

**THE SECONDARY SCHOOL MUSIC CURRICULUM:  
AN INVESTIGATION OF DESIGNED LEARNING EXPERIENCES THAT  
PROMOTE MUSICAL UNDERSTANDING**

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# The Secondary School Music Curriculum: An investigation of designed learning experiences that promote musical understanding

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## Abstract

This folio of research employed a constructivist epistemological perspective to investigate the learning designs and pedagogical considerations used by teachers to promote musical understanding within the secondary school music curriculum. The three studies were framed by the following ideas: learning and teaching through experience (John Dewey and David Kolb); learning and teaching for musical understanding (Jackie Wiggins); and designing learning that makes more likely the construction of certain understandings (Charles Reigeluth, Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe). The focus was on the teacher's role in designing and providing learning experiences rather than on students' actual musical learning.

The first folio topic examined the role of music ensemble competitions within the secondary school music curriculum and explored student perspectives on participation in competitions. A large number of research studies from the United States have explored a range of issues surrounding music competitions. However, there are few that have examined student learning perspectives on this experience, and even fewer studies that present an Australian viewpoint on music ensemble competitions. This qualitative study tracked the views of 265 students using three questionnaires strategically positioned throughout the ensemble year. Multiple choice data were examined using frequency analysis while written responses were themed and tallied. Findings indicated that students regarded competitive performances as more significant and motivating than non-competitive, although both were highly valued. Teachers considered that competition participation alone did not achieve better musical outcomes but could generate unique motivational factors legitimising a heightened emphasis upon musicianship and additional rehearsals which could result in better musical understanding.

The second folio topic examined the pedagogical strategies of teachers in designing and teaching an extended music remix classroom activity using Music ICT. Although music technologies in schools have been heavily researched, recent studies have encouraged more substantial research into observed teaching strategies. Ten secondary classroom music teachers, representing a range

of teaching and Music ICT experience, were studied using a mixed method qualitative design that included document analysis, two lesson observations, three interviews, and three questionnaires. Data were analysed using a dual lens model, incorporating Lee Shulman's Pedagogical Reasoning Model and Elizabeth Murphy's Constructivist Checklist. Research findings demonstrated that teachers who could articulate a learning philosophy, as well as design their own instructional resources, tended to demonstrate pedagogy likely to lead to deeper student learning. Other findings indicated that teachers used constructivist influenced student-centred teaching strategies 75% of the time, and that unique Pedagogical Content Knowledge was most evident when teachers regularly connected musical concepts to software specific processes which they apply in the classroom.

The third folio topic involved the development and exegesis of a designed music learning experience titled *Boomacious*, which is a practical instructional resource for secondary school Music ICT. As the exegesis indicates, it is a demonstration model for a researcher developed learning framework and an instructional design model. EMDCARE is a constructivist influenced Music ICT learning framework that emphasises guided discovery through the steps of: Experimentation; Modification; Deconstruction; Construction; Application; Reflection; and Extension. The instructional design model, entitled Amplified Instruction Depth (AID) provided differentiated levels of instructional guidance.

The portfolio concluded that the three designed learning experiences were able to contribute to student learning, the promotion of musical understanding, pedagogy and classroom practice and the secondary school music curriculum through their operationalizing of constructivist learning theories.

# Thesis Declaration

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I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Antony Hubmayer

17 May 2013

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