

# Maintaining enthusiasm for classroom teaching through multiple syllabus changes over a 20-year period: A case study of one teacher's journey

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## Abstract

This paper investigates one experienced classroom music teacher's journey in navigating syllabus changes in New South Wales (NSW) secondary schools in the period between 1968 and 1978. A significant dearth of research on teacher education in general, and in particular, in the area of secondary music teaching exists in NSW. This research will add to the area. In this case study, semi-structured interviews with the participant investigate the themes of adaptability and resilience to change in curriculum and pedagogy in the music classroom. Included in the research are syllabus documents and memoranda to School Principals over the time period, concluding with the analysis and interpretation of the research data.

**Key words:** secondary music, music syllabus, classroom music pedagogy.

## Introduction

This paper investigates the experiences of one NSW secondary music teacher in the period 1968 to 1988 which saw many changes to music syllabuses for both senior secondary and junior secondary music. Music teachers in schools were expected to adapt and to implement pedagogical changes in their classrooms, often with no Inservice training or advice when new syllabus documents were released. Little research exists on how or if these syllabus changes affected, influenced or shaped the philosophies of teachers and their actual teaching practice. This research is part of a broader investigation into teachers' experiences over the many music curriculum changes that occurred over the designated period. In the broader study, a group of Experienced Music Teachers (EMTs) (N=20) are interviewed, along with a group of Pre-Service Music Teachers (PSMTs) (N=20). This paper reports one teacher's

experience and highlights two significant periods in secondary classroom music history in NSW – the 1960s when music was more likely to be taught in a traditional and conservative style, and the 1980s when the development of a new syllabus for senior music classes changed the pedagogical landscape for teachers and students alike.

This paper provides data and evidence from the two contrasting time periods presenting the participant's viewpoint. The findings of the overall study will be of significance for music teachers across Australia and internationally by capturing the viewpoints and levels of experience of the teachers in the study (Argote & Ingram, 2000; Collins & Allender, 2013).

## Literature review

This paper builds on previous research concerning specific changes to the NSW music syllabuses (Dunbar-Hall, 1993, 1999; Jeanneret et al., 2003;

McPherson & Jeanerett, 2005); articles and manifestations on creativity in the music room in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom (Odena, 2001, 2012); influence on a teacher's pedagogical philosophy and development of a teaching style (Oleson & Hora, 2014); and perspectives concerning the promotion of informal learning, leading to the challenge in popularity of Western Art Music being studied in our schools (Green, 2002, 2005, 2008; Carroll, 2019).

Most of the early documented history of music in school classrooms in Australia has focused mainly on Primary School music, and records that music was predominantly taught in Primary schools by 'untrained' teachers, consisting mostly of 'vocal music' or 'class singing' (Cox & Stevens, 2017; Stevens, 1978). Secondary Music teachers in NSW in the 1960s and 1970s received their teacher training at Teachers Colleges and the Conservatorium of Music, gaining a Diploma in Music and Diploma in Education (Dip. Mus/Ed) at the end of their four years of study. Vocal music was one of the inherited traditions from English elementary education where it was introduced during the 1840s (Stevens, 1978). Class singing was 'used for school songs, emphasising patriotism, childhood culture, moral and social values' (p. 2), but was also a method of introducing music to all children without having to purchase instruments. Children of school age participated in choral festivals and concerts, and some schools introduced musical literacy by teaching singing through the Tonic Sol-Fa method and the Kodály Method (Stevens, 1978).

With new technological developments (gramophone, ABC Radio programs) introduced in schools, 'Listening' became an important part of teaching Music in school along with class singing (Stevens, 1978). The two components of class Singing and Listening therefore became the two principal components in music syllabus design for secondary music classrooms initially too. The NSW courses of study in music for secondary schools, published by the Board of Secondary School Studies, were first implemented in 1962 and

reached their sixth year in 1967 (Bartle, 1968). In public schools in Australia in the period 1967–1974 saw a 'cultural revolution' taking place where multiculturalism flourished (Barcan, 2010). The case study presented in this paper will show how one teacher navigated the teaching of music in this early era and continued to adapt to subsequent shifts that came along in educational thinking in the 1980s.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s music teaching had a very traditional focus in both the Junior Syllabus (Years 7 – 10) and the Senior syllabus (Years 11 and 12). In the 1980s the Senior music courses began to extend the topic focus to Music of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century compared with music of earlier periods, and by 1983 one of the topics of study was 'The Twentieth Century – a current survey'. However, the second topic remained 'The Foundations of Western Tonal Tradition', ensuring the study of Baroque, Classical and The Nineteenth Century remained on teachers' lists. The syllabus components of Performance, Music Writing and Listening were changed to Performance, Composition, Musicology and Aural (Dunbar-Hall, 1999), following the lead of the new 2 Unit A Syllabus of the late 1970s.

It was still a while, however, before the pattern of examining in traditional theory-based exercises changed and caught up with the times. Hoyle (2006) has written that for any curriculum innovation to become effective and improve on existing practice, it will not succeed unless teachers become personally committed to ensuring its success. As Lovat and Smith (1995), wrote 'any curriculum provides a representation of the social structuring of the society in which it is operating' (p. 33). The subject of this case study has shown not only her commitment to implementing changes that occurred over the period, but her enthusiasm and interest in doing so.

## Methodology

This paper utilises the qualitative research methodology of the case study, which can be described as the study of a 'real person' in a real situation, enabling the reader to more clearly

understand how ideas and abstract principles fit together (Nisbet & Watt, 1984). A strength of a case study is the capacity to observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects (Cohen et al., 2008). Accordingly, the case study has several 'hallmarks' (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995), in that it is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case and provides a chronological narrative of events relevant to the whole study. In so doing, it blends a description of events with the analysis of them while focusing on an individual and seeks to understand their perceptions of events while highlighting specific events that are relevant to the study.

In this case study, the data was drawn from different sources of information, including the participant's own experience collected via interview, the syllabus documents, Memoranda to School Principals, and archival records of the two periods chosen – the 1960s and the 1980s. The analysis of documentary materials contributes to the development of a more complex understanding of the phenomena being studied (Fossey et al., 2002). The interview was a one-hour face to face semi-structured interview, enabling the participant to follow streams of thought and explore in-depth experiences that are often unformulated, yet powerful in their lives (Bresler, 1995). The audio was recorded and analysed to ensure consistency with the underlying theory of interpretive research, allowing for new questions to arise which potentially informed and guided the collection of data (Locke et al., 2004). The participant, code named Abby, gives her responses to the two themes chosen below.

## **A case study**

Music teachers in NSW who have taught through the many syllabus and assessment changes over the past forty years are testament to the resourcefulness needed by teachers in the music classroom. Abby is one such teacher and completed her training in the early 1960s,

teaching in NSW State Secondary Schools and organisations for the next forty years. In that time Abby experienced many different music syllabus iterations and could offer a perspective from the classroom teacher level, the Head Teacher level, as well as from positions as consultant and curriculum officer with different government organisations all adding to her wide experiences with syllabus implementation. The mid 1960s were the beginning of Abby's teaching career, and the period of 1979-1980s, when the introduction of a new senior music syllabus changed the landscape of the senior secondary classroom for NSW music teachers, was towards the end of her school teaching career. In this paper, Abby's perspectives and experiences of practice and philosophical thinking about secondary music teaching will be investigated in relation to the syllabus developments of that era.

## **The mid 1960s – A junior syllabus perspective**

Abby's music teacher training was undertaken at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and Sydney Teachers College in the early 1960s. At this time, the highest level of qualification awarded by the Conservatorium was the Diploma in music teaching, performance, or a combined teaching and performance diploma. The four-year Diploma in Music Education was the combined responsibility of both a Teachers College and the Conservatorium of Music. The training for Abby consisted of three days a week at the Conservatorium, two days at College for three years, then in fourth year, full time at the Teachers College. Abby was doing the combined Performance Diploma in piano alongside the teaching qualification.

In classroom teaching, the process of learning and developing ideas can be shaped by a number of influences, including mentors, knowledge of pedagogy, and the practical knowledge gained in the classroom (Oleson & Hora, 2013). Another important component of classroom teaching

is the observation of other people's practice as being important in shaping and forming their own ideas and philosophy of teaching (Bandura, 1977). Abby discussed the importance of her musical knowledge, her practicum experiences and her early classroom experiences in shaping her pedagogical knowledge and confidence, and in her learning gained from attendance at inservice teacher training, such as courses in the Kodály Method and the Orff Method.

Her memories of teacher training were that it centred on "talk a little, chalk a little" so consequently she felt totally unprepared for the world of teaching. However, her final year cohort was fortunate in that a Music Inspector at the time heard about the students' dilemma and concerns and stepped in to offer them training over their Christmas break. In the mid-1960s, NSW and Victoria were the only two Australian states who had an Inspector of Music in the Education Department (Bartle, 1968). As Abby recalls, all the student cohort gratefully took advantage of the offer, and in that 'summer camp', learnt how to program for classes by being shown how to 'unpack' the syllabuses of the time. As Abby said:

She (the Inspector) wrote up a whole program which I wish I still had and wrote out a whole program of work that we could do. It wasn't just an expansion of the syllabus, she would write week by week, like a program, and it was absolutely marvellous, and it really helped. And it was developmental. For example, with the songs from 'Sing Care Away' – you'd start with all little ones, and you'd teach notation with those songs. It was all based on theory in those days.

Up until the point of her first practicum experience, Abby was sure that she wanted to pursue the path of performance, as she had been pursuing that through her Performance Diploma. It was her practicum experience that 'made the lights go on' for Abby about teaching, as she says:

Then – we came to Prac teaching – we had to do Practice teaching – well, I loved it! I went to 'School x' in fourth year and it was a lovely school. I really enjoyed it and thought 'Yes – this is what I'm going to do. The teachers there were all a help, they really were. They'd watch lessons and give

you some feedback, and were very, very helpful. And so, I became inspired that way.

Jeanneret (1993) points to the importance of practicum experience in teacher education, and quotes Turney (1977), who sees it as the 'single most powerful process' in teacher education (p. 53). This statement is borne out in Abby's comments, in which she acknowledges that she gained confidence and 'found her feet' as a result of her practicum experiences. According to Oleson and Hora (2013), a teacher's 'on the job training and experience' in experimenting with different pedagogical techniques in the classroom is one of the most important factors in shaping knowledge and growth and finding out first-hand what works and what does not work (p. 3). This is also borne out in Abby's statements of her early teaching experiences.

In the period under study – 1968 to 1978 – there were three syllabuses for junior music classes – *Syllabus in Music – Form 1* (NSW Department of Education for the Secondary Schools Board), and two syllabuses called *Ordinary Level Course – Forms II, III and IV*, and the *Advanced Level Course – Forms II, III and IV* (NSW Department of Education for the Secondary Schools Board). The latter two syllabuses were originally from 1963, but were revised in 1968, basically remaining the same in structure and content. The Form 1 syllabus had been in implementation since 1963. There was also a *Syllabus in Recorder* (NSW Department of Education for the Secondary Schools Board, 1966). Abby had no recollection of the recorder syllabus ever being used in the schools in which she worked.

Abby reflects that singing was always an important part of music classes, whether core or elective classes, as often there were no instruments other than untuned percussion instruments available in her early years of teaching. In the 1968 music syllabus, under the heading 'Starting-Point', the following description of 'Performance' underlines only one of the many significant changes music teachers have witnessed in our syllabus design over the past 40 years. For

example, Performance was divided into A – Group Performance, and B – Individual Performance. Performance A was described as ‘Participation in school choir, madrigal group, chamber ensemble, school band/orchestra; and class singing and playing of musically significant works’ (p. 4). The foundations for this were stated on page 2 of the syllabus:

A repertoire of at least 12 unison songs, which may include hymns and other songs for Assemblies, as well as folk songs and some songs by classical or contemporary composers. Some pupils will have had experience in round singing as a foundation for part-singing, but this may not have been possible in all First Form classes.

Experience in percussion and/or recorder playing will be an advantage to pupils commencing the elective music course, but this background may not be common to all First Form pupils. (Syllabus in Music, 1968).

The other type of Performance in the 1963/68 Syllabus was Performance B – Individual Performance, described thus: ‘Pupils who have made a special study of an instrument, apart from class tuition within the school programme, may elect to take Individual Performance on that instrument as part of the School Certificate Examination. Singing will not be accepted’ (p. 6). This statement was interesting considering that Vocal – Class Singing – was such an integral part of the Form I syllabus, as well as the group performance component encouraged in the ensuing years.

Abby remembers that the ‘go-to’ book for singing in the classroom was called ‘Sing Care Away’, and the teacher would start with the shorter songs, and then progress to more difficult ones, using them to teach notation. Abby remembers that the classes would often be able to sing two-part harmony songs with ease. In the 1960s and 1970s, all school music storerooms had class sets of these song books. ‘Sing Care Away’ contained such gems as *The Ash Grove*, *Fairest Isle* (Purcell), *Art Thou Troubled* (Handel), and students would happily sing along in large class size groups. In her classroom, Abby made use of both the Kodály and Orff Methods to

make musical points and to reinforce notation and pitch. She had not been specifically taught these methods in her training, but had taken advantage of in-service courses which were on offer to music teachers in the 1960s and 1970s:

Kodály and Orff – No special training, no, no – but if there were inservice courses I would go along – like Deanna Hoermann for Kodály, and Richard Gill who had been to Salzberg to train.

Many of the requirements that guided Abby’s classroom practice stemmed from the Wyndham Report of 1957. This Report heralded a raft of changes to school-based education in NSW. The changes related to curriculum, examinations, transition of primary students to secondary school, and the provision of two new external examinations for the two stages of school leavers – the Fourth Year School Certificate Examination, and for students wishing to complete another two years of study, the Higher School Certificate Examination, replacing the ‘Leaving Certificate’ (Wyndham Report, 1957, p. 72). Abby recalls the introduction of the *Wyndham Scheme* in the 1960s:

The introduction of the Wyndham Report in 1962 had a huge effect on the Syllabus and the way in which music was taught. It then became Core and Elective music classes.

Students now were to remain at school beyond Third Year, which had been the ‘Intermediate Certificate’ Year, and were to complete a fourth year of study which culminated in a new award, called the ‘School Certificate’, after the completion of an external examination. They then had the option of another two years of schooling for a new award called the Higher School Certificate (HSC). These changes affected the way music was offered in schools, with Core music classes existing for First to Fourth Form, and Elective music classes being offered to Forms II, III and IV.

In her first school, a state secondary school in a country town, Abby had to convince the Principal, who was sceptical about music’s inclusion in his school’s curriculum, that elective music was a good thing for the students and the school.

The difficulty there was the Principal – he wasn't confident that elective music was a good thing. Who was going to do the course and would there be enough children wanting to do the course, and it was a real battle. I was there for two years, and it was a battle. He wouldn't abide the thought of it the first year. But I got a group of kids together who really wanted to do it, and so by the second year I was there, he agreed to having it.

The Principal's fear of the subject being introduced as an elective subject was a common fear of 'headmasters' of the time (Bartle, 1968), who has chronicled comments by headmasters such as 'The music teacher must be able to control his class'

'I have taken the Form III youngsters off music, because the teacher's control is so poor. The subject has deteriorated in the eyes of the children'

'Music will not be successful unless it is taken by a competent teacher'

In this time period, there were not many specialist music graduates in schools, and music was often taught by non-music trained teachers. However, the Principal had underestimated Abby's determination and her qualification.

Abby persisted and by the second year managed to implement a course with a group of students who really wanted to do elective music. These syllabuses, the *Ordinary Level Course* and the *Advanced Level Course*, were designed to cater for students who not only had access to classroom music, but 'as well as for those who are studying music privately' (p. 1). There were no 'Aims' articulated in these syllabuses as such, but content was prescribed and set out under each Form (Forms II – IV) as sequenced learning. The syllabus was designed to build on the content from the 1963 Form 1 Syllabus, with the Syllabus stating that 'by the end of First Form, pupils should have acquired the following foundations for the elective music course commencing in Second Form' (p. 2). The foundations (called 'sections' in both the Ordinary Level Course and the Advanced Level Course) were:

- I. Performance – Vocal only and direction was – 'Attention should be given to the works of composers studied in Section III. Songs in at least

*3 parts other than rounds and canons should be introduced.'*

- II. Music Reading and Writing, linked to time, pitch, tonality, terminology and harmony and also featured sight-reading; III. Listening, and IV. Musical Vocabulary.

The syllabus recommended that these sections 'be integrated in the course presented' (1963, p. 1). Abby remembers that her lessons at this time were mostly based on theory:

In terms of Listening, it was mainly listening to works from an analytical point of view. You'd talk about the structure, basically the structure and the instruments. But it certainly wasn't divided into melody and duration and that sort of thing. I mean you'd notice dynamics, obviously, but it was basically the structure, key changes, and keys, concentrating on the theory side.

This syllabus proved to have a lasting influence on Abby's teaching style, as shown in her words:

Even in a school, in the late '80s, I would still teach cadences and four-part harmony, and the kids were okay with that, it sort of pinned them down.

## A radical new syllabus – the 1980s and Senior Music

In 1978 a new syllabus called *Music Syllabus Years 11 and 12 New 2 Unit A* (New South Wales Department of Education for the Board of Senior School Studies), was designed as an alternative course for students who had not necessarily learned music before. The introduction of the new syllabus forged a new learning and teaching pathway for students and teachers, emphasising the inclusion for the first time of students who were more interested in popular music forms, and who did not necessarily have a previous music reading background (Carroll, 2019). This change in direction reinforced that the music young people listen to does not keep still – it keeps moving forward (Kratus, 2007). Teachers now had to adjust to thinking not only about the importance of the music of the past, but the importance of engaging students with the music they choose to listen to. The new syllabus augmented the syllabus already in place for Senior Music students – the *Music*

*Syllabus and Notes on the Syllabus – Year 11 and Year 12, 3 Unit Course and 2 Unit Course* (1980). The two courses within this traditional syllabus still focused on students' background theoretical knowledge and experience as performers and were to be regarded as a continuation of the course for Years 8 – 10. The work was set out under three main headings: I. Performance II. Music Reading and Writing and III. Listening. It was not until 1984 that this 'traditional syllabus' was revised to have the same 'activity areas' as the new *2 Unit A Course* – I. Performance, II. Composition, III. Musicology and IV. Aural Perception.

Teachers quickly deduced that methods previously used for teaching art music would not be suitable for the teaching of popular music (Dunbar-Hall & Wemyss, 2000). When asked about the effect on her teaching practice with the introduction in 1978 of this new Syllabus for Senior students (to be examined for the first time in 1979), Abby acknowledged that it was a huge step forward for both the students and the teachers:

That was a huge thing – the inexperienced kids could take it up. Initially it was intended for kids who hadn't done any outside of school music, and so you'd get kids who hadn't done much singing and they'd start to sing as their performance. Unfortunately, it has changed these days because you get really good kids who choose that course, which has made it difficult for those kids who genuinely have not had a chance to learn music before they reach this point of schooling. I do think the course is very valuable, I think it's a great course, because they can specialise in their strength, and I think that's a great thing.

The new 2 Unit A syllabus stated in the Preamble:

The present structure of Music courses in the senior school presupposes a firm foundation of musical literacy and does not allow for a later development of interest in or aptitude for music. Experience has shown that such late development is not uncommon'. It went on to say 'The traditional requirements of the present courses limit their content to the extent that music in the senior years could be regarded as elitist and therefore exclusive of the great majority at a stage when it could be argued they are in a position to derive the greatest benefit. (p. 1)

Students suddenly had access to a subject they may have instinctively loved but had not previously been able to access without a traditional music reading and playing background. Those students without a music theory background usually dropped the subject after Year 10. With the introduction of the new 2 Unit A Syllabus, (subsequently renamed in 1982 *2 Unit 1*, then in 1994 *Music Course 1*, then 1999 *Music I* as it remains to the current day), students could participate in music making with groups of their peers who previously had not had formal music training (private instrumental lessons or theory lessons) and could choose their own topics which included a wide range of possibilities for studying and performing popular music.

In this first syllabus iteration of 1978, students were required to study a maximum of five 'Units of Work' (five out of a choice of 30 possible topics) for study over two years. The length of the course was described as four hours of school study per week in Years 11 and 12. Students could choose to specialise in areas that suited their strengths. For example: Performance Major, Composition Major, or Musicology Major. There were two areas of examination – Practical and Aural. The examination format was described as: 1. Practical and Viva Voce (approximately 30 minutes maximum) and 2. Group Aural Test – Written responses (2-hour duration). In the Practical and Viva Voce mode – Performance Major:

- a) candidates performed four pieces of reasonably extended duration, one of which could be an ensemble (for 2–8 participants)
  - b) sight reading on the instrument or voice presented OR a viva voce on the interpretative and stylistic approach taken in one performance piece.
- Composition Major:
- a) candidates performed two pieces as soloist or member of a group;
  - b) two of candidate's compositions or arrangements to be performed by either soloist or ensemble.
  - c) viva voce on the compositions presented.

Musicological Major:

a) two pieces performed as either a soloist or member of a group

b) Viva Voce on one unit selected. Candidate submits an Outline Summary of one page on which examination questions are based.

By way of example of its 'new' accessibility, the Written Paper – the Listening component – was now labelled an 'Aural' test that needed no theoretical knowledge – no harmony or melody writing in an exam situation as previous syllabuses had demanded. Students answered a question in prose form as they listened to musical stimulus, initially made up of eight different excerpts of music. They were expected to respond to each piece by describing what was heard in terms of the different 'elements' of music (as the 'concepts' of music were called in 1980) – Tone Colour, Melody, Rhythm, Form, Harmony. The examination ran for approximately two hours, so was quite a challenge for powers of sustained concentration. By 1982, the number of excerpts had been reduced to 6, and as of the latest syllabus iteration (in 2009), consists of four listening excerpts each with a different question in a one-hour Aural Examination.

Along with the Aural Examination, the other component that was externally examined was a choice of specialisation in the areas of Performance, Composition, or Musicology. Each of these 'areas of activity', as they were then called, had to be done in a choice of various combinations, depending on the students' strengths and interests. For example:

A. One area to be chosen as a Major activity, activities in the two remaining areas being Minor studies, OR

B. Two of these areas as a Combined Major activity, each receiving equal emphasis, the one remaining area being undertaken as a Minor study. (p. 2)

For example:

1. Performance Major (activities in Composition and Musicology being Minor studies), OR

2. Composition Major (activities in Performance and Musicology being Minor studies) (p. 2)

Abby acknowledged that the teaching of Composition to non-musicians presented a challenge and stated:

Composition – Well you had to start in Year 11 with whatever the topics are that they're studying and try and write some little pieces – like if they're doing the Classical Period, everyone would try and write a composition of a little classical sonata or something. It was hard to teach it to all kids, as really to be a composer you have to have some ability. It's not easy to teach composition. I'd always say with the kids doing it, just start with something simple and diatonic that they were comfortable with, and then add, you know, your touches later on.

Teaching composition to students with no background in traditional music notational skills proved a challenge for teachers, as evidenced by Abby's comments above, as there was little guidance for teachers apart from some information regarding 'musical effectiveness' which came to schools via a memorandum in February 1988:

*'In the Years 11 – 12 Music courses, 2 Unit 1 and 2/3 Unit Related, all compositions and arrangements are assessed according to their musical effectiveness; they are expected to display imagination, originality, stylistic awareness, technical competence and familiarity with the capabilities of the chosen resources' (5/88).*

The document went on to address 'particular problems' around arrangements and pieces for electronic instruments, preparation of the electronic score, and the improvisatory elements in Composition Memorandum No. 5/88 (Board of Secondary Education). It was not until 1999 when this course became known by the name it retains to the present day, *'Music 1 Stage 6 Syllabus'*, that the syllabus document very clearly outlined the types of 'Learning Experiences' that were possible for students to develop their compositional skills. These included *'such activities as providing melodic and non-melodic ostinato patterns to songs, adding a bass line to a song, improvising, creating variations on existing melodies or rhythms'* (p. 20). Any guidance was overdue, but once technology became available in classrooms, via computer access and innovative software, the challenges of notating and

preserving musical ideas, transferring them from the imagination to external notations (Kaschub & Smith, 2013) became a viable reality for both teachers and students.

The structure of the course underwent various changes in the rewriting over the following years (1983, 1994, 1999 and 2009), all of which improved its accessibility. But for now, this syllabus had changed the landscape of secondary music forever. The new syllabus was a challenge initially for teachers who had come from a traditional learning background, but as can be seen from Abby's reaction, she embraced that challenge and ran with it. The advantage for teachers was the growing number of students in elective music, a phenomenon that increased the popularity of music within high schools and meant music teacher numbers in schools increased to accommodate this rise in elective numbers. Most secondary schools in NSW experienced a sudden rise in student numbers electing to take music for the HSC. See the chart below showing the gradual rise in numbers from 1979, 1980, 1985 and 1988, – the numbers of students had grown from 915 in 1979 to 3,120 in 1988 – a staggering jump of 2,205 students taking up the subject (Statistics Archive, NESAs). These numbers include the candidature of each of the music courses offered, as well as the Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB) Course which could be done for the HSC.

Figure 1 shows the increase in numbers taking the subject music for the HSC over a ten year period –

the Music Board courses encapsulate 2 Unit, 3 Unit and 2 Unit A music (which became 2 Unit Course 1 in 1983) up to 1988. It was only from 1991 onwards that Music became categorized by Individual Courses, and in that year Music Course 1 had a candidature of 2,034. By the end of that century the 1999 Music Course 1 numbers had reached 3,414. No further proof was needed that the course was a success with students and teachers had shown their willingness to adapt and move with the times.

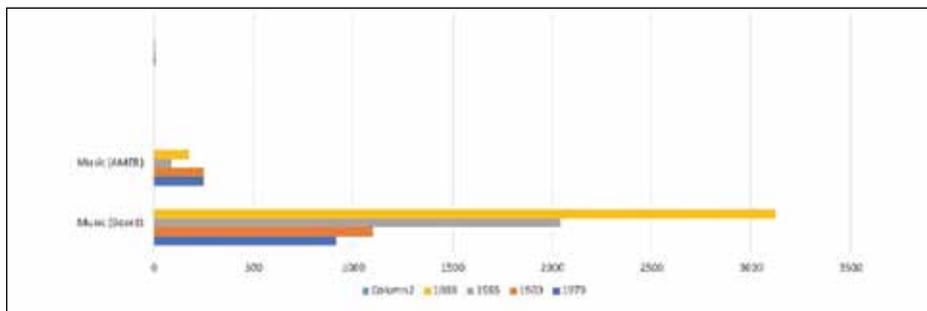
## Conclusion

Common research findings have shown that teachers teach the way they were taught (Kratus, 2007; Oleson & Hora, 2014). This case study allows us to see firsthand one person's view of the changes to syllabuses as they occurred, and to see how this person dealt with the challenges presented through syllabus change. Abby demonstrated her resourcefulness and adaptability in her willingness to accept change, learn and implement new ideas and techniques, not always 'teaching the way she was taught'. Abby has acknowledged that her teaching style and practice altered over the years because of the impetus of syllabus changes:

You have to teach what's in the syllabus – for example the way we used to teach Listening had to change once the Concepts of Music became a focus in our NSW syllabuses. Once upon a time you would be more analytical, but then you had to change and teach to the concepts.

There will always be new challenges for teachers

**Figure 1: HSC Music statistics, 1979-88.**



because the field of education is an ever changing one as new ideas and new technologies come into play, and pedagogical practices need to be considered and re-evaluated when new syllabus documents are introduced. With the completion of the larger research study, the comparison of all twenty of the participants will give a broader picture and provide differing perspectives to the many changes music teachers have experienced in NSW syllabuses over the 40-year period. Before valuable insights, knowledge and pedagogical experience of the EMTs are lost the recording of their first-hand experiences will be of historical interest. The research stands to provide an important history of our music classrooms of this time, ensuring that this knowledge does not disappear, perhaps providing future pathways for pre-service teachers to explore.

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