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## “Music Is Special”: Specialist Music Teachers Navigating Professional Identity within a Process of Arts Curriculum Reform

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### Abstract

Processes of curriculum reform are often a period of upheaval for teachers and schools. As values and priorities change and new knowledge and skills are required, teachers find themselves occupying new positions upon the school landscape. In the case of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts, some of the concerns emerging from recent reforms include insufficient class time to cover the new content, inadequate support and resources for planning, and challenges stemming from five distinct arts subjects being grouped into a single curriculum, without a shared experience as “the arts”. This paper explores the impacts of this particular curriculum reform on three music teachers’ work, specifically the ways in which they position themselves and their work as music teachers in relation to the arts curriculum. Their stories highlight

the importance of professional networks and relationships in developing new curriculum knowledge, and point to possibilities for developing shared understandings as teachers of the arts.

## **Introduction**

The Australian Curriculum: The Arts (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2018) represents a significant commitment to the value of the arts as part of the educational experience of Australian school students. However, as Stinson and Saunders (2016) identify, the process of writing the curriculum and gaining subsequent government approvals was highly politicized and tumultuous. Likewise, the current implementation phase poses new challenges for teachers and schools as they navigate the requirements of the new curriculum and adjust to the changes that need to occur in practice. This paper explores the impacts of this particular curriculum reform process on three music teachers' work. It begins by describing the local context in which the research was undertaken and the methodological underpinnings. Three narrative vignettes follow, which present issues raised by the teacher participants as salient aspects of their experience of the curriculum reform. The paper concludes by identifying a number of areas for further exploration.

## **Background**

### ***Curriculum, Reform, Identity and Teachers' Work***

This research is underpinned by two theoretical premises: first, that teachers' professional knowledge is socially constituted, existing as part of a complex professional landscape; and second, that teachers' professional identities are interwoven with curriculum and reform. This work follows in the tradition of narrative inquirers Jean Clandinin, Michael Connelly and colleagues, and curriculum scholar Cheryl Craig, as well as the theorists that informed their work, including John Dewey, Jerome Bruner and Joseph Schwab.

### ***The Nature of Teachers' Professional Knowledge***

What teachers know is embodied, practical and reflexive, inherent in the multitude of in-the-moment decisions teachers make in their everyday work. Much of Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) early work was focused on how teachers' personal practical knowledge was held and expressed. Drawing on Dewey's (1938) understanding of experience and Bruner's (1986) notions of narrative knowing, their work led to the development of a language to describe teachers' personal practical knowledge: using imagery, metaphor, stories, rhythms and cycles (Clandinin et al, 2006, p. 5). In essence, teachers' knowledge is narrative in form (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990); teachers make sense of their experience through telling stories. This understanding of teachers' knowledge underpinned the approach to the interviews in this

study. Further, Clandinin and Connelly (1995) put forward the concept of a professional knowledge landscape as a way to make sense of the contextual, temporal, social and relational interconnections and dependencies of teachers' professional knowledge. The relationships between people, places and knowledge on the landscape impacts on teachers' knowledge and how they make decisions about their practice.

### *Identity Interwoven with Curriculum*

As Rosiek and Clandinin (2016) point out, the word curriculum is often used to signify the prescribed course of study, but this mandated curriculum is only the starting point for the highly complex work that teachers do in their classrooms. Curriculum is also planned, enacted, assessed, learned, lived, hidden, nullified (by omission) and experienced (p. 293). In its fullest sense, curriculum involves "an expression of teachers', children's, and families' lives as they [meet] in classrooms, sometimes schools, around subject matter and shaped by the cultural, social, institutional, and linguistic narratives that structure milieu" (Huber, Murphy and Clandinin, 2011, p. 7). Importantly, these authors see this "curriculum making" work that teachers undertake as interwoven with identity making. This relationship between teachers' work and their professional identity is the focus of the narratives presented in this paper.

Cheryl Craig (2009) builds on this work, looking specifically at the impact of "handed down" curriculum reforms, where decisions are made by distant politicians and bureaucrats. Following Schwab (1983), Craig recognises the central role of teachers in curriculum reform processes, as active agents rather than simply as conduits in the process of change (p. 599). Curriculum reforms have a significant impact on the work that teachers do, as they are often left on their own to figure out what the enactment of policy means for classroom practice and what needs to change (Cross & Hong, 2009). Those who design education policies do not always think about the consequences for those who are responsible for and directly affected by the implementation; namely, teachers and students (Dwyer, Willis & Call, 2020). Curriculum reforms provide opportunities to reconsider what teacher professionalism entails, potentially unsettling and reconfiguring surrounding professional knowledge and teacher expertise (Gerrard & Farrell, 2014).

Importantly, curriculum reforms have the potential to change the fundamental nature of teachers' work, and thus, may affect their professional identity. As Cross and Hong (2009) identify, teachers' identity shapes their choices of action and judgment, and is continually formed and reformed in response to external factors such as curriculum. In her description of a research project that has followed a school's journey with curriculum reform over 12 years, Craig (2012) highlights three significant ideas, "knowledge associated with the profession, respect accorded the profession or professional, and relationships with and among

professionals.” (p. 99) In particular, teachers’ sense of autonomy and agency and their relationships with others on the school landscape had a significant influence on the teachers’ professional identity and their wellbeing. These ideas can be seen in the way the teachers in this study experienced the move towards implementing the Australian Curriculum: The Arts in their schools.

### **Methodology and Methods**

The research reported in this paper adopts a narrative approach, where teachers’ lived experience of the curriculum reform, and the stories they tell about that experience, is the basis of the research evidence (Craig, 2003; 2007; Dwyer & emerald, 2017). While the research design does not follow the longitudinal approach of the Narrative Inquiries of Clandinin and colleagues, Craig and others, it maintains a number of features. The research positions the teacher participants’ professional knowledge as part of a unique landscape, connected to contexts and relationally dependent. The teachers used imagery and stories to communicate their experiences. The participants’ responses to the interview questions were “re-storied” for the purposes of (re)presentation, through process of narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995).

This narrative research incorporated interviews conducted with arts teachers in primary schools, focusing on their experiences of a recent curriculum reform. The interview questions focused on what they enjoy about teaching and what they feel is important for students to learn, and how the new curriculum had changed what they teach and their students’ experience of the arts. Each participant was interviewed once, with the interview lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded, with relevant sections selectively transcribed.

The narratives of the three participants selected for this paper have a number of features in common. All three are demographically similar: women, aged 40-55, highly experienced music teachers, in secure positions in public schools. Because of the length of their teaching careers (between 20 and 30 years), they have experienced curriculum reforms at least three times previously, and, in theory, should all be well-positioned to navigate a changing professional landscape. Interviews with each of these three participants were completed within a small window of time – in the space of less than a month. This became important as a number of significant events (ie. the release of new information that altered teachers’ expectations, a large-scale industrial issue resulting in intervention from the teachers’ union) had such an influence on the interviews conducted later that the focus of the study shifted. There are, of course, limitations on what can be learned from a single interview: the stories are intended to “resonate” (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; 2012) with the stories of others, rather than to generalise.

Summary portraits were developed as a way of drawing out the key messages of what was important to each of the participants. The interview audio was listened to repeatedly, as part of an initial coding process (Charmaz and Belgrave, 2012), to identify the most pertinent aspects of the interview dialogue and select sections for transcription. As they were transcribed, key messages that seemed to encapsulate the participants' experiences about the reform process were distilled. These summaries were then presented to the participants for comment, and were used as a frame for developing the narratives presented in this paper. These stories are but glimpses of these teachers' work and lives, told at a particular point in time, and shaped by both the context of the interview and their relationship with me in my multiple roles as researcher, acquaintance, colleague and as an advocate for the profession.

### Context

#### *The Australian Curriculum: The Arts*

Despite widespread agreement that education in the arts is valuable for students (e.g. Barton & Ewing 2017), it is often relegated to the periphery of school curricula (Barton, Baguley & MacDonald, 2013; Wright & Leong, 2017; Yu, 2013). While a full discussion of the reasons behind this is beyond the scope of this paper, the political focus on academic achievement, narrowly measured through test scores, shapes the curriculum landscape in important ways. Arts (including Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts) as a collective has held a place in the curriculum of Australian schools since the 1999 Adelaide Declaration (Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 1999), where The Arts was identified as one of eight key learning areas to be studied by all children from P/F/K-Year 10 (approximately ages 5-15). This was seen as a significant step towards ensuring that arts education had an official place in curricula of Australian schools. When the Australian Curriculum was developed, beginning in 2008, it followed the neo-liberal trend towards a standardized curriculum, while at the same providing an opportunity for advocates of arts education to – successfully – lobby federal politicians to ensure that the arts were included (Gattenhof, 2009).

The content of the curriculum is organized around the interrelated strands of Making and Responding (ACARA, 2018), and is focused on levels of skills and understanding to be demonstrated at particular stages of their schooling (Stinson & Saunders, 2016). However, while the arts is positioned as a single learning area, it “draws together related but distinct art forms” (ACARA, 2018). This grouping of five disciplines, each with their own unique knowledges, skills and practices, has been a source of contention. In their review of the Australian Curriculum, Donnelly and Wiltshire (2014) argued that the curriculum had been “cobbled together” (p. 218) and that “there appear to be no other countries that have combined these five art forms into one curriculum.” (p. 212) While this may be the case, there are a

number of examples of curricula that include Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts, including New Zealand, Scotland, as well as British Columbia and Ontario in Canada. All of these curricula follow a similar conceptual structure to the Australian Curriculum, making connections between the art forms and using common language.

While the bringing together of five arts subjects has provided an opportunity to stake a claim that might not have been possible for individual subjects, it has not been without problems for arts educators. As Stinson (2017) puts forward, “There can be no true alliance until all arts subjects stand on the same footing... until the ongoing privileging of music and visual arts, at the expense of other artforms, is arrested” (p. 554). The tension Stinson describes is strongly felt in Queensland, the state in which this research took place. Unlike the other Arts subjects in the Australian Curriculum, and unlike in other Australian states, music has long had a significant and established presence in State (public) schools (Ballantyne & Lebler, 2009), primarily because of a particular set of circumstances in the 1970s and 80s, where key advocates with powerful political connections successfully lobbied for music education. Primary music specialist teachers are part of most schools, with students receiving 30-60 minutes a week of general music (usually called “classroom music”), where students sing, play, listen, analyse, read, write and compose, although the shape and balance of these has varied over time. Classroom music teachers are typically itinerant, usually working in 2-3 schools, although larger urban schools may have enough students to warrant a full-time classroom music teacher. In addition, most State schools have an extra-curricular instrumental music program operating in parallel to the classroom music program, offering low-cost lessons on a string or concert band instrument, with an instrument provided by the school for the first year.

The longevity of these programs, which have been sustained through periods of budget-cuts to education, means that music in Queensland schools has enjoyed a position of relative privilege over other arts. The place of music is somewhat protected, as the provision of a classroom music teacher is connected to release (or non-contact) time for classroom teachers, enshrined in workplace agreements (see Queensland Teachers Union [QTU], 2018). Music has been part of an “arts” curriculum in Queensland since 2002 (The State of Queensland, 2002), but the implementation of other arts subjects in the primary years was largely ad hoc and rarely monitored, with limited opportunities for teacher professional development and curriculum development.

The status of music as different or separated from the other arts can be seen to create tensions as the Australian Curriculum: The Arts moves towards implementation. While State schools are still required to have a specialist music teacher (where one is available), the curriculum time allocation is 2 hours for all five arts combined, which has prompted some schools to

reduce the hours for music to make way for other arts, and/or ask classroom music teachers to include more of the arts in their program. Such moves have been met with resistance, and one of the aims of the broader research project of which this paper is a part, was to explore the contributing factors and the lasting impacts of the curriculum reform process.

It is also crucial to identify my place within this professional landscape. I went to school in Queensland in the 1980s, and participated in the classroom music and instrumental music programs under discussion. I began teaching in 2003, as a secondary music teacher before making the move to primary classroom music where I worked for a number of years before transitioning to teacher education. In many respects, the interview participants are my peers, and I have an intimate understanding of their work. For the 8 years prior to these interviews, I worked with preservice music teachers, and thus know several hundred beginning music teachers who move in these teachers' professional circles, who have been mentored by people like Joan, Sue and Liz. I also am involved in a professional association for music teachers, and I am involved in decisions about professional development events, including events in 2014 and 2015 that focused on the Australian Curriculum. My entanglements shape the interactions with these participants, but also bring shared understandings.

## Findings

### *The New Curriculum for Joan: Business as Usual*

Joan has been teaching for 30 years as a specialist music teacher. We've crossed paths before but have never been introduced. She currently works in two schools – one large urban school, and one smaller, more isolated school. The attitude taken by each school, towards music and the arts, varies considerably. Joan describes this as largely due to the attitudes of the two principals: one who values music and values her as a professional; and one who does not. I ask Joan about the approach that each of the schools is taking towards the implementation of the curriculum,

At both schools, in terms of the arts, I can honestly say, I have no idea... I really don't know... I get the importance of the arts, but I do think that music has a unique offering in terms of child development and brain development.

Joan's perspective on music within the arts is common among specialist teachers. It's rare to find specialist teachers with a background in more than one arts discipline, and this experience in the discipline is a powerful shaping force of beliefs about pedagogical practice (Regelski, 2012; Richardson, 1996). Joan resists the label of Arts Teacher—she's a Music Teacher,

But it's an ongoing fight to convince the powers that be, in reality... I get that

principals are under pressure because they're thinking "I've got to fit five arts into two hours a week". Everyone seems to be saying the same thing—the curriculum is too crowded—but what's happening is that people are paying the highest price in the arts. It's impossible to fit it in.

For me, musically, I've really been looking at the Australian Curriculum since the draft document came out. I think some music teachers would look at the Australian Curriculum and find it quite frightening... but [it] hasn't changed much of what I do.

As Joan talks to me, she refers to a large binder, overflowing with policies, emails, curriculum documents, covered with carefully handwritten notes. Joan takes it upon herself to keep up to date with the latest developments in the curriculum landscape,

I've been teaching a long time and I've been through this before. When something new comes out, I have a look through and think "actually, you know what? This is pretty much what I'm doing." I don't have to worry about it too much... I have a rule of three. I don't do anything new until a principal's asked me for the third time "have I done it?" I guess the cynic in me says "I wonder how long I can hold off, and not worry too much about this" before it gets changed. To me, this is just a bit like reinventing the wheel.

Although Joan herself describes her approach as somewhat cynical, it's certainly not motivated by apathy. She regularly attends professional development courses, and reads extensively. She takes her professional learning seriously, and is able to audit her current practice against any new curriculum requirements, deciding what needs to change and what can remain. While her cynicism may be driven by a sense of "curriculum fatigue", her experience in working with a number of different documents over three decades has positioned her well to adapt and continue on her way.

### ***The New Curriculum for Sue: A Crisis of Confidence***

Sue has also been teaching for 30 years, and has been in her current school for the past 10 years. Music has always been a part of the school, and Sue has developed a thriving choral program in addition to her work in the music classroom. Sue spends quite a bit of time talking to me about the professional development that she sees her school colleagues undertaking,

My school has gone down a path of collegial planning and specialists are not included. Classroom teachers are getting time off and loads of coaching and [personal development], and the specialist teachers are getting nothing. So, there's



committees and teams that work before school, that I can't be in because I have rehearsals. [The teachers having coaching] are coming out of classroom teaching time—every 2 weeks they're off for a whole block (around 2 hours), a whole group of them. And they have a coach and they have their goals, and they're observed teaching and they've been given feedback. If I was to come off at the same time every 2 weeks for a term, those classes would not receive specialist music education. I've also said no I don't want to do that because my students don't get taught.

Sue's words reflect a tension between wanting to be a part of a team, but not at the expense of her time with the students. She sees the collegial planning teams in which other teachers engage, and laments that she doesn't have the opportunity to participate in something similar within her school community. She also feels a need for a team of music teacher colleagues, where there are opportunities to unpack the curriculum and develop understandings collaboratively,

Gosh, if I had some planning time with other music teachers, it would have been done by now. It's a matter of finding time. Doing things by yourself takes twice as long, because you're second-guessing yourself rather than having discussions with other people. I'd love to be locked away in a room for a week with somebody else and write a program. I want my program to be "same-ish"—to be measurable against others'.

Sue's desire for external validation or comparability is perhaps influenced by the school's data-driven approach to accountable decision-making,

[My progress towards implementing the curriculum] really has come to a crashing halt because I want to talk to other people. I don't think that however many hundred music teachers there are in Queensland... why should we all be sitting at home alone on weekends writing our own program? I've looked at the [video] work samples on the Australian Curriculum website and... it didn't make me feel any better. I don't see that what they were showing us clearly identified an A and a C [achievement standard], in the tiny little bits that were done. Again, I start questioning all my training: "what should I be focusing on?" I didn't feel the samples were quality work even at the A level, let alone at the C level, so "are my standards too high? Am I just aiming at the completely wrong direction?" It's actually thrown up more questions and more self-doubt, killed my confidence even more. I'm even more lost at where to start.

Unlike Joan, Sue's experience of beginning to familiarize herself with the new curriculum has been shaped by a lack of confidence in her own knowledge and skills as a teacher. Despite having the same access to opportunities for professional development, and considerable professional knowledge, the factors that would allow Sue to trust her judgements as a teacher are not in place. Her words highlight the importance of support in developing curriculum ideas, and the negative impact of isolation, which is exacerbated for specialist teachers who are often the only teacher of their curriculum area (Davidson & Dwyer, 2014).

After I've turned my recording device off we talk for a while longer, about possibilities for professional networking that might help Sue to feel more connected. It's clear to me, even though I've only met her today, that despite her obvious knowledge, experience and passion for music teaching, Sue is searching for support.

### ***The New Curriculum for Liz: Broadening Perspectives***

Liz has been teaching for 20 years, and has been in her current school, on and off, for 14 of those (incorporating periods of parental leave, and a secondment in curriculum development). We've met many times before and have significant overlap in our professional networks. I ask Liz what she enjoys about teaching,

I love planning... I love to hone what I've been doing. And I keep thinking "I've been teaching for a lot of years now, surely I can use last year's lesson plans sometime?" but they're never quite what I want. But I enjoy that process. I also love it when I have a chance to collaborate with others, which doesn't happen at school, but I find other ways to do that. I've got a few people that we talk about our planning together. Sometimes it just happens ad hoc – a quick phone call about a specific thing. And also with different people at networking and [professional development] as well.

Liz's informal network of teachers, planning collaboratively, reminds me of what Sue seems to want, to join her in unpacking the curriculum. Liz's investment in developing her professional networks could be seen as a strategy for countering the risks of professional isolation.

Liz is one of a team of around 15 arts teachers who were seconded to the State Department of Education to develop a suite of resources to assist teachers in implementing the arts curriculum. These resources have already been available for several years for English, mathematics and science, and the arts resources are eagerly awaited. Many teachers see this investment into developing the resources as a signal that the curriculum is valued, that its implementation is to be taken seriously. I ask Liz about how this experience of moving out of

the classroom and into a curriculum development role has changed things for her,

I think firstly it gave me time to reflect, which you don't often get in the classroom. And to have professional conversations with other people who weren't always like-minded, but were all into the arts, so I guess [it gave me a chance to] understand some different perspectives. Because [in the past] all my networking has been with music teachers, or general classroom teachers, not other arts teachers.

The broadening of perspectives that Liz describes here is a result of a unique opportunity, to engage with both the curriculum itself and with other arts educators in developing and disseminating professional knowledge. Being a part of an "Arts" team is new for the majority of primary music specialist teachers, and engaging with the teachers of other arts subjects provided a prompt for Liz to think differently,

I think we have to be careful as arts educators not to demean the other arts in trying to push our own art form. Although having said that, I will fight for my time over every other subject. There are other people who can fight for other subjects. I don't want to do music at the expense of other subjects, but I don't want them to come on board at the expense of me either. Even though, through all of those discussions [with other arts educators], I still think music is a little bit different

While Liz's experience working as part of an arts team has clearly shaped her views about the arts, the need to fight to protect music is still at the forefront. This is a sign of the pressures that Joan alludes to, where music (and the arts) are at risk of being squeezed out unless they are advocated for. The introduction of other arts at the expense of music, as Liz suggests she will fight against, creates a significant tension within the arts, with the potential to disrupt successful implementation.

### **Discussion**

A number of resonances (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; 2012) emerged through the interviews: the connection between positive professional relationships and the teachers' professional identities, and the tensions that emerge for music teachers' professional identities when positioned within the arts. These resonances will be contextualised alongside the theoretical ideas presented earlier in this paper, specifically the relational nature of teachers' knowledge and identities and the interconnections between identity and curriculum.

#### ***Relationships Matter***

The most significant thread running through each of these narratives is the importance of

professional relationships, both with colleagues who have specialist knowledge of the discipline, and with school leaders as a form of support for professional practice. As Clandinin and Connelly (1995) put forward, teachers' knowledge exists on a complex landscape, and the relationships with others have a significant impact on teachers' identities. Music specialist teachers in this primary schools, in this context, are almost always the only music specialist teacher in their school. This exacerbates feelings of isolation already experienced by teachers due to the "egg-crate-like" nature of classrooms (Lortie, 1975; Krueger, 1999).

The stories of these three teachers point to the importance of professional networks and professional conversations in navigating curriculum reforms, to build and maintain confidence, as well as to generate shared professional knowledge. The teachers in this study did so to varying degrees: from Liz who has well-established networks that she can readily call on, Joan who has developed confidence through engaging in professional development opportunities and her professional reading, to Sue who feels isolated and uncertain. The importance of alleviating teachers' professional isolation by building relationships with colleagues and mentors has been explored thoroughly in the literature (Hargreaves, 2001; Lieberman & Mace, 2010; Lortie, 1975). However, what appears to be missing for some of these teachers is the structures, systems and processes that would facilitate the development of professional networks. All of these teachers are in a metropolitan area where professional development is readily available, as well as online networks active through social media. Practical strategies for disseminating information and fostering connections to support teachers in developing their curriculum knowledge is still an area that warrants further attention.

Another important aspect of the three teachers' professional relationships was in their relationships with their school leaders. Joan described both positive and negative relationships, and tied those experiences with the school leader's respect for music as a part of students' education. Sue desperately wanted to feel valued – as a professional, not just for the performances that she produces – by her school leaders, and to be offered the same opportunities as other teachers to develop and grow. Liz had a primarily positive relationship with her school leaders, working with the leadership team, who value her professional expertise in the arts curriculum. The way the teachers talked about their interactions with their school leaders seemed to correlate loosely with their health and wellbeing, particularly around their professional identity. This aligns with Craig's (2003; 2007; 2012) work with teachers around professional identity and curriculum reform: when school leaders respect their teachers' professional knowledge and allow them autonomy and agency, the school's culture is more likely to be positive.

***Tensions Within and Between the Arts***

As described earlier in this paper, historically, music in Queensland has been treated differently to other arts subjects, and this has potential to exacerbate feelings of isolation within the community of arts educators. There are a number of stories in the literature that highlight the impact that arts educators can have on advocacy efforts when they work together (Gattenhof, 2009), but also the tensions that are manifested when one or more of the arts are privileged over others (Stinson, 2017). None of the teachers interviewed in this study identified strongly with being a teacher of the arts; they all self-identified as music teachers. Being a music teacher was an important part of their professional identity; it shaped who they are as teachers. This disjuncture between their identity as music teachers and the curriculum of The Arts limited the ways in which they engaged in discussions about curriculum reform in their schools, as they teach only one fifth of a learning area.

Of the three teachers in this study, Liz considered herself to have a stake in implementing the full Arts curriculum, and it was her experience of working in a multi-arts team of curriculum writers that contributed to her taking a leadership responsibility for implementation of the arts curriculum in her school. Her relationships with other arts educators appeared to have a positive impact on her identity, drawing attention to the commonalities in the work of arts educators. For Joan, on the other hand, the arts curriculum was positioned as a threat to her music program, her job, and to her identity as a music teacher.

This would appear to suggest that building relationships with arts educators in other disciplines may have a positive impact on the implementation of the arts curriculum. There is a need to explore the ways in which professional conversations and networks across the arts subjects might assist in building relationships between arts teachers, supporting the development of professional identities that facilitate the successful implementation of the arts curriculum. The tensions between music teachers and other arts teachers thus have the potential to fracture and divide, threatening the place of the arts within the whole-school curriculum, which could lead to further marginalisation of the arts. Spaces where conversations can take place may contribute to the development of a united voice as “the arts”, which has the potential to strengthen the position of arts educators to advocate for their students’ right to receive a quality arts education.

**Concluding Remarks**

The stories in this paper present glimpses of the implementation of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts in Queensland, Australia. These stories resonate with the experiences of others: those who are participants in the research, and who share stories of their work in other forums on the professional landscape. The stories presented in this paper highlight the importance of

attending to the professional knowledge needs of teachers as they navigate reform processes, but perhaps more importantly, the need for professional knowledge to be contextualised within the individual professional knowledge landscapes of each teacher to facilitate the shifts to professional identities that curriculum reform may elicit. An explicit focus on identity work is not often a part of in-service teacher professional learning, and is an area that warrants further investigation. The stories presented in this paper would suggest that an integrated approach to developing positive relationships, professional knowledge and identity would have a positive impact on the teachers themselves and the implementation of a curriculum reform.

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### **About the Author**

Dr Rachael Dwyer is an educator, researcher and advocate, focused on ensuring that all students have opportunities to participate in quality music and arts education as part of their schooling. Rachael's research focuses on music and arts education in schools, in particular how the professional identities of those teaching the arts shape their students' experiences. She is co-editor of the innovative 2016 book 'Narrative Research in Practice: Stories from the field' (Springer) and her doctoral work has been published as 'Music teachers' values and beliefs' (Routledge). She sits on the editorial board for the Australian Journal of Music Education and is President of the Queensland Chapter of the Australian Society for Music Education.

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