed to learning music as a result of the programme at the school, although they may not necessarily have moved to learning through MGL or continued with a string instrument.

The incongruity between the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme and the musical life of the school was a challenge for the relationship between MGL and the school. The principal's interest in traditional music and the vice principal's interest in choral music and singing were evident in other developments. During 2015/2016, the school introduced a tin whistle programme. As coordinator I attempted to create a link between the teachers/principal and the MGL musician educators so that they could programme collaboratively but this was not successful. The MGL musician educators assigned to the school lacked confidence in playing/arranging new or unfamiliar material. The failure to understand the situation and foster partnership impacted on the potential to develop a strong community of musical practice in the school. The principal also attempted to set up a traditional music group at the school with limited success. While participation levels were low, this was a lost opportunity for MGL to support the school and make it work. The strings programme discontinued in this school for the 2016/2017 academic year.

5.4.4 Connections with Home

While not directly involved in classroom activities, this example demonstrates how parents play a crucial role in the success of the programme. While in some instances, the decision to introduce the programme to a school was made by a principal, in some instances it was informed by communications from parents or the parents' council. Their involvement goes

beyond the previously discussed process of enculturation; their enthusiasm for their child's engagement in music can have a significant impact on their child's continuing engagement. In my experience as coordinator, parents have become increasingly visible, particularly as the project has extended out beyond the classroom, most notably for performances at local festivals. One principal noted that:

Showcases and [festivals] are brilliant – they [the parents] see the children take part in a community occasion.

Another stated:

we always get good feedback from the parents (you always get the one or two who don't want to pay and complain.

While the cost of additional activities can be a source of concern for some parents, others will relate the cost to the value. As one principal explained:

The parents, they loved it. When it began to wind down they began to realise how much they loved it. The last group of parents – they said: “That strings, you should push that.” The parents came to see them perform and got a huge kick out of it. They understood the difficulty and effort it required.

However, other principals reflected a more ambivalent attitude from parents:

You know something, I've neither had positive nor negative, the parents are happy to go along with it. I did think it was interesting that so many came online and the parents were there to get them online – and you met them on Mondays for tuning ... that in itself showed a level of interest.

The second part of this statement reflects the potential factor of life rhythms – as people adjusted to new rhythms and circumstance during 2020 and 2021 owing to social restrictions and a greater use of virtual engagement, the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme could 'fit' better into the lived experience (cf. Kavanagh, 2020).

5.5 Towards A Positive Experience for All

The ambition expressed by all responding principals was that the positive learning experiences provided would impact on the children's attitudes towards music. If the children enjoyed music making, there was the chance that they would develop an interest; if they were

inspired, they would be open to learning and playing music in the future. The principal of one school stated:

There will always be a handful who will go to instrumental lessons but a lot never will and maybe someone will find that they actually really like it... if they enjoy it, they will develop an interest and are inspired, they will be open to learning and playing in the future.

There are a number of factors that contribute to this enjoyment. The role of the musician educator (and their skillset or pedagogical approach) and performance opportunities has already been flagged. The response of parents and peers is also critical.

Attitudes are learned. The processes of association, reinforcement and imitation determine this learning. Children spend a lot of time with their parents, and after a while they start believing what they believe by simply copying them. The same process seems to work for people other than parents, such as peer groups, teachers, or every important person in a child's life. Attitudes acquired at an early age are quite static and do not change easily unless there are significant experiences and events (Freedman et al., 1988). Accordingly, it can be said that the family is very effective in forming attitudes. Performance opportunities that showcase not only musical learning but a child's enjoyment of musicking can shape parental attitudes to music.

All of the adults interviewed emphasised the importance of fun and enjoyment to positively influence children's attitude and intrinsic motivation towards musical participation. Looking more deeply at this and when enjoyment occurs, it is worthwhile to reflect on the programme in the context of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory, particularly in relation to education (Csikszentmihalyi, 1977), whereby children achieve the optimal enjoyable, meaningful and happy state. A class teacher interviewed in one of the schools rated the children's enjoyment of the programme at 9 out of 10. She said most of the group wanted to continue because they were learning with their friends and there was no pressure to practice, unlike her own off-putting experiences as a child learning piano. She described how the children would chat enthusiastically about the songs and the music they played after each weekly session. When

her class was interviewed, ten out of the twenty said that they really enjoyed playing their instruments. Five quite liked it, four did not comment; only one boy did not like it and he expressed an interest in swapping from violin to cello, indicative of the importance of choice in relation to instruments. This is highlighted to a greater extent in another school where ten out of eleven children said they were interested in playing another instrument and ten also believed that their participation in the programme would help them learn another instrument. This demonstrated potential hidden pathways for musical development beyond the programme that were not factored into planning. Returning to the previous school, fifteen out of the twenty children said that they were interested in continuing to play music when they moved to post primary school and when they became adults. Four said they wanted to continue to play a stringed instrument. The remainder dreamt of playing a range of instruments that included drum, guitar, keyboard and harp. In another example, drawn from a cohort in 5th and 6th class, ten out of thirteen children indicated that they liked music and said they would probably continue playing music after leaving the school. Six of this group said that they would like to continue playing the instrument they had been learning at school, while four said they would like to change to something different, possibly ukulele or keyboard. In another cohort, eleven out of the fifteen said that they might decide to keep playing music when they were older at post primary schools and when they were grown up. Four said they would like to continue to play their stringed instrument; the range of other instruments included ukulele, piano, guitar and recorder. As a measurement of success, it is not necessary that the children continue to perform on string instruments but the programme has opened up the possibility in their consciousness to pursue music performance as an activity.

By contrast, a class teacher interviewed in another school, consisting of all girls, stated:

I'd say about half of them really like it but you know some of them have no interest, you know by looking at them, they are doing it because they have been given an instrument and

have to play it. The musicians make it fun. It is just one of those things. Maybe because it starts to get a bit difficult for them like when the bows are introduced.

The response from the class group however showed a much higher level of enjoyment; ten out of thirteen in the group said that they really enjoyed playing their instrument; the remaining three said that they didn't really like it. Seven in the group said they would like to continue to play their stringed instrument when they were grown up; six said they would like to play another instrument such as guitar or piano when they were older. Echoing the thoughts of this teacher, albeit from a different group where thirteen out of fifteen children indicated that they enjoyed music, only one girl said that they did not like playing violin. Interestingly, this child had her own violin and was attending individual instrumental lessons outside of the programme. She said she enjoyed playing her violin in school more than going to her lessons because they were hard. The WCET approach provides a different context for engaging in music education that can be beneficial to some children. One principal expressed that his strongest motivation was to provide a shared experience for the children to be involved in something together that was in-depth, unusual and a little challenging. Such an experience could potentially lead in turn to an open mindedness and a confidence within participants that they could bring forward into their future lives enabling them to fully participate in society.

One of the musician educators responsible for delivery of the programme in this school during Spring 2020 observed that all of the children appeared to enjoy the musicianship activities and games. When it came to playing the instruments however, it was obvious that some did not enjoy participating to the same extent, which was obvious by their level of concentration and effort. At times behavioural issues crept in, depending on the activity and choice of music; the change in tone and way that the children related to the musicians changed. The choice of repertoire was key to enhancing the children's engagement.

5.6 Programme Development Case Study

As one of the first schools involved and because the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme has continued in the school, School B provides an informative case study. After the initial pilot

study, the programme continued to develop in the school, although not without difficulty. One of the challenges was the high turnover of musician educators over the years. Ten different musician educators facilitated the in-school sessions since 2012. The programme was ambitious in terms of the standards that were desired by the musician educators but reflection deemed that there was unrealistic expectation from them in relation to practice with philosophical differences becoming apparent from 2014. While MGL sought to promote music as an inclusive activity, musician educators who had experienced a strict Western arts musical training reflected attitudes to 'quality' that were grounded more in performance technique and favoured musical excellence over participation.

One of the challenges to the development of the strings programme has been to create a community of musical practice (Kenny, 2014, 2016) that helped develop enculturation (see also Cawley, 2016). The after-school lessons in School B that were set up to provide a progression route from the whole class in-school activities lacked a supporting musical community to sustain engagement. This was evident by the high drop off rate. It proved impossible to create and sustain a sense of musical community amongst the children and their families without either a musician educator to take the role of musical leader who could work in partnership with the school to oversee the development of the programme across a number of years, or a musical ambassador within the school to build awareness and enthusiasm from within. However, the school participated in local community events and a local music festival. From 2017, an afterschool group was reformed with a strong focus on developing as a social group rather than on developing instrumental technique. This encouraged participants to turn up and play and it attracted additional young people to join, although this also led to challenges in being able to cater for different levels of musicianship. The group transitioned to post primary schools in September 2019 and, despite efforts, it was not possible to sustain their engagement to attend lessons at the MGL after-school hub in Dundalk.

The pedagogical approach in School B was based on the WCET model. There were always two musician educators present to facilitate classes. From 2019, a musician with training and experience in Kodály and Dalcroze pedagogies was assigned to the school. This led to a shift away from focusing exclusively on strings; a choral/musicianship weekly session for older classes was added. This added a new, attractive musical programming element to the strings project through collaborations for performance.

A significant challenge identified in School B was finding a suitable progression route so that those who wanted could continue to develop their musical skills and acquire more advanced instrumental technique. A weakness of the programme was that the trajectory of learning had not been mapped at the outset. Such routes to progression need to be strategically planned in advance with supports around them to ensure they will be successful. However, it must also be understood that at the time of initiating the programme, how MGL could work within school contexts had yet to be determined. The preference of schools for MGL to deliver whole class programmes and the reluctance by most to allow small group tuition to take place during the school day created challenges. The options for progression were to continue delivery through the whole class model or alternatively to provide tuition after-school. The after-school progression route in place for school B was problematic and impacted on the level of uptake and engagement. As a small school, it was especially challenging to attract sufficient numbers to make it viable to run after school activities. There was no tradition of afterschool activity at the school. The principal noted that parents with more than one child found it difficult to manage multiple pick up times. The inconvenience for them resulted in only a small group of children signing up for lessons and their attendance was sporadic. As first-generation musicians in their families, many of the children may not have had the adequate support at home to enable them to attend and parents may not have fully understood their role in encouraging home practice. The school implemented a small charge for

attendance and instrument hire. In a culture where many opportunities were available free of charge, this may also have impacted negatively on uptake and engagement.

As a step towards building progression routes and creating communities of musical practice amongst the children who were participating in MGL strings programmes, MGL devised the *Pathway Orchestra* initiative across 2016/2017. Additional financial support for the project was provided through the Music Generation Arts Council Partnership fund. A group of eight students from School B joined children from two other MGL *Introducing Strings* schools to participate in the initiative, which was a combination of in-school and holiday time commitment leading to showcase performances at part of MGL end of term celebrations. Performances are important both in assessing the progress of the participants and motivating them to remain engaged. A performance in DkIT's Mac Anna Theatre in 2017 was a notable highlight. All of the children from School B attended along with their parents. They performed a piece that they had created for the event. They had also created their own arrangement of a well-known popular song and performed this along with a professional band and singer on the night. A production team was hired to provide lighting, sound amplification and the overall production values contributed significantly to the experience.

Participation in the *Pathways Orchestra* programme impacted positively on the students' engagement and interest in playing with the after-school programme continuing for the next academic year. In June 2018, a string blitz event was organised to gather string players from across all MGL schools to meet and play together. This "Blitz Day" included students from schools across Louth and focused on Irish traditional music, community and culture. The free event included transportation from schools. The event built awareness and interest in a summer course that followed which culminated in the group performing on the gig rig as part of *Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann* in Drogheda in August 2018. Participants from the school participated in the String Blitz event. Observing their engagement in these additional activities highlighted an initial lack of confidence amongst the group but notable personal progress was

observable through the event. However, participation in the summer music courses facilitated by MGL, which were made available to the group without a fee, such as a summer traditional music programme, was low, thus limiting the overall impact.

It was evident from reflections that better engagement was achieved when there was consistency in musician educators. Difficulties in establishing mutually agreeable contracts and terms and conditions of employment for MGL musician educators led to a higher than desired turnover. A developing relationship with children/staff/principal/school community is important to build up a supporting infrastructure at a local level to allow programmes to grow and develop. The coordinator can have a significant role in this but given the expanse of the programme, the organizational structure and leadership needs be adapted to empower musician educators to take on a more significant role in each school community.

5.7 Challenges to Delivery and Expansion

All of the schools involved in the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme presented different challenges in terms of infrastructure. This was important in the context of a WCET approach and exploring the potential to include music technology. Expanding the WCET model across a number of years was the most favourable option selected by schools to accommodate progression. This presented challenges for developing a curriculum that balanced engagement and fun alongside the progression of instrumental technique. If progress was too slow, there was the risk that those who were interested and capable got bored. If moving too fast, there was the risk that it was too difficult which would be off-putting. The challenge for the musician educators was to find a balance where, as in Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory, the activities presented were within reach, but yet challenging enough, for the children to provide the optimal state of enjoyment for all (cf. O'Neill, 1999).

Of the fifteen schools involved in the programme, eleven accessed the school hall to facilitate the weekly strings workshops. The hall space enabled the musician educators to start sessions

with warm up games and to intersperse musicianship activities alongside playing the instruments during sessions. In four of the schools, timetabling did not allow access to the hall. Workshops in these schools took place in either in the classroom or in a smaller resource room. The lack of space restricted activities, affected curriculum choice and limited lesson planning for groups in these schools. Sessions within the confines of the smaller spaces focused more on instrumental playing with areas of musicianship and notation using more traditional pedagogical approaches.

There were several examples of challenges related to space within the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. In one situation, the sessions had to be organised to take place in the classroom. This caused severe disruption to the teacher who was burdened with the responsibility of reorganising the small space to accommodate thirty children playing the full range of stringed instruments. Often it took longer than the dedicated time to get set up for the session; the children felt cramped and there was little/no scope to supplement content with fun musicianship games and activities. The teacher's enthusiasm for the project decreased, her involvement in the sessions decreased as the terms progressed and the impact of this on the learners became apparent. The musician educators were often left to deal with discipline issues as well as delivering the programme. Little progress was made as time often became disrupted by poor behaviour. Whilst the school principal was enthusiastic about hosting the programme at the school, this had not permeated through to the teaching staff.

In another school, the musician educator took the opportunity when the weather was good to work with groups outside to have adequate space to play musicianship and singing games. Given the physical demands of playing stringed instruments, it is important to look for creative ways like this to provide variety into sessions to alleviate the stress and physical fatigue experienced by beginner string players. In another school, a variety of solutions were trialled to overcome the challenge of space. During 2014/2015 the sessions were delivered in the classroom, with the instruments stored in an adjacent room. The group was large and so

space was extremely cramped. It took as much time on the part of the classroom teacher and the musician educators to set up for the session. The following year, during 2015/2016 and 2016/2017, to cause less disruption, it was decided to utilise a resource room for the workshops and to split the class into two groups, each attending a slightly shorter session with the musician educators. The musician educators found that the children's' learning greatly accelerated working in smaller groups. However, with the class divided, it meant that the class teacher was no longer able to participate in the sessions. She had to remain in the classroom working with the groups as they alternated. Whilst the children were making good musical progress and enjoying the experience of participation, the link between the programme, the musician educators and the teacher was lost. No one in the school had a knowledge of the teaching and learning that was taking place, nor to see the potential for development and integration into the school life. This example demonstrates the impact that physical space makes on allowing the development of a community of musical practice to emerge within school settings.

In another school, there was no hall, which meant that activity took place in classrooms and was disruptive to the school day. In this instance however, the staff and principal understood and were supportive of the MGL activities; everyone was involved in making it happen. The musician educator used the classroom whiteboard and flip chart to display simplified rhythmic notation and letter names of the chosen music to play with participating children seated in a quasi-orchestral layout. As the children became familiar with the pieces, the musician educator presented fully notated (sometimes with the addition of letter names/fingering) on pages and displayed on music stands.

Whilst access to a large hall space brings many benefits, typically such spaces within primary schools are not set up with IT equipment. This means that the musician educators cannot utilize online resources such as Charanga to enhance the learning for groups. Instead, the musician educators create large-size charts using simplified notation with note names

displayed that the whole class can see and follow. The musical content is most typically an accompaniment to songs that the children sing whilst they played or music that is accompanied by a pre-recorded backing track.

5.8 CPD for Tutors

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for musician educators was embedded in the development of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme from the start. As previously outlined, a willingness to engage in CPD was written into the job description for the musician educators from 2011. In this section, I critically reflect on a variety of CPD sessions that have been offered to the team of musician educators within the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme.

In the context of education, Beatrice Avalos defines CPD as referring to:

[...] teachers learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students' growth. Teacher professional learning is a complex process, which requires cognitive and emotional involvement of teachers individually and collectively, the capacity and willingness to examine where each one stands in terms of convictions and beliefs and the perusal and enactment of appropriate alternatives for improvement or change (2011, p. 10).

Avalos identifies a number of forms of CPD for teachers, including school-university partnerships, teacher co-learning, and workplace learning, noting that different processes are required at different stages, notably for beginning teachers and more established teachers who can engage with reflection. Not all CPD is formal and structured and CPD facilitated by MGL also takes place through team meetings and communications. The approach, where musician educators are provided with opportunities for collective exploration, reflection, discussion and collegiate sharing has been identified as a design feature of high-quality professional development within the broader educational sector (Bautista et al, 2017).

I too have engaged in CPD throughout my time as MGL co-ordinator. For me, the act of engaging in postgraduate research at Dundalk Institute of Technology has facilitated my own CPD as a leadership figure in analysing and reviewing the programme structure and

philosophies of MGL's *Introducing Strings* programme. The findings from this research will inform the future direction of this programme and the strategic decision-making process across MGL's entire programme portfolio.

In MGL, amongst the areas addressed in CPD sessions for its team of musician educators are group teaching, mentoring, pedagogical approaches and developing creativity in the classroom. A critical consideration of CPD can be traced back to the induction session for the team in 2012, which led on to the development of team meetings that sought to create a sense of community amongst the musician educators, in addition to aspiring to excellence in terms of high-quality teaching. In her evaluation of the WCET programme in the UK, Hallam (2019a) outlines a range of factors that affect the quality of teaching (Table 4). Similar to Conaghan (2014), she outlines how many musician educators develop a model of teaching and delivery based on their own experiences but CPD allows for greater reflexive practice, exploration of different approaches and the sharing of knowledge.

Pace of Teaching
Quality of performance and constructive feedback
Balance between teacher talk and children making music
Making music as opposed to doing exercises
Teacher demonstration
Rapport with the children

Table 4 Factors Affecting Quality of Teaching (Hallam, 2019).

There are several pedagogical approaches to teaching music and, while all of the musician educators employed by MGL are skilled musicians and often qualified teachers, there are varying degrees of experiences and training in specific relevant pedagogies, depending based

on each individual's own prior learning and training. Practices associated with Kodály and Dalcroze (see Chapter 2), were explored through CPD workshops offered to the strings team. As the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme evolved and responded to the participants' needs and desires, the genres encompassed by the programme diversified. This first emerged in the classroom, as explored in Chapter 4, but required discussion and training through CPD workshops. Both the incorporation of new approaches and methods for teaching and the development of new repertoire drawn from a variety of genres required the sharing of resources; how this was realised for the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme is explored herein. Probably the most significant element related to this is a critical reflection on the attempt to embed creativity in the teaching and ethos of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, which is developed further in Chapter 6. Some of the challenges to developing successful CPD are considered before drawing conclusions on the development and impact of CPD on the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme.

The success of the training sessions, in terms of recognising the impact of CPD workshops on activities and use of skills, is important in the design of future CPD. It is clear that the team of musician educators are highly skilled but also require regular upskilling and opportunities to refresh their knowledge, skills and approaches to delivering the programme. When musician educators had the opportunity to immediately implement learning, there was a greater use of new skills, learning and resources.

5.8.1 Induction, Initiation and Developing a Community

The first CPD workshop organised by MGL in April 2012 for its entire panel of musician educators (which included those who would subsequently deliver the *Introducing Strings* programme) was related to group teaching. This workshop took place in the early months of Music Generation's establishment nationally. From its initiation, there was a clear and shared vision amongst all three initial Music Generation programmes (Louth, Sligo and Mayo), that group teaching would be the delivery model of choice for all the programmes to be rolled out.

The recruitment process for Louth's panel of musician educators in November 2011 showed a range of understanding, knowledge, expertise and experience in 'group teaching' amongst the team of musician educators. Some musician educators had prior experience of the UK's Pathways Programme from their teaching experience in the nearby Southern Education and Library Board's (SELB's) Music Service in Northern Ireland. These musicians therefore already had a familiarity with the concept of the WCET model group teaching. In contrast, the teaching experience of many others was of delivering one-to-one tuition. The extent of exposure to group teaching determined the level of benefit provided to the workshop attendees.

The initial CPD offering by MGL was an example of CPD as retooling as defined by Judyth Sachs (2007), whereby the sessions sought to provide musician educators with strategies, tools and skills to facilitate learning. Critics of this type of CPD, which is perhaps the most prevalent model of CPD delivery, question its value and impact, as it places all of the emphasis on the teacher rather than giving consideration to the learners. This perhaps reflects the evolution of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme as outlined previously in relation to stakeholder engagement and changes to genre in the programme.

Feedback to the initial CPD sessions from those who had experience of group teaching was extremely positive and this group reported that they were likely to integrate the ideas presented into their whole class teaching practice ideas. For those not familiar with the concept of group teaching at the time, however, there is little evidence to show that they implemented any of the practices and approaches into their teaching to any degree. Whilst the workshop may not have changed and improved this group's teaching strategies, the session nevertheless may have opened their minds to the very possibility of group teaching as a concept. Furthermore, and very importantly, it provided a clear statement of intent that from the outset, group teaching would be at the core of all of MGL's output.

A CPD session, facilitated by Madeline Casson, was well received by musician educators and resources and ideas were subsequently acted upon and implemented to a degree when the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme was piloted in three schools (April/May 2012). Access to the online resources Charanga presented at the workshop had not been initially arranged. However, in 2013 MGL developed a partnership with Charanga to be able to access these on-line resources for group teaching and issued musician educators with licenses and arranged further training. Despite the excellence of resources, getting the technology set up alongside whole class strings proved too time consuming and was not developed further. Challenges included issues with the availability of whiteboards and computers in hall spaces where strings sessions typically took place. Thus, it was critical that a whole school planning approach was developed that gave consideration to both music activities and ICT infrastructure.

From the outset, it was recognised that a team approach with a shared ethos was necessary for the successful delivery of the strings programme. In September 2013 and January 2014, I invited local musician Jayne Graham to facilitate two workshops to equip a small number of musician educators with knowledge of the aims and resources to deliver the strings programme using a WCET approach. Graham, a former student of Fr McNally, graduate of Guildhall London and a qualified secondary school music teacher, brought a significant level of skills and experience to MGL. Through her work as a peripatetic violin teacher with music services in London and Northern Ireland, she had gained considerable experience in the delivery of access programmes based on the WCET model. Alongside her work with MGL on the delivery of the strings programme in a number of Louth schools, she also took on leadership of MGL's string orchestras. This CPD support provided internally, proved very effective and the tutors that partook in this CPD with Graham continue to refer to these sessions and resources shared. The workshops served as an excellent starting point and utilised the skills of individuals already involved in the organisation.

In 2015, similar workshops were facilitated by Clare Sweeney, another musician within the MGL team that had developed extensive experience in the WCET through her work with the SELB Music Service in Northern Ireland. These were again effective, and ideas were implemented immediately as the musician educators were in situ in schools right away. Furthermore, as these musician educators were qualified and experienced classroom teachers, they were able to absorb training quickly and build on what they had learned.

Through a period of quite rapid development, it was difficult to sustain consistent engagement in CPD, but it was recognised that even less formal approaches, reflecting some of the categories outlined by Avalos (2011), were important. Team meetings for those involved in the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme were held in February and April 2018. These sessions marked the beginning of more regular team meetings to share practice, as well as to begin to understand and be aware of what the CPD needs might be. This type of activity is referred to by Sachs as ‘revitalizing’:

CPD as revitalizing connects teachers with other teachers and with the needs of students. The difference between this kind of CPD and the two so far presented is that its’ focus is primarily on teacher learning, in particular professional renewal through opportunities to rethink and review practices and in so doing become reflective practitioners (2007, p. 13).

This first session focused on sharing warm up activities and making arrangements/sharing arrangements. At the request of the team, the second session in April focused on working in teams of two to make string arrangements to accompany pop tunes/songs. The musicians taught each other the arrangements and shared resources that were utilised for the remainder of the term. As a result of the session, a digital space was created for collecting and sharing resources and arrangements.

The team meeting in February 2019 reflected on curriculum, reviewing aims with the team and introducing the quality parameters from the new quality framework published and circulated by Music Generation National Development Office. The team reflected on the MGL *Strings Blitz*, which took place on 5 June 2019 in An Grianán, Termonfeckin, and

engaged in planning for further events. Through discussion the team identified that the area where they had least experience and expertise was in the area of creative music making and creativity. In order to complement and enrich the existing curricula of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, the team decided that the focus of the *String Blitz* day would be on creative music making. Katherine Barnecutt from Irish Chamber Orchestra's outreach programme *Sing Out with Strings* was engaged to lead this day-long creative session. The benefits of the MGL *String Blitz* were twofold: The children who participated got the opportunity to engage in a different, freer kind of music making than hitherto; the team of musician educators learnt about the delivery of creative music making through seeing in action.

At the request of the team, Barnecutt returned for another CPD session in August 2019, during which time was set aside for a review of the 2019 MGL *Strings Blitz*. One of the MGL team of musician educators had been tasked with liaising with Barnecutt to design the day for the children. This served as CPD for the musician educator who learned from the process of planning and organising the event. The musician educator was briefed by other members of the MGL tutor team and given some initial ideas for consideration on content. She was tasked with taking responsibility for final decision making on content in consultation with Barnecutt and the rest of the team. The area of creativity was chosen because it was perceived that it would be something different for the children. Also the musician educators felt that this was an area where they needed to gain skills, ideas, and confidence. They felt they could learn how from seeing how Barnecutt delivered this kind of work. Feedback from them on the *String Blitz* day was extremely positive and they were keen to try similar activities with their groups in the new term.

Involving musician educators in the review and planning of these activities added to their sense of ownership and engagement in the overall MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, expanding their involvement beyond the classroom. A community of practice evolved over

time amongst the strings team of musician educators in which the members shared an understanding of how the programme was delivered. They gained a better understanding of the needs of their learners and they were revitalised and enthused through the opportunities provided to meet, discuss, collaborate, share ideas, resources and observations. Mirroring Sachs who notes ‘teachers feel inspired, idealistic – a reminder of what teaching’s all about’ (2007, p. 14; 2011), CPD had a positive impact on the morale of musician educators.

5.8.2 Pedagogical Approaches: Dalcroze, Kodály and more

Another aspect of the CPD process involved engaging with different pedagogical approaches in music education that would contribute to delivering the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. Two approaches in particular formed the basis of a number of workshops provided by MGL to its musician educators. One focused on the approach developed by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, ‘a Swiss music educator who believed that experiencing the elements of music with the whole body led to a deeper understanding of those elements’ (Stevens, 2007). Coining the term eurhythmics to refer to music through movement, Dalcroze believed that musical sensibility is deepened when embodied. He also believed that a greater connection between mind and body had more far-reaching benefits for human development.

The second approach drew on the work of composer Zoltán Kodály who devoted a significant part of his creative life towards the development of a music curriculum for schools in Hungary based on singing and the use of folk song. The objectives of the Kodály approach are twofold: to aid in the well-balanced social and artistic development of the children and to produce the musical literate adult. Choksy defines the Kodály method as ‘being able to look at a musical score and “think” sound, to read and write music as easily as words’ (1974, p. 15). Nolet (2007) expands on the Kodály method in a Canadian context, including a critical consideration of the balance between orality and music literacy within the genres of folk, traditional and popular music. Nolet recognises the opportunities for both creativity and ‘preservationist approaches’ in pedagogical practices that lean on orality. With reference to

Cape Breton musical traditions, this is particularly relevant in instances where Irish traditional music has become foregrounded in MGL *Introducing Strings* activities.

The Kodály and Dalcroze pedagogical approaches reflect Music Generation's mission to transform lives through music; it is not just about music making for its own sake but the transformative power of music making to provide holistic development and to enrich the lives of children and young people. In 2015, Jaqueline Vann facilitated a workshop for MGL musician educators on Dalcroze approaches. For some of the MGL musician educator team, the training helped to broaden their outlook on teaching methods and understand the educational purposes of movement and the need for movement to be incorporated into classes alongside instrumental playing. Several who attended were not as open or receptive to the approaches of Dalcroze presented in the workshop and did not see the possibilities of transferring elements to the context of WCET with MGL. Although well facilitated, they noted that the workshop was a daunting experience, which was musically, physically and creatively challenging. The workshop highlighted the different backgrounds of the musician educators working on the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme and how their prior musical experiences and own learning experiences shaped their approaches to teaching. To become a skilled Dalcroze practitioner takes more than one taster session and further workshops were organised. Vann returned in October 2016 and worked in particular with the orchestra leader to help widen the approach and repertoire for Junior Strings to make participation in orchestra more accessible and engaging.

CPD facilitated a growing awareness of different pedagogical approaches to music education amongst the musician educator team. At a team meeting in October 2019, those present requested training in the Kodály approach relevant to the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. Lynn Sullivan, a musician educator with MGL who had significant prior classroom music experience and an MA in Education with a focus on the Kodály approach, facilitated the session. The workshop sought to develop approaches in teaching of

musicianship and to teach strings in a musical way integrating singing into playing. A subsequent survey highlighted the usefulness of the workshop and indicated that the material and approach was immediately implemented by the musician educators. This had a transformative and positive impact on delivery.

5.8.3 Creating and Sharing Resources

As outlined above, exploring different pedagogies (such as those of Kodály and Dalcroze) or incorporating a mix of genres (such as Irish traditional and popular music) requires the sharing of resources. In the context of a strings programme seeking to involve a large number of children in performance across the ‘classical’ string family of violin, viola, violoncello and double bass, this required musician educators to seek out or create arrangements of repertoire. This was also necessary where students expressed a desire to learn contemporary music, which may have been in the charts and not yet arranged by others or readily available as scores for purchase. While the musician educators were very competent musicians and teachers, the task of creating arrangements for strings required another set of skills that could also be developed through CPD. Kathrine Barnecutt’s session with the MGL team in August 2019 included a focus on this. Barnecutt provided an insight into the ICO *Sing out with Strings* model. Musician educators could see similarities and differences between the ICO model and the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. As part of the session, Barnecutt provided examples of resources, demonstrated how to make appropriate arrangements, and discussed lesson planning. The MGL musician educators agreed to take on to create their own arrangement of one piece for the following term and also requested further training on software such as *Musescore* and *Sibelius*. These programmes are often now studied by music students for the Leaving Certificate Music Curriculum and utilised on many undergraduate music degree programmes and can be of significant use in creating and sharing arrangements.

The MGL strings team meeting held in October 2019 followed on from the ICO session and focused on sharing repertoire. Musician educators were challenged to make their own

arrangements for projects and to share these resources so as to build the common repertoire bank. Three of the team had taught themselves how to use *MuseScore* and had prepared materials for sharing. The software provided a means by which the musician educators could experiment, refine and adapt arrangements for specific learners. Additional reading aids could be integrated into the scores such as note names, colour coding for strings, fingering numbers etc as these could be shared amongst the team and replicated in other schools.

5.8.4 Embedding Creativity

Creativity is at the centre of many recent policies related to music teaching and more besides. As noted in Chapter 2, creativity is prominent in the literature on music education. The multiple and far lasting benefits in developing a creative society through the education system has led to the establishment of Creative Ireland and the Creative Schools programmes initiated by the Irish government. A similar emphasis on creativity can also be found in policy and programming in the UK such as the Durham Commission on Creativity and Education (2019) and the Culture White Paper (2016). In this section, I reflect on how we approached embedding creativity in the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme through CPD workshops.

The findings of a national survey of music educators by UK organisation Sound and Music, collated in the 2019 report *CanCompose* demonstrate that the challenge to provide creative opportunities for young people to compose is not unique to the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. 45% of the music educators who participated in *Sound and Music's* survey cited the need for CPD to gain skills in this area. As the musical upbringing of formally trained instrumentalists tends not to focus on creativity and composition, it is understandable that many lack confidence in facilitating creative work. Of the twenty-two musicians who have been involved in the delivery of the strings programme since 2012, three have come from a traditional music background, eighteen from a classical music background and one with a background in both popular and classical music. Whilst composing and improvising are

commonplace activities for popular and jazz musicians, one must acknowledge that these are not routine activities for musicians within the classical and traditional genres.

In contrast with early induction workshops that were timed to coincide with the start of terms prepare for the classroom, in July 2016 and 2017, summertime CPD events were organised with Corda Connections, facilitated in 2016 by Kathrine Barnecutt and Sheena Knepper of the Irish Chamber Orchestra with composer Elaine Agnew. Knepper returned in 2017 for further sessions, bringing a wealth of experience gained from her previous work with El Sistema programmes in the UK. These workshops gave opportunities for MGL musician educators to work alongside others in delivery of summer courses to experience how resources for strings programmes of diverse abilities can be created/developed. Rather than workshops focused on facilitating sessions with musician educators, these workshops provided MGL musician educators opportunities to work alongside experienced external guest musicians with skills in creative music making and a range of pedagogies including Kodály and Dalcroze to broaden their knowledge, outlook and facilitation skills. As with other CPD sessions, the impact on delivery cannot be generalised across the entirety of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme.

Reflecting on the impact of a CPD workshop on creativity provided for the MGL musician team as part of the *Re-Imagining Oriel* project in 2015, only one musician who had a background in traditional music implemented the compositional activities into her practice. One musician educator mentioned ‘this is what we should be doing’ but it was never implemented. When reflecting with the team during this period, there was a feeling that there was not enough time to carry out creative work during strings sessions. There was a sense that the priority should always be to develop instrumental technique. The focus on instrumental technique as a marker of quality is something that was addressed latterly with a broader understanding of and appreciation for the importance of an enjoyable music experience with opportunities for creativity.

In September 2016, Katherine Zeserson facilitated a CPD workshop on Creative Pedagogies. The purpose of this workshop was to further encourage musician educators to bring creativity into the teaching to enrich the learning experiences across the programme. The training coincided with the release of *Possible Selves in Music*, a publication resulting from a research partnership between Music Generation and St Patrick's College Drumcondra (2013–2015). As discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, *Possible Selves in Music* sought to present a pioneering new model for music education that can achieve powerful and positive outcomes for children and young people. The workshop engaged with themes in the publication and aided musician educators to become more aware of the values espoused by Music Generation; and the ethos that music education is more than just teaching technique on an instrument. The musician educators were very enthusiastic at the time about the content of the workshop and it worked as a way of educating them about their role as a musician educator with MGL to include creativity. While the workshops were effective, the lack of physical resources such as hand-outs as aide memoire meant that few followed up with implementation although many were enthusiastic at the time.

Composer Elaine Agnew has been involved in a number of CPD projects and in Spring 2017 she facilitated the *Pathways* project to encourage creativity in strings teaching. This CPD was developed as part of a new development programme. The intention was that Agnew would part deliver the project and also mentor a small team of MGL *Introducing Strings* musician educators to deliver other elements. The *Pathways* project marked the start of a better understanding of what was required from strings projects to sustain engagement and deepen impact. It marked a change in focus from merely teaching the instrument in a more conventional Music Service style ‘one size fits all’ model of delivery. For me, as coordinator, it was important that I became aware of the potential changes and highlighted the responsibility of the coordinator in making good choices at every level to aid development.

As a project, the 2017 *Pathways* project achieved many goals. The children enjoyed the experiences and, through interviews in my role as coordinator, I ascertained that it had helped sustain their interest in music. Critical factors included playing music that was familiar (pop), high profile performances, creating their own music, and meeting new people from other schools. However, in the context of CPD, the programme was not particularly successful. It did not have a significant impact on the delivery of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme but it did initiate discussion with the musician educators to start thinking outside the box and beyond traditional string teaching repertoire and approaches.

Whilst CPD interventions will most certainly provide a level of upskilling, it is debatable whether musicians can facilitate sessions in creative music making with confidence unless they themselves are fully comfortable and competent as composers and improvisers. Acquiring such skills requires an investment of time, practice, good instruction and mentoring as well as an intrinsic motivation to become competent in these areas. Even after receiving CPD training, not all musicians will be comfortable improvisors and composers and this will impact on their effectiveness in facilitating creativity. There is an argument that much can be gained by engaging guest musicians and composers to work alongside the musician team in the delivery of creative projects within programmes so that both the children and young people along with the musician educators can explore creativity and acquire creative skills over an extended period.

5.8.5 Attitudes to CPD (and Creativity)

The attempt to develop creative approaches was challenged by an attitude amongst some musician educators, who had themselves become excellent musicians, that they should teach in the same manner that they themselves had been taught. Some felt for instance that the complexities of the instrument, usually violin, meant that there was not sufficient time to ‘risk’ doing other things. This reflects the fact that they had very limited opportunity to develop their creative music making skills during their own musical upbringing in classical

music. In the initial years of the programme, policy and procedures within administration meant that musician educators were not paid to undertake any additional training or curriculum planning. They were paid an hourly rate according to their teaching contact time and it was expected that they would self-organise to collaborate and co plan with their teaching partners for the delivery of the programme at each school. The lack of incentive to engage in any additional planning required for the implementation of new curriculum activities impeded the impact of the various CPD initiatives offered. The musicians had confidence that the tried and tested resources and activities that they previously used worked well. It was quicker and easier for them to use these rather than invest in additional effort and time to the creation of something new and unfamiliar.

Reflecting on the musician educators' attitudes presents a challenge for the coordinator. Despite several of the musician educators having attended previous workshops that focused on embedding creativity, some with the same facilitator, the musician educators still regarded the embedding of creativity in their teaching of music as something new. The majority did not feel sufficiently confident to be able to deliver creativity effectively with their groups. However, as noted previously, the high turnover of musician educators challenges progression over time as new members will not have attended previous sessions. Those who had attended CPD workshops previously had a positive experience and so welcomed the opportunity to work again with the facilitators. They requested further training session with her to share knowledge, expertise and ideas. For some, it was a starting point for them to develop more creative practices in their group teaching and it opened up their minds to new ways of teaching and making their own resources.

While CPD workshops create opportunities for exploring new ideas and exposing musician educators to different approaches, not all aspects can be easily integrated into the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. In response to workshops with Corda Connections in 2016, the musician educators saw that what they learned during the workshops could apply to their

delivery of the MGL *Introducing Strings* schools programme. One musician educator recognised the high quality of teaching by the external facilitators and requested further training from these external musicians so that she could apply it to her work in strings programmes outside MGL. Some musician educators who embraced the learning experience implemented some aspects such as making bespoke arrangements and teaching aurally into their practice. Other musician educators did not engage to the same extent and due to a variety of factors, did not continue working in schools for MGL. This aligns with the fact that CPD is a significant investment in individuals, some of whom may not remain in the long-term employment of MGL.

It is important to acknowledge that CPD does not need to be delivered by external experts and that a team will often have skills and knowledge that can be shared. Sharing the existing knowledge and learning from each other was integrated into regular activities for the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme musician team throughout and in particular from 2018 onwards. As one new musician educator said: ‘I think the meetings are brilliant, just to see what everyone else is doing and that we are on the right track’. The induction and upskilling of new musician educators to the programme had to be carefully considered and managed in order to sustain quality and continuity of provision across all schools. Where possible, a model of apprenticeship was employed whereby a new and experienced musician were partnered to work together, with the experienced musician taking the lead and the new musician assisting and learning on the job. The model proved to be an effective strategy to facilitate the continuation of the programme. Over time, the new musicians became experienced delivering the programme; they grew in confidence so that typically by year two of their involvement they have enough confidence to bring new perspectives and ideas to share with the team, keeping the programme dynamic and always developing. As one musician educator commented: ‘I learnt from working with other musicians. At first I didn’t have a clue. I really learnt from their expertise, I learnt from them all’.

The attitudinal change by 2019 amongst the team towards the integration of creativity into the programme is noteworthy. In part, this may be explained by the raised awareness of the value of creativity within education through such programmes as Creative Ireland and Creative Schools. Also, through initiatives led by Music Generation National Development Office such as National Musician Days (St Patrick's DCU, April 2018 and Athlone IT April 2019) and the dissemination of Music Generation's new National Quality Review Framework (2019), musicians were gaining a clearer understanding that creativity amongst other factors played an important role in their teaching on Music Generation programme.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the expansion of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme and some of the key changes that were implemented. In addition to providing access to the programme in a number of new schools, the programme developed through increased stakeholder engagement and reflexive practice on the part of musician educators and myself as coordinator. There were a number of challenges to this expansion, notably issues related to infrastructure to facilitate progression and an inability to add to the number of instruments.

The development of programmes highlighted the importance of considering connections with the home life of the children and their experience of music, leading on to a greater consideration of genre, both in relation to the lived experience of the child and that of parents, teachers, principals and musician educators. A greater level of stakeholder engagement led to significant changes and in this chapter I reflected on how principals and classroom teachers have an integral role to play in influencing programme development.

I also recognise the important and ongoing role of CPD in the development of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. Early experiences highlighted the potential for CPD to help develop a community of practice. Different pedagogical approaches to music education were explored that informed the practice of the MGL musician educators. While it is hoped that a

good standard of musicianship will be developed, it is essential that the activities facilitated through the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme are enjoyable and engaging. To this end, it is very evident from the CPD workshops that a great emphasis has been placed on developing (differentiated) approaches to this end and upskilling and informing musician educators. All activities involve using the instrument but this has developed beyond a focus on the four string instruments (violin, viola, cello and double bass) to include more use of the voice. Increased and regular performance opportunities have provided added impetus for engagement and moments of observational enjoyment. Ways and approaches to creating and sharing resources were developed through the CPD process that involved upskilling but also allowed musician educators to meet local musical needs. CPD workshops placed an emphasis on developing approaches that will enhance and facilitate greater levels of creativity amongst children. The musician educators' attitudes and responses to the CPD programme have informed my reflections and plans for further CPD development.

Chapter 6: Destinations

6.1 Where are we?

While the previous chapters have focused on the initiation and development of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, the focus of this chapter is identifying where the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme is now in the context of its development and critically commenting on the efforts at moving forward strategically and sustainably informed by the desires and needs of all stakeholders. A significant impact on this chapter, that is less evident in preceding chapters, was the interruption to activities in March 2020 due to COVID-19. Like many other organisations, MGL had to adapt; we did not stop but used the time to refocus, try new approaches, and examine our future plans.

The title of this subsection has two meanings that refer to geography and achievement. There is a desire to ensure access to music education across the entire county. In this chapter, I critically consider gaps that have emerged recognising that some are due in part to the impacts of COVID-19 related restrictions and challenges. The second relates to the extent of the development and evolution of the programme as evidenced in Chapter 5. In 6.2, I consider recent reports from the National Development Office of Music Generation. In 6.3, I draw on Louth's engagement with Music Generation's new *National Quality Review Framework* (Zesserson, 2019). Further to this exercise, which I led with members of the team, I present a review informed by Fautley et al's (2019) report on WCET in England highlighted previously in Chapter 2. It is evident that my parallel studies of MGL highlight many similar categories, albeit that Fautley et al engaged in a more wide-ranging, large-scale study with a greater reliance on quantitative data and that they focused on Primary Schools only (Table 5). Similar research in Louth requires a greater engagement with ethnographic data as the numbers are much smaller and it is more difficult to generalise.

Active School Support	The school in which the WCET programme is located takes an active role in supporting the musical teaching and learning involved.
Enjoyable	The participating learners have an enjoyable experience of musical participation in WCET.
Engaging	This category is used separately from ‘enjoyable’ for when respondents describe pedagogies or programmes as ‘engaging’.
Continuation routes available	This is being used in the ways described in section 6 of this report, about having musical activities to go on to after the WCET programme. In the way it was defined earlier, this is separate from the notion of <i>progress</i> .
Regular Performing opportunities	Self-explanatory, as it says, opportunities to play/sing are available
Holistic	This was used by a number of respondents to mean that they were covering music education ‘in the round’.
Involves the instrument	This was used when respondents described specific aspects of musical learning which involved the instruments of WCET
Good progress	The specific use was that as described in section 6 of this report, namely making progress in breadth and/or depth of learning.
Good Peri's	This coding was used when respondents talked about the need for high-quality music teaching staff.
Differentiated	This means that respondents discussed music teaching and learning that was focused on the range of learners as presented in each setting.
Choice of instruments	Means that learners could choose instruments.
Covers National Curriculum	Self-explanatory.
Learn Notation	Teaching and learning of notation is important
Flexible	Used when respondents described being able to respond in different ways to different schools. Not the same as differentiation, as that applies to learners in WCET programmes.
Creativity	WCET involves some aspects of creative processes from learners.
Take instrument Home	Self-explanatory.

Table 5 What makes a good WCET programme? Source: Fautley et al 2019, pp. 115-116.

6.2 A National Context

An analysis of statistical returns by Music Generation LMEP Areas for 2020 was prepared by the National Development Office of Music Generation and published in March 2021. Engaging with the impact of COVID-19, this document engaged with data on the type of

programme, number of participants, and age/gender profiles if known. The analysis demonstrates that the majority of Music Generation programmes nationally are delivered in a group or whole class context, accounting for 79% of participants nationally. There are some disparities between the level of engagement between boys and girls. Recognising difficulties and anomalies in data, Table 6 presents the gender ratios for County Louth. Gender disparity has not emerged as a significant factor in Louth nor has it been highlighted during my fieldwork.

MG Area	% Male Music Generation Participants	% Male Population Under 18, Census 2016	% Female Music Generation Participants	% Female Population Under 18, Census 2016
Louth	37.84	50.74	62.16	49.26

Table 6 Gender Ratios - Music Generation Areas and Census 2016 returns. Source: Music Generation National Development Office, March 2021.

The impact of COVID-19, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation and, in the longer term, required more detailed examination, is captured in part at the point of December 2020 in Table 7. Apart from a significant decrease in participants at year end compared with the first part of the year, it can be seen that the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme is one of 15 programmes in the county. A larger than average amount of programming takes place in primary schools and half of the activity takes place during school hours. This highlights the significance of *Introducing Strings* in the context of the MGL programming.

	Louth	All MG Areas
<i>Number of Programmes</i>	15	299 (5.02% of overall total)
<i>Number of Participants</i>	1,074	41,708 (2.58% of overall total)
<i>% Increase/Decrease in Participants (Sept to Dec compared to Jan-Mar 2020)</i>	-47.41%	-29.59%
<i>% Population 0-18yrs participating in programmes (Census 2016)</i>	2.92%	4.65%
<i>% Programming in Primary Schools (PS as Venue Type)</i>	41.67%	25.00%
<i>% Programming in Primary Schools (PS as Unique Venues)</i>	60.71%	60.81%
<i>% Programme Delivery Within School Hours</i>	50.00%	39.02%
<i>Musical works created with CYP</i>	219	703 (31.15% of overall)

		total)
<i>Performances</i>	224	873 (25.66% of overall total)
<i>Digital Resources Created</i>	207	4,392 (4.71% of overall total)

Table 7 Statistical Analysis of MGL 2020. Source: Music Generation National Development Office, March 2021.

6.3 Quality Review

In 2020/2021, the MGL team engaged in a quality review exercise on the MGL *String Orchestra* programme. The review was conducted in accordance with the new quality framework produced by MG National Development Office in 2019. Although the review did not focus on the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme, the findings from the review revealed the lack of connection between MGL's *Introducing Strings* programme and the MGL *String Orchestra* programme, despite a desire for connections as indicated in Chapter 3, figure 2. Nevertheless, other networks are evident in the review as detailed below. CPD activities are also included in the review and in the National Statistics Analysis (MG, 2021). The MGL musician educators undertook a series of half-day workshops in February, April, August and October 2019 for the purposes of curriculum planning, score preparation and sharing of practice. The group met regularly throughout the COVID-19 'lockdown' period and post-lockdown 2021 met five times for the purposes of induction of new musicians and sharing of ideas and practice.

As an action from the MGL *String Orchestra* review, a quality review of the MGL *Introducing Strings* commenced in May 2021 and at the time of completing this research was still underway. Quantitative data submitted to MG National Development Office by MGL for Music Generation's national report on activity during 2019 reported that *Introducing Strings* had been delivered across 28 weekly sessions in eleven schools (nine primary schools and two post primary schools). There was an estimated weekly participation of 800 delivered by a team of ten musicians, including an additional eight musicians (strings) joining the MGL panel of musician educators in August 2019. The review noted that performance opportunities

are an integral part of the programme; showcase events for the wider school community and parents were arranged at Christmas and summer in each setting. Critically, progression routes to allow participants to continue beyond the programme were configured according to the context in each school. Links created between the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme and the wider community included a collaboration between one school and a local festival leading to a performance at the opening event of the festival; a sharing workshop in Drogheda that brought together children from different schools; and participation by one group in a performance in the National Concert Hall as part of RIAM's schools ensemble day. Links with other musical activities within the county were also noted, including a collaboration with Louth Contemporary Music Society and LMETB's *Creative Interventions* programme involving workshops and culminating in public performance as part of a festival programme. There is evidence of a growing desire to integrate creativity, exemplified by a one-day *Strings Blitz Workshop Day* at An Grainán, Termonfeckin led by Kathrine Barnecutt (Irish Chamber Orchestra) and the MGL musician educator team of string specialists. Focusing on creative music making and improvisation, the event was attended by groups from six of the eleven MGL *Introducing Strings* schools (120 children in total). The event also served as CPD training in facilitating creative music making and improvisation for the MGL team of musician educators.

Changes in repertoire and genre are also evident in the review, exemplified by the development of a *Schools Trad Orchestra Collective*. This was a continuation of a programme started in 2018 and led by local musicians, which had led to a performance at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. It provided another ensemble opportunity from 2019 for children in participating strings schools to join. The potential for expansion was further demonstrated through a link with a traditional music school in Co. Down, with twelve musicians from Northern Ireland participating in the ensemble with partial funding from LMETB's Peace IV Creative Interventions programme.

An important parallel between the Music Generation Quality Review and Fautley et al (2019) is a desire to understand quality in a broad sense and identify means by which the programme may be understood to be successful. The sixteen categories from the UK study are presented in Table 3 and provide signposts for consideration in a study of MGL. These categories may be compared with the core values of *Musical Futures* outlined in Table 2 and Hallam's categories based on her evaluation of WCET presented in Table 8. In contrast with the UK model, Music Generation does not set out to cover the National Curriculum. However, in developing WCET with a focus on music performance, children do learn to read music notation and, with an increased emphasis on creativity developed in part through CPD, have explored composition.

The development of general music skills
Specific instrumental skills
Creative skills
Musical literacy
High quality teaching (See Table 4)
Enjoyment and engagement of the children
Assessing the development of musical skills
Transferable skills
Differentiation
Pupil choice
Ensemble experience
High quality materials
Appropriate instrumental resources
Enthusiastic and inspiring teachers
Quality assurance

Table 8 Assessing the Quality of Provision (Hallam, 2019).

Critically reflecting on the content of Chapters 4 and 5, which incorporate the voices of principal teachers alongside my observations of school-based activities, it is possible to draw some assessments on ‘where’ the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme is in the context of existing scholarship on other programmes. As I have demonstrated, active school support is critical with examples in successful situations of teachers engaging proactively in classroom activities and maintaining a good relationship with the musician educator, who in turn responds to the positive influence of the classroom teacher. Outside the classroom, the support of the principal is critical and active communication between all stakeholders is critical.

One of the challenges for MGL *Introducing Strings* has been to ensure that there are continuation routes available. Unlike the UK models, the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme developed a presence in second level education from an early stage and, where possible, has tried to ensure a continuation for children in their education. Beyond that, it is hoped that those children with proficiency and interest will have access to Afterschool Hubs and opportunities to join the MGL *String Orchestras* or other programmes facilitated by MGL. While it is not presumed that all children will become proficient performers on string instruments, it is hoped that music and musicking will become integral to their lives. For this, a holistic approach is necessary and music has been integrated into other aspects of school life.

One of the most observable challenges for establishing a WCET approach has been to ensure that there is good progress amongst the children involved. Initially, progress was considered only in terms of instrumental technique and the learning of repertoire. Through the period in which this study has been undertaken, a broader acknowledgement of what can be termed ‘progress’, including a recognition of varying abilities and targets in classroom groups has been developed. This also related to the development of a differentiated approach whereby music teaching and learning is focused on the range of learners as presented in each setting.

This has been informed by CPD activities and involved changing approaches to classroom teaching methods and changes to repertoire, embracing genres beyond Western art music. It also requires good communication and relationships between the stakeholders including coordinator-principal and musician educator-classroom teacher.

Confidence in the skills of musician educators has been critically important. MGL has been fortunate to attract an excellent team of musician educators over the duration of the programme. However, it is also recognised that there has been a high turnover, which may be related to terms and conditions of employment offered. The musician educator team is a valuable asset and experienced musicians have taken on a mentoring role for new recruits. As coordinator, I have recognised the need for regular CPD and responded to the needs of musician educators in this regard.

Although limited to the four string instruments (violin, viola, cello and double bass), children have opportunities to choose and change their choice of instrument as part of the programme. Beyond *Introducing Strings*, the MGL programme team have recognised a desire and need for other programmes that incorporate other instruments. However, a challenge that remains is that, in most instances, children do not have the opportunity to take their instrument home, thus limiting opportunities for practice and moves towards enculturation. However, as noted in previous chapters, when children did have the opportunity to bring the instrument home, it did not necessarily make a significant difference, highlighting the need to engage with parents and consider other supports.

6.4 Towards a Community of Musical Practice

The MGL *Introducing Strings* programme has been delivered in a range of schools and the enthusiasm and commitment for the strings programme has varied widely. Support manifests in several ways; it can be ensuring that there is an appropriate space for the weekly sessions to take place, a safe space for storing instruments with staff taking an active role during sessions

and principals and teachers taking time for communication and discussion about the programme with the music educators and programme co-ordinator. When the logistics of the delivery are well supported by the school, it ensures that the musician educators can concentrate on effective delivery and engagement of the students. When such supports are not in place, session time can be impacted and progress is impeded. In the very worst scenario this can create a spiral of negativity, less enjoyment, a decreasing sense of achievement and eventually a lack of motivation of students to engage. Without the full team behind a project or initiative, it is extremely challenging for it to be a success.

At all stages, it was hoped that the initiatives of Music Generation would lead to a cultural change related to music and education that extended beyond the schools and out into the communities of Co. Louth. It was critical that efforts and measures of success would not be solely based on the classroom. Highlighting one example that demonstrates the development of a culture within a school led by a community of musical practice, one principal noted an event to mark the retirement of one of the teachers when the children volunteered to be part of a musical group playing their stringed instruments for the occasion. In another school, the older group of strings players joined with the school choir to perform at the official opening ceremony of the new school building. In another large urban school, one of the class teachers was also a string player; under her leadership, the school applied to take part in a performance initiative for school orchestras at the National Concert Hall, Dublin, organised in partnership with the Royal Irish Academy of Music. Transport was organised for parents as well as the children to attend. The principal described the occasion as a community event, which gave a great sense of pride and togetherness for everyone.

There have been a wide range of inter-connected activities facilitated and funded through MGL. Some of these are directly related to the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme but all provide opportunities and links as part of the development of a community of musical practice that facilitates enhanced access to music education in Co. Louth. While schools provided the

initial point of engagement with potential young musicians, the expectation was that the after-school programme would offer a route for sustained engagement and musical progression for children who had participated in the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. The children would attend lessons after school and in time, participate in one of MGL's string orchestras. Initially, the view was held that the level of uptake in after school lessons from children who had participated in MGL *Introducing Strings* programme was some measure of the quality of their experience in the programme. The assumption was that the more positive the learning experience with MGL had been in school, then the more likely that the child would engage with MGL for after-school lessons. Feedback provided by children through surveys and interviews across the period 2012–2016 shows that the majority of children enjoyed participating in *Introducing Strings*. Despite the positive reception for the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme within the majority of schools involved, registration data for MGL's after school lessons from 2012 to 2016, shows that only a small number of children who participated in strings programme went on to register for after-school classes in nearby centres. Furthermore, those who had registered for classes mostly dropped out within a year or less. It is not clear if this was because they gave up music or because they had other opportunities to learn beyond those provided by Music Generation.

6.4.1 Ensemble Development and Diversification

Efforts at creating ensembles are present from the start and initiatives include the MGL *Strings Orchestra* programme established in 2014, which takes place on Saturday mornings. The orchestras have become one of the prominent public aspects of MGL and were envisaged as a progression route for participants in the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme from all of the schools. Events for the Saturday orchestra groups included a performance at the Irish Association of Youth Orchestras festival in the National Concert Hall in February 2016. One of the challenges with the MGL *String Orchestras* has been the tendency towards a culture of elitism and while high standards have been achieved, the access route from the MGL

Introducing Strings programmes in schools had not been strengthened and many of the members gained private tuition outside of MGL Louth's programmes. However, the orchestras and ensembles have provided an important opportunity for these young musicians to perform collectively and meet the needs of one of the communities that MGL is serving.

Choral music has also been integral to the activities of MGL from the start. However, despite 'Let's Sing' Primary School Choral Taster Workshops as early as 2012, a choir has not been sustained in the county in a manner akin to the strings orchestras. Nevertheless, an MGL choir participated in OTC's production of *Carmen* at An Táin Arts Centre, Dundalk in 2013. An after-school choir started in Dundalk and Drogheda in 2014 and the Drogheda Choir participated in the 1916 Events at Collins Barracks. The choirs also contribute to end of year concerts by MGL.

MGL has responded to demand and sought to develop other areas of interest that are not catered for in the county. The expansion of instruments included the development of recorder and ukulele programmes in 2014 and 2015, reflecting both the use of the recorder in some second level schools and amongst the concert band community which is strong in mid and south Louth, and the popularity of the ukulele amongst many community musicians and community organisations. A 'Pick Up and Play' programme was initiated in 2017 with an emphasis on popular music. Popular music became part of the summer programme in 2012 and this genre of music has grown in popularity amongst service users more recently, providing a pathway for some into and out of the strings programme and other music activities facilitated by MGL, as well as private providers of music education in the county. Popular music has been central to some of the summer programmes, which have also engaged with Music Technology.

MGL programming has also built upon strengths and interests in the community. The MGL Harp Ensemble was established in 2014 and has grown in strength with a number of notable

performances and links have been created with Harp Ensembles in other Music Generation partnerships. Although the focus of MGL *Introducing Strings* was initially on Western art music, Irish traditional music has also been prominent. Initially MGL programming was not connected with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, although the organisation has strong branches in both of the large towns in the county. Links in this regard were developed with the creation of *Nós Nua* in 2017.

6.4.2 Developing Networks

Partnerships are important for Music Generation nationally and locally. In addition to the later association with the regional centre of CCÉ, activities include collaborative events with Dundalk Brass Band and St Paul's School, Bessbrook (Co. Armagh). A close working relationship with Louth Contemporary Music Society (LCMS) also created opportunities for young people involved with MGL to become involved and perform new music, with opportunities to meet and work with some composers. Opportunities for collaboration also occurred with festivals including Féile na Tána, Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, the Cairde na Cruite Festival, and Ardee Baroque Festival. Not all partnerships were sustained and there are organisations engaged in music making and music education in Co. Louth that are not currently engaged in partnership with MGL. Opportunities for expanding partnerships should be part of future planning.

Experiencing different genres and engaging in creative practice has been an important development across all of MGL's activities and is evident in the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. A group from one school participated in the creation of a new piece of music performed as part of the final concert of Louth Contemporary Music Society's Festival in 2019. The opportunity to create, perform and listen to contemporary music is something that few adults experience. The principal of the school described how for the children involved, this exposure to contemporary music meant that they did not view contemporary music as weird. For this principal, one of the highlights of the programme was seeing the children

playing music and getting into a type of music that they would never experience and exposing them to a side of life that they would never otherwise know existed.

While MGL has developed a strong team of musician educators, some activities have created an opportunity to involve guest musicians on a short-term basis. While local musicians Zoe Conway and John McIntyre have facilitated many different types of programmes and workshops for MGL, they were joined by leading Scottish musicians Catriona McKay and Chris Stout in 2014. McKay and Stout have established a reputation not only in relation to traditional music but for performing contemporary composition that engages with folk music elements. *Reimagining Oriel*, co-led by Zoe Conway, composer Elaine Agnew and MGL musician Barry Hynes was established in 2015 and linked with the local traditional music festival *Féile na Tána*. The project referenced repertoire from *A Hidden Ulster* (2003) and author Padraigín Ní Uallacháin joined the team to visit the schools and perform some of its repertoire. There is a recurring tendency towards Irish traditional music and the involvement of local artists. In 2019 the 'Young Voices Louth Summer Course' involved the O'Connor family, who are steeped in the traditions of Oriel and again drew significantly from the work and influence of Ní Uallacháin (2003).

From 2018, there is a greater diversity in the number of public performances and the venues used. Venues in Dundalk included St Nicholas' COI, the Spirit Store, the Oriel Centre Dundalk Gaol. In Drogheda, venues used included the Barbican Centre, Droichead Arts Centre and the Gig Rig stage as part of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. In 2019, a wider geographical spread is evident with performances in the Carlingford Heritage Centre and An Grianán in Termonfeckin. Public performances are critical for raising the profile of the activities of MGL and many of these are attended primarily by the parents of children involved. These performances help MGL to reach a wider audience, including non-participating children, to increase an interest in participation in music education in the county.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter seeks to set out the position of MGL's *Introducing Strings* programme in 2020, at the point when COVID-19 changed the context for music education and life more generally. Borrowing from national reports from Music Generation, the Quality Review exercise undertaken by MGL, activity reports presented by me as coordinator to the LMEP, and ethnographic reflections, this chapter recognises both the achievements and challenges for sustained development of and engagement in the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. Consistent with previous chapters, it recognises the importance of identifying the schools as partners in a model of delivery, while also recognising that connecting these schools through music presents new opportunities that are only beginning to be explored. Such connections between schools and beyond schools to involve more community stakeholders can encourage the development of a community of musical practice. While a number of partnerships have been identified, and these have expanded based on the developments in terms of genre identified in Chapter 5, there are many more stakeholders that can become part of the network or partnership in Co. Louth. My study recognises that progression and the development of a community of musical practice is complex and multi-faceted.

Crucially, this chapter identifies the importance of facilitating an enjoyable experience, recognising that while many stakeholders recognise its importance, the measure of enjoyment can vary between principals, teachers and children. The majority of children surveyed indicated that they did enjoy their musicking experiences and were interested in continuing with their music education. While this dissertation focused on a programme that centred on the playing of string instruments, it is important to note that this can be considered a pathway and that many of the children indicated a desire to perform and learn other instruments.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Summary

This research has been carried out in order to better understand the critical factors at play in sustaining children's musical engagement within and beyond the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme. My findings will inform future organisational and programming decisions for MGL and will be shared with the Music Generation network and wider performance music education sector. In this dissertation, I have critically considered a number of core aspects drawn from an examination of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme informed by intensive fieldwork, carried out in parallel with my role as coordinator for Music Generation in Co. Louth. These themes include:

- Policy, Ethos and Values
- Partnership Development and Stakeholder Roles
- Models for Music Education and Pedagogical Approaches
- Continuing Professional Development
- Genre and Creativity
- Musical enculturation
- Communities of Musical Practice

Within these, I examine further challenges that include access to instruments, supporting progression and developing suitable infrastructure, and the sustainability of programmes.

In critically reflecting on how this specific programme developed over the eight years from 2012–2020, I have sought to draw attention to the experience of group music-making as part of the programme, the importance of creativity in music education as experienced by

participants in this programme, and connections to other MGL activities. Beyond the scope of this dissertation, but worthy of further critical engagement, are issues related to differing levels of engagement based on gender, similar to studies by Fautley and Whittaker (2017) on WCET, and more generally by Harrison (2007) and Power (2008). Although it did not emerge as a significant issue in my fieldwork, it would be beneficial to critically consider challenges related to access and special educational needs, similar to studies by Stafford (2016) in relation to WCET.

Schools decide to engage with the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme for a number of reasons. The WCET model of delivery provides access to music for a very wide number of students, reaching many who otherwise would not have the opportunity to engage with music. Undoubtedly, the variety of instruments on offer makes it an appealing offer to schools who want to complement their music curriculum beyond more typical classroom instruments such as tin whistle and recorder. Some school principals and teachers also noted that the disciplined nature of the instruction had therapeutic value, improving the children's listening skills and levels of concentration. Important also for schools in deciding to get involved is the fact that the WCET model used for the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme causes minimal disruption to the school day for the purposes of curriculum teaching and learning.

In its early phase, the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme was a generic model, using similar approaches of delivery and repertoire across all schools. The musical repertoire and pedagogical approach to instrumental instruction was based predominantly on the Western art music approach. As it has developed over the years, the uniformity of delivery across schools has decreased. The programme has evolved to become responsive and adaptive to fit the specific context of each school. Each context is unique and needs to be considered and planned for individually. An adaptive, responsive model is required rather than a 'one size fits all' approach to ensure programmes best fit with the culture of the school and its wider community. This has proven to be a critical factor in embedding programmes into the life of

schools and contributing to the development of rich musical cultures within each school community. An adaptive and responsive model also presents challenges as it requires musicians to have a deeper connection with each school community, to develop meaningful relationships with staff, children and parents and respond to local contexts. Thus, musician educators require a broader skillset beyond instrumental technique and more time is required for planning and CPD. It is also challenged by a high turnover in musician educators who sustain quality, maintain relationships and help realise a shared vision.

Undertaking this research as my CPD in the role of coordinator for MGL has provided me with a deeper understanding of the factors that influence sustaining musical engagement. Through reflection on the strings programme, I have learned that the development of a community of musical practice within each school context is crucial in order for the work of the musician educators to have a positive impact on the children and young people participating. I have learned that, as coordinator, I have an important part to play in fostering relations between musicians, principals, teachers, parents and the wider community so as to create and maintain an interconnectedness in order for Music Generation's work in schools to flourish. I have come to realise that sustaining communities of musical practice needs sustained investment of my time and energy as coordinator, particularly where there are changes to personnel delivering a programme.

I have an important role to play in identifying and/or creating opportunities for programme development. This is of utmost importance when making programming decisions at many levels; whether to develop a partnership with a particular school in the first instance; what type of programme would be appropriate to deliver in a particular school; what musician educator would be best suited to deliver a programme in a particular school; what sister programmes and performance opportunities would help embed the programme in a school; if/what partner organisations to work with in order support and sustain musical engagement beyond the school programme.

One way of understanding the role of coordinator is to incorporate theories put forward in recent work Fahy and Kenny (2021) on the role of the broker. My research has shown that when I took a more active role as broker - making the connections, building the relationships and connectedness between musician and school – I was more impactful. The challenge is with the scale of the programme, it is not humanly possible for the coordinator to engage to this level on all projects at all schools. The unstable nature of engaging musician educators at present means that the broker is the one who builds the long-lasting relationship with the school, although this dissertation demonstrates that where musician educators have been in situ for an extended period, a sense of shared enterprise developed and the work was more impactful.

It takes effort on the part of both Music Generation staff and school staff to make the time to collaborate and to work jointly to create a music rich community within a school. The Music Generation coordinator must make time to be familiar with the environment, the school community and the interests of all local stakeholders. It is beneficial for the coordinator to be an active participant in the programme – certainly at the start and in the case where there are changes in the team of musician educators; they need to invest this time, facilitate the meetings with the parties to keep them connected and mutually supportive. In the context of the schools, the programmes are most successful where the principal engages in partnership with teachers so that all invested in the programme are willing to make time to watch, observe, meet, discuss, give time within the school day for the programme to happen, to meet, look for ways of connecting their work with the programme, and to build a supportive context for the children. Simple things such as communicating with the class teachers by email – not just the principal, meeting them as a group, paying attention to working in a way that encourages them to participate, engage, develop a love of the programme and an understanding of what the programme seeks to achieve. This is something that the coordinator needs to nurture and then pass on for the musician educators to follow. If the

programme is regarded as an inconvenience for staff, both of Music Generation and of the school, then no matter how enthusiastic the coordinator and principal might be, the programme will have limited success.

I have come to understand that the role of the musician educator is both as instrumental tutor and community musician. To develop the quality of teaching and learning, I have learned the value of bringing the musicians together regularly to discuss and reflect their work and experiences. Through such sessions, and through networking at national events, musicians gain also a better understanding of their unique hybrid role and the transformative potential that their work may bring about. This is of utmost importance so that musician educators can work together with the coordinator to develop vibrant musical communities in schools. Just as it is important to create musical communities of practice to support children and young people's music making, so too is it important for me in my role as coordinator to facilitate the development of a community of musical teaching practice amongst the Music Generation team of tutors.

The extension of communities of musical practice from primary school environments to post primary level and the wider musical community needs to be carefully considered and planned for in order to sustain engagement. Further research is needed in this area that extends beyond the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme to consider some of the other activities of MGL and place them in the wider context of musicking in Louth. In part, this returns to the origins of my involvement, which began with a survey of music education in the county, pre-empting the selection of Louth as one of the first three counties funded under Music Generation. I hope that my research will benefit those counties who are currently at an earlier stage of development, as well as contributing to a sustainable and revitalised ecosystem for music performance education in Louth.

7.2 Recommendations

While this dissertation focuses on one programme in one county, the findings can be critically considered to inform developments in other areas and at a larger scale. Some of the key findings form a series of recommendations that are centred around the themes explored in the dissertation.

7.2.1 Each School as a Community

In aspiring to purposefully address access, each school must be considered as a community. It is necessary to develop a community of musical practice in each school through building relationships and working in partnership with the school and paying careful attention to communicating and building links with parents. This allows for the development and delivery of bespoke programmes that best suit each context. Doing so creates music-rich school environments that can be a nursery preceding engagement with a wider community.

7.2.2 Linking Communities

Once a community of musical practice has been established within a school, it is important to extend and interlink school communities of practice with others - locally, county wide, and country wide. This can be done through performance or other project-based activities. Creating links contributes to progression, engagement and enculturation and the resulting network provides further opportunities for collaboration.

7.2.3 Sustain Human Capital

Some of the goals and aspirations of the programme have been hard to achieve because of the turnover in musician educators and because of the scale of the programme. It is not possible to constantly expand programmes without significant changes to budgets and recruitment of new musician educators. Established musician educators have enormous cultural knowledge of the communities of musical practice that can shape programme development and they become mentors for new colleagues. Making the profession of musician educator a viable career path to sustain and investment in high quality facilitators is critical.

It is important to also consider carefully the role of coordinator as curator, broker and relationship builder with each school community. The role of coordinator, otherwise defined as Development Officer, in the establishment of school partnership should be clearly articulated and explained. The coordinator must be supported by a team who can provide a link with other stakeholders and inform developments.

7.2.4 Musician Educator Role

There is potential to consider a redefinition of the role of musician educator, to take a musician-in-residence approach where musicians develop programmes in response to the needs and interests of the school, building longitudinal relationships with schools and their immediate communities. The role of the musician educator should be reconsidered as much more than merely passing on instrumental skills but broader; at its most effective, it is a hybrid role that contributes to the development of a community of musical practice. Musician educators must be facilitated to engage in CPD related to music education and pedagogy, and in engagement in performance opportunities to develop as an artist.

7.2.5 Flexible Curricula and Progression

It is critical that there is regular reconsideration of the curriculum, which must always be more than merely the acquisition of instrumental skills. It is critical that the pedagogical approach is child centred, creative, inclusive and inspiring. The MGL *Introducing Strings* programme is about access to music, not merely access to playing strings. Clear progression routes to the range of options to continue musical engagement (within and outside the MGL programme) must be identified and shared with children, parents and other stakeholders.

7.2.6 Geographic Considerations

Sustainability of both the programme and the development of a community of musical practice can be enhanced by school clustering according to geographic area so that it will be more viable to build progression routes in community settings. This is of particular relevance to rural locations.

7.2.7 Quality Assurance

The implementation of the new Quality Review Framework will help define ongoing CPD needs to ensure the workforce can deliver programme that aligns to the core values of Music Generation. Regular CPD for musician educators, with opportunities to involve classroom teachers to educate them how to work in partnership within the classroom space with the musician educator, can enhance the quality of the service provided by Music Generation in Louth and other counties and help achieve the aims of the programme.

7.3 Final Remarks and Key Learning

Findings from this research project suggest that music making is presently not mainstream activity for children and young people. Similar to Hallam's findings, the research has shown the power of group performance in motivating and inspiring children and young people about music making. Discerning musical leadership for such groups creates performance opportunities that are challenging and yet within reach so that the children experience a state of flow, the optimal state of enjoyment. Whilst children and young people enjoy music making and participation in music, whether they will continue with music beyond the WCET programme at school depends largely on the home environment and whether there is the necessary support to enable continuation. A review of the literature and evidence from the research has shown where there is a musical role model at home or where there is one adult or more who values music, there is significantly more likelihood that children will engage with opportunities for further musical engagement beyond school.

The WCET model is an effective social cultural learning model. It has an important function in establishing a vibrant community of musical practice within a school, between children and between children and adults. Where adults within the school community value music and are actively engaged in the programme, a stronger sense of musical community develops, impacting on the children's engagement and attitudes to music.

Where there is no musical role model and home, musical enculturation can still take place in schools. Music making in school can positively influence attitudes to music making and create a desire amongst children to be a musician. It is an important function of Music Generation to create partnerships with schools to collectively develop music rich environments where musical development flourishes through socio cultural learning models. Developing a functioning partnership requires significant investment of time and energy and intervention by the coordinator as broker in fostering the links and relations across the school community which includes students, principals, teachers, SNAs, parents and boards of management.

Musician educators have the potential to play a bigger role in building the community of musical practice within each school. Their role, responsibilities along with the terms and conditions of their employment require review and redefinition so that they can more effectively assist the coordinator to lead and develop bespoke programmes for each school community. CPD should impart to musician educators their key role in assisting the coordinator in the development of music rich schools. This goes beyond their function in the delivery of weekly music sessions requiring a deeper level of thought reflection, discussion, leadership and shared vision. The most effective model for providing musician educators with training and continuous professional development is through mentoring and providing opportunities to shadow experienced practitioners. Whilst attendance at courses and workshops provide a useful means by which to introduce new ideas and concepts, these experiences do not necessarily furnish musician educators with the confidence to integrate new ideas into their teaching.

Progression routes beyond the WCET programme need to be localised to best suit the context of each school. Evidence in several schools has shown that when a WCET programme concludes and choice for participation comes into play, it can negatively impact on the sense of musical community within a school. In two small schools, optional progression routes led

to only a small number of children continuing to play music. The change from participation in large group to small group meant that their sense of being part of musical community was somewhat lost. The adults in the school became disconnected with the week-to-week activity of the programme as they were no longer directly involved activities. Without the socio-cultural learning experience provided by the WCET, engagement dwindled and the perception of music as a non-main stream activity remained. In one school, where progression routes reverted to the WCET model, a sense of shared enterprise was restored and music grew to become a strong part of the school's identity.

A challenge that presents in delivery through the WCET model is that progression on the chosen instrument(s) will typically be slower. Where groups experience the WCET model across a number of years, it is critical for the curriculum to be broader. It should include singing, musicianship training and creative music making so that the experiences provided can continue to be engaging, music-rich and where the acquisition of musical skills is not solely focused on the development of instrumental technique. Prolonged musical engagement and starting music young as a shared experience with peers is key for it to become habitual and to sustain interest as children get older, gain independence and rebel against what they are told to do by adults.

All the children interviewed valued the experience of trying several instruments before choosing their instrument. This had a strong impact on engagement and enjoyment. They preferred the experience of mixed ensemble, which created a richer sound that they found more pleasurable than when they all learnt the same instrument. They understood that different instruments suit different people and that it was important therefore to continue to offer choice in what they played when participating in the programme. From the musician educator's perspective, the extension of the WCET model beyond year one with mixed ensemble presented several challenges. Ensuring technical progression on multiple instruments using the WCET framework was difficult.

In designing effective programmes to widen access to music, choice of musical repertoire is critical. Playing stringed instruments presents challenges and it will not be every child's musical possible self to want to be a string player. As an access programme therefore, the curriculum for *Introducing Strings* and other WCET programmes should be broad with multiple learning outcomes beyond the development of instrumental technique to best serve the needs of every participant. Starting with what is familiar and the integration of popular music has proven to be highly effective for engaging interest and participation. With careful planning and exposure, however, children can be encultured into any genre of music, beyond the familiarity of popular music. The research has shown the success of integrating Irish traditional music into the musical choices of the MGL *Introducing Strings* programme and validates Kodály's belief in the power of folk music as a vehicle for musical learning. The power of creative music making is that the children will own it and therefore supersedes discourse on musical genre, choices and personal musical tastes.

The transition from participation in WCET programmes to progression routes needs careful navigation, planning and communication on a school by school basis. One of the key findings is that progression routes need to be localised, if access is to be meaningfully addressed. It is worthwhile considering a more focused approach to developing after school music hubs that are built in and around school communities, rather than the generalist approach trialled by MGL which has had limited success. Also, within the limitations of MGL resources and aligning to the core value of partnership, progression routes navigated by MGL should include musical learning opportunities through other providers such as private music schools, individual teaching studios and musical organisations within the community.

Appendix A: Music Generation and Related Reports

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