

## CHAPTER SIX

### EXPERIENCED MUSIC TEACHERS

In this chapter, experienced teachers were asked to reflect in their training and practical understanding in order to extract responses related to the three research questions. In relation to knowledge and skills, the specific questions asked of participants related to their experience of teacher education and their view of themselves as musicians or teachers. By asking these questions, it was possible to obtain answers to the research question *what knowledge, skills and attributes does a music teacher need to possess?* The second research question (*How do these qualities contribute to constructing music teacher identity*) was a strong focus at this phase of the study. The descriptions of their experiences of music teaching and the critical incidents they identified in both text-based and “river” responses gave a strong indication as to the way in which their identities had been and were, through continuous learning, continuing to be constructed. In being invited to describe their ideal teacher education course, the third research question (*How can the knowledge, skills and attributes required of music teachers be shaped into the essential components of teacher education in music?*) was also answered to some extent.

In Phase 3, experienced music teachers were asked:

1. Outline your experience as a teacher.
2. Do you perceive yourself as a musician, teacher, music teacher or something else?
3. Describe your ideal teacher education course.
4. What is the role of continuous learning in teacher education?
5. What qualities or attributes do you believe it is important for teachers to possess?
6. Do you have any other comments relevant to this research project?
7. Can you describe any critical incidents that shaped your identity as a music teacher? \*

\* There was an opportunity for respondents to reflect on this in prose and/or placing critical incidents on a river.

### 1. Outline your experience as a teacher

Most teachers had been teaching for between 10 and 21 years, many beginning to teach in a studio format while they were still students undertaking tertiary studies in performance. Of the 12 respondents, 7 had some experience as head of department. There was a strong emphasis on co-curricular work – ensemble direction, management of students, parents, staff and school administration. Almost all had a portfolio-type career: some covering different aspects of music teaching, others taking on duties in other student areas. An example of this can be seen in this response:

Andrea: Taught secondary music from 1975 until 1981 then left teaching and worked in music industry, undertaking further music study during that time. Returned to teaching in the studio format; returned to full time classroom in 1990 teaching both secondary and primary; by 1991 worked full time in primary music only; have worked in large primary school for last 10 years and prior to that was teaching music in two schools per week.

Another, more extensive, example of the portfolio nature of music teaching was revealed in this response, which encapsulates teaching English, studio teaching, state, religious, primary, secondary, tertiary, co-educational, single-sex, classroom and ensemble direction:

Carrie: During my undergraduate years I taught violin in private lessons in a government primary school's instrumental program. After completing my performance studies, I taught English privately to young Turkish children. I went back to uni and completed a Diploma of Ed in secondary music teaching. In my first year of teaching classroom music I taught Year 7-11 in a Catholic co-ed secondary school. The next year I accepted an opportunity to teach primary music where I taught Prep-Year 7 in a P-12 co-ed Anglican school. I spent the next 7 years teaching primary and early childhood music in a range of school settings. These schools include co-ed, single-sex boys' and girls' schools, and a Steiner school. My roles varied and included string teaching in instrumental programs, choral and orchestral conducting, and Head of Junior School Music. I have also taken tutorial classes at University for the Diploma of Education.

## 2. Do you perceive yourself as a musician, teacher, music teacher or something else?

The responses to this question were quite evenly spread: 3 teachers considered their main identity to be as musician, while 4 regarded themselves as teachers first and foremost, with their subject being music. Only 2 responses indicated they were music teachers and 3 teachers considered themselves as musician and teacher equally. One teacher's response represented the considerable struggle found in identifying oneself in this way:

Carrie: I continue to struggle with this question for two reasons. The first is because I don't believe you can have a successful career in both simultaneously. I have come to accept that I will forever feel a conflict between my "musician" identity and my "teacher" identity. Sometimes this conflict is so great that I don't perceive myself to be a musician at all anymore which brings me great sadness... On a philosophical level I like to think of myself as someone who inspires and helps others to have a richer life. My chosen tool or medium happens to be music.

Others were quite clear as to their identity:

Jordan: I am a teacher first and my subject area is music. I am a musician last of all.

Instead of giving a definitive response, some teachers ranked these roles, as Jordan did above, and added some to the list:

Judy: I consider myself to be a musician first, a music teacher second and a teacher third. The reasons for this are: I was always a musician, from a very early age. I was never always a teacher, although my mother always thought I would be a good teacher. Once my skill in music making improved, I naturally gravitated towards teaching as a means of employment... Therefore I cannot easily separate the role of musician from the role of music teacher/educator.

This response resonates with the conundrum in tertiary music teacher preparation of the performer who "ends up" teaching, raising the issue of the "accidental" music teacher. Another respondent echoed these words:

Terry: [I see myself as a] musician – my love of music decided my career of 35 years. I trained to advance my music skill and knowledge.... I became a teacher by default.

One of the two respondents to construe themselves as “music teacher” gave this more succinct response:

Andrea: My immediate response is I perceive myself as a Music Teacher. However in order to carry out this role I need to have both the skills of a teacher and of a musician. I never forget my primary purpose to teach music but often forget my own ability as a musician.

A final comment in the area is from a teacher who has taken a broader perspective since undertaking part-time employment as a teacher educator:

Judy: I perceive myself to be a teacher, but having now been involved in teacher training, I think I identify my role as one of an educator. In performance, either as an instrumentalist or conductor, I am a musician. Musicianship and instrumental technique constitute my core content knowledge in music teaching at a school level. The role of an educator, however, needs to extend beyond this core knowledge. There are many musical people who are poor teachers. When teaching, I feel that I need to focus on being a teacher. The process is not about me, it becomes about the students' needs.

### **3. Describe your ideal teacher education course**

Responses to this question constituted the lengthiest of any in the survey. Most respondents agreed that there needed to be an entry requirement for a music teacher education program, as summarized in this statement:

Jordan: An entry requirement [is] most important: a very good and thorough basic understanding and knowledge of music, and confidence in yourself as a performer. To be a good teacher, performance knowledge and experience is essential.

Kerry: A course that insists that teachers can perform to a competent/excellent standard on at least one instrument.

After entry, responses focussed on the broad content of a course, including practical musicianship and pedagogy components, alongside theory of music and psychology of teaching:

Chris: A course that offers a broad and practical base for students from a wide variety of backgrounds to become involved in. This program should focus on students' interests as well as broaden their horizons into various styles and genres

Shaun: A balance between practical and theoretical – Do it, and then quick explanation as to the why, how, what research supports this...

Larry: To begin with a big picture of what is to be achieved, then to plan around the achievable within this picture.

Some responses were emphatic about the need for a course that was practically based:

Andrea: Lots of practical teaching opportunities. This is very necessary!

In some cases, detail was provided as to the precise nature of these practical elements, particularly in relation to specific musical skills:

Jordan: One [a course] that deals with teaching methodology and behavioural management but also gives substance about the material to be taught. E.g., learning composition, performance and analysis and then strategies for teaching these things.

Kerry: ... a course that teaches “How to teach Composition” in a variety of musical styles, genres and historical periods of music.

Andrea: To become a good music teacher the course should involve a great deal of emphasis on the development of the musician which would include, conducting skills, instrumental skills (particularly keyboard).

Judy: Basic drum playing, basic singing lessons and band/orchestra/choir class conducting, with an actual band. Prac lessons in one's own instrument; Theory lessons, aural training and development of listening skills.

Two other aspects were considered essential to pre-service teacher courses: The first of these was voice training and care. The responses below encapsulate this emphasis:

Kerry: Awareness of your "voice". As a teacher, particularly in the primary school, this really gets a big workout. Knowing how to use your voice with confidence is very important.

Carrie: The voice is the greatest musical instrument we all have and it is highly under [-] utilised! We can't improve school singing unless student teachers are given the training and confidence to use their voices successfully in their teaching. I believe voice education is essential for teacher education courses.

Andrea: This course would include ongoing training in use of voice and how to manage the demands made on your voice as a teacher. Although the course would involve undertaking teaching practicum, this would not come before the acquisition of some skill base.

The second specific area highlighted in the responses of experienced teachers was an understanding of music technology:

Kerry: A course that embraces the use of technology in the teaching.

Judy: How to use basic music software including Band-in-a-box, Garage band, Sibelius, Acid, Reason and midi programs. How to use a recording studio!!!!!!

Helen: Knowledge of computing software and how to use it.

Other elements for inclusion in pre-service programs pertained to:

- A course that emphasises conducting of choral, orchestral and band groups as a key part of the curriculum;
- A course which develops good repertoire choices for a variety of ensembles;
- A course which is practically based and gets potential teachers in the classroom as soon as possible;
- An understanding of the various learning styles;
- How to motivate students and how to make the subject matter interesting;
- Good understanding of behaviour management; and
- Lots of practical teaching opportunities.

Some experienced teachers ranked the “soft skills” higher than almost any other skills:

Judy: Teacher education courses need to provide an initial foundation for pre-service teachers to have the practical skills needed to teach. Teacher education also needs to focus on the development of what has been called “soft skills” such as interpersonal skills and assertive communication and other administrative tasks.

#### **4. What is the role of continuous learning in teacher education?**

Many responses acknowledged that pre-service courses could not provide all the necessary components for teacher education:

Carrie: All these things can't be possible without more contact time, a problem common to music teacher education providers.

Brad: Teacher education will hopefully provide some foundation and initial skills for teachers. Continuous learning is required to allow teachers to develop their skill bases further, making choices that are applicable to their individual experiences and talents as well as to the context in which they are practising. It is unlikely that initial teacher education can be comprehensive in terms of the skill needs of all students for all teaching contexts.

Two respondents were vigorous in their opinion regarding the role of continuous learning (professional development) in teacher education:

Helen: It is not an option; it is essential. The skills that are needed today to become a relevant educator are far removed from what skills we acquired in our training.

Judy: Essential! Teacher education will hopefully provide some foundation and initial skills for teachers. Continuous learning is required to allow teachers to develop their skill bases further, making choices that are applicable to their individual experiences and talents as well as to the context in which they are practising. It is unlikely that initial teacher education can be comprehensive in terms of the skill needs of all students for all teaching contexts.

Another respondent suggested that continuous learning should be compulsory:

Shaun: I think it should be compulsory for all teachers to refresh their skills with professional development and be exposed to positive change. How boring could it possibly be to teach the same material in the same way for years on end?

One respondent was even more forceful, suggesting the regulatory body should insist on continual learning for teachers:

Kerry: Absolutely essential!! Teachers should get provisional registration which then requires them to do PD [professional development] courses and subjects each year for a certain number of years.

The teachers above referred to the necessity for continuous learning, along with some reference to the nature and content of such learning. Other respondents understood the question to be more focussed on the delivery and application of the process:

Terry: Music education is a dedicated ongoing everyday process. It never stays constant just because you did a huge amount of work or practise for a particular event. All music educators understand that to achieve excellence takes time and regular practice. It does not have to be lots of time but it does have to be regular and focussed.



For these reasons teacher-training courses in music need to have an element of “every day” to realistically provide skills along with knowledge.

Others took a personal approach to their response, including reference to the life-learner and the quality referred to by pre-service teachers above, passion:

Jordan: It also helps to keep your passion for learning alive and to transfer this to your students.

Carrie: I enjoy learning no matter what it is – I like to put myself into the “learners” position rather than being the teacher all the time. This pushes me to discover things about myself.

The purpose of on-going learning was eloquently put in this response:

Shaun: You can never complete your own education if you wish to be a good, great, fantastic teacher. You must relate to others with a thirst to improve their teaching, mix with other professionals to gain inspiration, new ideas, and different perspectives...

And less eloquently in this example:

Shaun: Those who consider they have ceased learning should definitely cease teaching. If you think you know it all – then please GET OUT of teaching.

## **5. What qualities or attributes do you believe it is important for teachers to possess?**

The categories used in Table 9 below were developed from the literature and from the themes from Tables 1 and 3 and employed in Phases 1 and 2. The responses given by this cohort have also been categorized into generic, content/management-based, empathetic, communicative, and social justice attributes. The responses here are generally more extensive than those referred to earlier.

Table 9 *Qualities or Attributes Considered Important by Experienced Music Teachers*

Generic Attributes	Content and Management Attributes	Empathetic Attributes	Communicative Attributes	Social Justice Attributes	Self Awareness Attributes
Enthusiasm	Competent, if not excellent, musicianship skills	Empathy	Good communication skills	Acknowledgment and support of gifted students	Humility *
Patience	Love and passion for music and their interests	A kind heart	An ability to make it interesting, stimulating and relevant.	Belief in others and respect for others – students and colleagues	Self-regard
Be prepared but flexible	Good musicians (on at least one instrument)	An ability to recognise and reward others for success no matter how small		A strong sense of justice for all	Belief in self and ideals
Ability to improvise in a hurry #	Good administration skills			Teaching to create a place where kids feel respected ^	Willingness to learn anew, again and again!
A cheerful disposition to laugh at life and have fun	Reasonable keyboard (piano) skills			Global perspectives	The realisation that the more one knows, the less one knows.
Common sense	Computer literacy			Parochial perspectives	Curiosity
Personality	Love of subject area				
Passion for the job	Knowledge of Music Computing Software and how to use them.				
Positivity					
Charisma/ dynamism/ the x-factor					
Presence/confidence in the classroom					
Lateral / quick thinking					

Notes: Some responses above included additional information such: # not musically, although that helps! [teacher comment], \* to realise that we really do not teach... we create an environment for learning; ^ this response also added: “rewarded, encouraged, nurtured, praised”

Rather than giving a list of attributes, some respondents commented at length about teacher qualities, some emphasising the nature of being the “adult” in the teaching and learning process:

Gordon: I also believe that teachers need to have a mature self-identity to be able to view themselves in their role as teacher rather than be seeking to develop this identity through “friendships” with students and assessing themselves according to popularity. At the same time, positive relationships with students are essential and need sincerity, so it is a difficult role especially for a beginning teacher.

Comments tended to focus on elements such as patience, flexibility and the capacity to cater for student-centred approaches:

Andrea: In a general sense, teachers need to have patience, good self-esteem, passion for what they are teaching, ability to work within a diverse staff and student body and good communication skills. Teachers need to have and demonstrate a strong belief in the value and importance of education. For the music teacher in particular, you need a love of what you teach, an ability to sell this subject area, and a desire to continue learning.

The notion of living and modelling being a teacher (similar to Palmer’s (1998) concept of “we teach who we are”) and allowing the attributes to be apparent through this, rather than through learned behaviours, was aptly summarised in this response:

Judy: Integrity, sincerity, compassion – teaching is a lot about figuring out where students are coming from and what they need. Students learn much from what isn’t taught, but simply modelled by their teachers. With the above qualities teachers should be able have a foundation on which to build respect. I’m also not at all confident that these can be “taught”, but they can certainly be exemplified.

One respondent gave extensive answers to this question, focussing on the definition of the words *qualities* and *attributes*, referring also to *skills*:

Judy: I would like to emphasise that these personal qualities are not sufficient, but I identify the other attributes as skills. These include: an extensive knowledge of the subject area, including the practical ability to demonstrate musically for students (including vocal and instrumental exercises and games in a classroom music context); an excellent and continually increasing “toolbox” of teaching strategies; excellent management skills of self, resources, and people; excellent communication skills and the ability to interact with students with sincerity.

Another response focussed on the crux of what is perhaps the most important quality:

Helen: The ability to teach. Sounds funny, however I think in the past a lot of the content that was assessed in classroom music was really acquired through instrumental lessons / theory lessons. It scares me when I see schools having pre requisites for entering classroom music courses.

**6. What critical incidents can you reflect on that would benefit teacher education in the broadest sense?**

The notion of passion was raised in this context with comments such as:

Helen: Basically for as long as I can remember I had a passion for music and it was one of the only things I had much success for as a student. To this day I still have this passion as well as one for teaching.

Of particular relevance to this project were the responses that referred to critical events in the pre-service phase:

Brad: I went to the conservatorium full time to study for a BAMus. I was absolutely blown away by what there was to know and how much I loved learning about music. It was so fresh because I knew none of it. Excellent teachers and hopeless teachers were all around me. Some inspired me and some spoiled it.

Jordan: All critical incidents (for me) involved contact/involvement with other music educators.

Kerry: Teacher practicum as a pre-service teacher: Incredibly lucky to have an outstanding musician/conductor/teacher as a prac supervisor who made a very significant contribution to the teacher that I have become. The comprehensiveness of her knowledge and teaching skills set a high benchmark transforming teaching practicum from one of passing the subject and getting the diploma to one of shining a light on the path ahead to becoming a quality music teacher.

One teacher commented specifically on the aspect of survival with reference to three critical events, placed chronologically:

Jordan: Being the only music teacher with 1400 kids and having to survive; getting canned for playing pop music at a competition; being actively involved in music making with my students.

The critical incidents of four of the teachers who reflected on the river echo some of the common themes given above, while showing great detail about the individual's personal theories about teachers and teaching. The comments below are drawn from the rivers and should be read in conjunction with the full rivers in the Appendices.

Like the pre-service teachers in Phase 2, river-based comments reflected early influences, particularly music teachers. One teacher's river was constructed almost entirely of the names of music teachers and colleagues. Others commented in broader terms:

Carrie: Inspired musically & personally by two female viola teachers during secondary school

Kerry: Childhood: Excellent music teachers who had empathy for their students and who instilled a love of music and encouraged a love of performance; Adolescent: Teachers who continued with my fascination for and love of "theory" and also encouraged and supported my love of performance.

As with pre-service teachers, extra-musical influences played a role in the career paths of experienced music teachers:

Judy: Phase of impoverishment and emotional despair, eventually leading me to teaching

Kerry: Birth of our daughter. My husband became critically ill. I was forced to change from performance to teaching. This proved to be an excellent choice. I love teaching. I had never considered this as an adolescent – I did not think that I would be capable.

Professional learning and further formal study were other dominant themes in experienced teachers' incidents:

Judy: PD and more PD, and yet more! Am I really learning anything?

Judy [again]: Commenced my Master of Music, boy, I'm learning so much!

Carrie: Returned to higher studies and fully realised how much I don't know!

Also of note here is the emphasis on continuing to learn through the processes of further study and continuing to question the extent of available knowledge. This was a recurring theme throughout the study, perused further in Phase 4.

## Summary

In summary, answers to the first research question (*what knowledge, skills and attributes does a music teacher need to possess*) focused on basic musicianship, conducting, broad knowledge of music styles and a range of personal attributes centred around empathy, communication and patience. Responses to the second research question (*How do these qualities contribute to constructing music teacher identity*) emphasized the conflict experienced by many teachers in relation to their identity as a teacher or a musician. This notion was pursued further in the next phase of the study. The role of continuous learning and aspects of the pre-service teacher course relating to management of students, colleagues and parents were evident in responses to the third research question (*How can the knowledge, skills and attributes required of music teachers be shaped into the essential components of teacher education in music?*) was also answered to some extent. The emphasis on essential aspects of the course assisted in defining aspects music teacher training that experienced

teachers believed should be compulsory. There was a clear indication of the importance of practical teaching opportunities. This phase of the study provided the foundation for the interview structure in phase 4.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### EXPERIENCED MUSIC TEACHERS: IN DEPTH

The final phases of the research involved the interviewing of six experienced music teachers in order to gain greater depth of understanding into their responses from Phase 3. As such, the main emphasis was on second and third research questions (*How do these qualities contribute to constructing music teacher identity and how can the knowledge, skills and attributes required of music teachers be shaped into the essential components of teacher education in music?*). The aim in this phase was to examine the development of the experienced teacher, attempting identify a pathway or pathways they had taken to arrive at their current “position” in music education. “Position” in this instance refers as much to philosophy as it does to standing in the community and employment status. The dichotomy between teacher and music was explored further, as an essential component in the construction of music teacher identity. The interviews also aimed to benefit from teachers’ views of teacher education in pre-service and professional learning contexts.

Given that the respondents had completed a structured questionnaire, an unstructured, informal interview approach was selected for this phase. The purpose of the interviews was to pursue the contents of the questionnaire and the rivers in greater detail. A video recording and a written transcription of each interview were produced. The main purpose of using a video recording was to capture the thoughts of experienced teachers for subsequent use in pre-service and professional learning contexts, subject to further ethical approval.

The interviews were wide ranging in their scope and the responses varied widely according to their basis in the questionnaire and river responses. Initial questions tended to focus on the background of the teacher in relation to experience and identity.

#### **Early influences**

As with the Phase 3 process, teachers reflected on their background experiences in the light of those who influenced them most. Typically, the early influences came from teachers and teachers of music, both classroom and studio:



Helen: I think the people who influenced me yeah sure were music teachers and they're the people I remember, and they're teachers in general really. I mean they're people who had such an impact on my life.

This teacher went on to qualify the statement above, referring to the "caring" teacher:

Helen: If I were to count on one hand I'd say the caring teacher had a profound impact on my piano playing. Music teacher at school had a profound impact on me; my singing teachers yes absolutely, these are the people who shaped who I am.

Another teacher commented on the value of the practicum experience, in relation to the context (as referred to in the literature above) and the qualities of the person with whom they worked:

Judy: I did a really good prac with a great school and great mentor.

### **Musician, teacher, music teacher or something else?**

The next series of questions probed the notion of music teacher role. Some commented on the constant interaction of these roles, with the teacher role growing out of the musician role. Andrea comments on the notion of passion, highlighted by so many responses in the first 3 phases of the study, while Helen also returns to the intrinsic nature of teaching:

Andrea: During college I developed a passion for music education and then from the classroom went into it and thought there is where I need to be.

Helen: Well now I'm a musician actually and the teaching is sort of intrinsically, and so bound with that because everything I've learnt has been through music everything I then do is based on that teaching.

One respondent claimed a more holistic approach to their role, with music as a conduit to a broader end:

Judy: My speciality is music, but my prime purpose in being here is for the benefit of students and for their greater education, and that includes a whole heap more than music.

The perception of music teachers by other faculty was a highlight of Helen's responses, commenting on the more creative aspects as being in binary opposition to organisational skill:

Helen: Teachers consider us (music teachers) different from other teachers... I think the external image of us is that we are all slightly crazy and that we couldn't possibly know how to run the school, or the department.

### **Ideal initial teacher education**

One of the main aims of the research was to gain an understanding from experienced teachers as to the essential components of teacher education and how the understandings of experienced teachers could be embraced in pre-service and professional learning environments. The responses at this stage of the research process were critical to the overall findings of the project. The comments provided here are lengthy in order to gain full and contextual meaning from the responses.

Given that the interviews were based on the survey responses from Phase 3, a number of responses referred to the need for generic skills and attributes:

Helen: The things are essential for them in the pre-service phase are a love of teaching; a reasonable amount of self-confidence; a bit of a thick skin.

Terry: Initially, simply confidence, having at that stage, without a lot of conscious pedagogical knowledge, it was a lot like I taught because this is the way I played. So there were a lot of skills that are so much part of you that it's just like where you – so a lot of it was probably very ad hoc

Terry: Graduates need excellent planning and management skills. A realistic view of the position that that teacher training has helped you reach...

As the role and workload of the music teacher often encompasses curricular and co-curricula activity, there was an emphasis on preparing teachers for the realities of the work outside the classroom:

Terry: I don't think there is any training in co-curricula management, nor is there any real training in how to start an ensemble for a year; how to choose music for an ensemble; how to manage audition processes if you're going to have an audition process.

Judy: And the other thing that I think would have benefited me a lot more when I graduated was having had a lot more experience in conducting field, in leading ensembles because I've had to learn that since I've graduated.

Judy also commented at length on the need for secure and diverse content knowledge in the classroom. There was also an emphasis on reflection-in-action and lateral thinking:

Judy: I think knowing the content base and having experience in that is just absolutely essential. I have had a couple of student teachers through that have a little bit less knowledge of their area, but had great planning and prep skills, and so they still succeeded, but they don't have enough broadness and have to do that research...I think content in the subject area is just so vital and being able to quote more than one example, and have that in your head because in teaching you're having to think on your feet all the time. So if you can't think sideways at another example you're pretty well stuffed really.

Other teachers linked the content and pedagogical skills. Responses accentuated knowledge aspects, but also focussed on the role of pre-service teacher education in providing tools for the implementation of curriculum and communication of content to students:

Terry: I think the teachers need to have a good knowledge of the working structure of what they are teaching and how they are going to teach it, so they need to have an excellent understanding of curriculum, even if they have had no basis to apply – perhaps lesson planning over a long period of time, but they need to be able to write a semester plan, they need to be able to write a work program and implement it... so the

tool box is more important than them relying on what can fit in their head. I think you can teach a whole lot of strategies for reflection and that be almost a barrier to implementing new things effectively.

Carrie: ... the musical skills foundation and how to teach aural work, how to teach history how to teach composition, then they need to be given perhaps a little bit of instruction on the delivery of a curriculum

Carrie: Obviously in terms of pre-service teacher training as a music teacher you want to have a good basis in lots of different musical genres so you've got some foundation knowledge, but certainly you want to have an approach that gives you flexibility in terms of your delivery.

The importance of flexibility raised by Carrie (and acknowledged in the earlier phases of the research) was the focus of many teachers who favoured diversity and flexibility in approach:

Helen: I would be saying to pre-service teachers always be aware of what your limitations are; be aware of what the students' limitations are; be aware of what you can and can't do with that student.

Judy: I think you have to have the essence of how to put material together, but not necessarily just one way. Looking at several different methodologies is a really good way, so you find something that suits you in doing that... it's good to experiment with different ways, so as graduates they've looked at a whole variety of different methods I think that's really important. Kids can stump you all the time, so you need to be able to have a lot of that knowledge just very comfortably in your head.

Carrie: Essentials of pre-service training. Obviously an understanding of what children want and how different learning styles vary from child to child is essential.

The role of practicum was a feature of many responses, some of which focussed on the nature, amount and timing of the practicum experience:

Andrea: I believe we should let pre-service teachers loose as soon as possible. My ideal would be, because every now and then I think about this and I would love, if I ever decided to go this way, I would love to have almost like an apprenticeship.

Judy: I definitely think they need to have (prac) experience throughout the course. I think that's absolutely vital that you get a little bit of skill as you go out and you observe, you watch and see what's happening in a situation. I mean I know some places do one day a week, I've had students like that. I think block pracs are better because you've got some continuity across – seeing them every day over a period of time.

A final remark in relation to pre-service teacher education turned the tables on the researcher to comment on lecturer attributes:

Carrie: So you want to have lecturers that are going to teach you a variety of different teaching strategies catering for a variety of needs, and also preparing you for the day-to-day teaching; the reality of having to teach classes where some kids are not going to be there because they're on excursions for example; how to structure classes for a variety of levels of ability within that class, and also levels of completeness of work.

### **Professional Learning**

The extensive nature of the responses in relation to pre-service education gave rise to questions regarding the proportion of teacher education that needs to be in the pre-service phase and what the role of continuous learning should be in teacher education. Comments in this field referred initially to the need for professional learning:

Judy: Since I went through my course I've continued to go along to courses and I think that is probably the prime reason why I've kept my skills at being able to deliver information to the kids there so that I don't try and just do it the same way that I might have learnt at uni. Taking time to do that that feeds your own musical soul I think can really benefit you and benefit your kids, and give you the time out that you need to clear your own head.

Helen: I'm still learning, I don't think I stopped. Everything I've learnt subsequent has been through the [PD] programs and stuff, and my own experience. But then it doesn't work for certain things.

The word of caution from Helen about "not working for certain things" suggests that the balance and nature of professional learning required further probing. There were a variety of different modes of professional learning advocated from short courses to seeking out colleagues and life experiences:

Carrie: There needs to be lots of short courses in different areas for example, writing curriculum documents there could be a short course in that; conducting short courses; IT integration short courses; ensemble development short courses.

Andrea: For me it's finding a respected colleague - even if I think they are a really wonderful educator, if I don't feel I have a relationship with them I wouldn't ask. I've got to feel that they are a friend or a colleague.

Judy: I have got most of my training in that area by my life experiences that came prior to my study.

There was considerable support for the idea of less-experienced teachers working alongside experienced ones:

Terry: I would like to see more ongoing mentoring. I wouldn't be opposed to doing something incredibly different, and structuring it like almost like having ideas of professional years. And as long as we were catering it to their needs and also offering that other professional development in the other core skills as well. But at other times we actually have some ongoing support for them.

Carrie: Very similar to the way pilots get pilots' licences you don't just get a pilots' licence and then you can go and fly by yourself or with passengers in Australia, it's a very structured approach and I think part of the experience of a teacher is that you've got to learn some stuff at university, go out and teach it and experiment for a while, and then come back to university and hone your skills.

## Qualities and Attributes

As the one of the aims of the project was to ascertain the qualities and/or attributes of music teachers and the extent to which these can and should be taught, experienced teachers were asked to explain in greater detail their survey responses in this area. Care for the student and the role of relationship was a strong feature of teachers' replies:

Helen: You've got to care for that student...you've got to care about their emotional wellbeing. Music is bound with emotional wellbeing so if you're not asking for feedback then you're not really caring about the student.

Judy: You've got to be people-orientated in some way shape or form. There's also a risk-taking kind of mentality that comes with the kinds of people that end up in performance areas. Music teachers are willing to form relationships. Because they have a kind of creative set in their head they're probably more open to learning new things, because I think they're more inspired by new things.

Terry: ...naturally your relationship with your own students and the structures you put in place to help manage behaviour ... I suppose it's about making students feel fairly secure.

Two teachers were emphatic about the need for flexibility and passion, both of which ranked highly in the earlier phases of the research:

Carrie: You have to be flexible. You have to – particularly with technology – appreciate that things can go wrong when things don't work. You need to try different things and you need to keep yourself fresh at all times. They need to sort of keep their performance skills up because students expect music teachers to be able to perform.

Judy: You've got to be very enthusiastic about benefiting the lives of young people, it can be a really, really frustrating profession if you don't have the interest of the kids as your foremost thing.

Carrie: What I look for [in staff] is probably people with a variety of skills that are enthusiastic and passionate about teaching first and foremost. Music is obviously an essential ingredient but they have to be passionate about wanting to teach students.

One interviewee also commented on flexibility but steered the discussion away from personal qualities back to the idea of skill level in this way:

Terry: I think there are natural personality qualities, but in a way I think there is an awful lot of skills. So that is a much higher order level skill for a very good teacher to be able to switch roles and change their style to suit their students and gradually help them over those boundaries that the students are not terribly good at.

### **Advice from experienced teachers to beginning teachers**

Many of the comments gained in the interviews were of a more general nature and related to advice teachers would give to graduates. The first of these refer to managing the early stages of a teaching career.

Andrea: The first bit of advice I always give them is before you even start, make contacts with people that you can ask questions of.

Carrie: It's a challenging business and unfortunately these days because of government regulations, the nature of students and, (more so) the nature of parents. Teaching is becoming harder and harder and harder. They need to go beyond the call of duty helping students out of class time; thinking of new initiatives to make classes more interesting; keeping abreast with new research or technology. You've got to do music teaching because you really want to do it you can't do it as just a job: it's really a lifestyle.

Shaun: Your focus should be on the year 8s and 9s; your energy should be put into those students first because your culture will be dependent upon what you do in year 8 and 9. You've got to be smart about how your subject is valued in the school - when you've got something working really well, invite the principal in to see this is what we do. Invite the principal to the choir rehearsal or whatever, get people on side and



provided that it's a good product and then it will be valued hopefully if there is a reasonable leadership team, it's valued and then you are supported.

One of the issues identified in the literature was the prevalence of stress-related issues in music teaching, particularly praxis shock (Ballantyne, 2004, December). Teachers offered these words of warning to beginning teachers concerning workload and classroom management, alongside strategies for managing such issues:

Helen: I think the one (of the fears) that always comes to mind is classroom management and being able to deal with it. And it's taken me years to get there.

Andrea: It's the demands of just the nature of the job that cause burnout, the fact that we're spread very thinly and in some ways I feel I'm only just comfortable in the job now after 25 years. Part of that I think is professional isolation.

Terry: We're getting teachers that already notoriously overworked, and not overworked in terms that their workload is too much in equivalent to other teachers, it's just that they have to spend more time doing it. I think we need to tap into the reason that they're doing it in the first place, and a lot I would hope are doing it for the love of music.

Judy: Sometimes you have to learn to say no.

At the conclusion of the interview, each of the six teachers was asked for any other comments relevant to the project and/or to summarise the rationale behind their commitment to music teaching. The result was a series of advocacy statements on the function of the music teacher in society, in the lives of the school and/or the lives of students. These positive remarks provide a balance to the suggestions of overwork alluded to above. They provide useful material for the encouragement of beginning teachers and teacher educators.

Helen: I think because most people – especially musicians – are doing it because of the love of music and so they want to stay close to the coalface... and when someone else learns something and you know that you helped them learn that, that's really cool and that's the best feeling.

Andrea: I make a difference to these kids' lives. I've opened (I think) a whole world to them that would not be open without me. It happens in music, no matter what their skill level, if they're contributed, they are valued and that makes a difference to them their entire life.

Terry: I guess it's seeing the potential that develops in students, not just through their ability to progress at music, but the ability of their academic progress as a result of music... whilst I love music and I love seeing musical growth, I really like to see the change in the student as a result of them having studied music.

Carrie: I've seen students' progress just generally. I mean we can see students that are not really making it in some aspect of music. It might be understanding of rudiments, it might be ear work, it might be their ability to play certain things on an instrument and seeing them progress is certainly a great highlight.

Shaun: ...the beautiful thing that occurs when you have students who've gone through that system, that by year 12 they have a sense that other people matter and other people count. I get energy from working with young people and music. My day is surrounded with music and most of it's good, most of it is satisfying music experiences.

Judy: It's about developing them as individuals and their life skills, and part of that is through the medium of music making, and so that's what I believe my job is. I certainly want to flood the world with lots of people that respect music making and a whole variety of music making, and can have a sense of what can be achieved; that joint purpose, the teamwork.

## **Summary**

Of the three questions that underpin this study, the interviews with experienced music teachers focussed on the second and third components of the study (*How do these qualities contribute to constructing music teacher identity and how can the knowledge, skills and attributes required of music teachers be shaped into the essential components of teacher*

*education in music?*). Interviewees shed light on the role of the music teacher, the aspects of teaching that could be included in pre-service and in-service courses and the key elements played by individuals in the shaping of their identity. The discussion of attributes was of high importance in relation to how these qualities could be taught (or not taught). The discussion in the next chapter brings together the data from pre-service and experienced teachers to suggest a future model for music teacher education.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### SO WHAT?

One of the risks in drawing a project of this nature to a succinct and purposeful conclusion is that it becomes reductionist, and this belies the complexity inherent in the findings. It is, as Korthagen (2004, p. 78) pointed out, impossible and pedagogically undesirable to formulate a definitive description of the “good teacher”. Providing a manageable representation can dilute the complexity of the data (Bartel, 2006, p. 366), and deny the multifarious nature of the teacher. To that end, the findings presented here in written form should be read in answering the three questions outlined at the beginning of this research:

1. What knowledge, skills and attributes does a music teacher need to possess?
2. How do these qualities contribute to constructing music teacher identity?
3. How can the knowledge, skills and attributes required of music teachers be shaped into the essential components of teacher education in music?

As stated earlier, there is no intention to compare these findings with the literature; rather the purpose of presenting the literature in Chapter 2 was to foreground the study. The four broad themes established in the author’s earlier research (Harrison 2003, 2004), however, are employed as the initial framework for the discussion. These were:

1. The acquisition of musical knowledge and skills;
2. The acquisition of pedagogical knowledge and skills;
3. The acquisition and/or development of personal attributes; and
4. Application of the above through professional practice.

One of the interviewees provided a near complete picture of how these four themes interact:

Helen: I would like to emphasise that these personal qualities are not sufficient, but I identify the other attributes as skills. These include: an extensive knowledge of the subject area, including the practical ability to demonstrate musically for students (including vocal and instrumental exercises and games in a classroom music context);

an excellent and continually increasing “toolbox” of teaching strategies; excellent management skills of self, resources, and people; excellent communication skills and the ability to interact with students with sincerity.

As foreshadowed in the methodology, the analysis of responses in this study in written, verbal or visual form involved identifying *time chronologies* for particular events, *frequency* of themes, *significance*, (how much time or space a particular topic occupies) and *consequences* (Burnard 2003, April; P. Burnard, personal communication, February 8, 2006; Denzin, 1994; Pope & Denicolo, 1993). In seeking to providing answers to the first research question (What knowledge, skills and attributes does a music teacher need to possess?), reflection on Harrison’s (2003, 2004) four broad themes, identified the following issues as *significant* and *frequently* occurring:

#### 1. Musical knowledge and skills

1. Musicianship, including theory and aural skills
2. Some instrumental (and/or vocal) skill, including at least one instrument to a high level
3. Conducting skills

#### 2. Pedagogical knowledge and skills

1. Love of /knowledge of content and capacity to communicate it
2. Broad knowledge base – style, genre etc.
3. Understandings of diversity in students and approaches to student learning

#### 3. Attributes

1. Passion
2. Flexibility
3. Patience
4. Capacity to engage/motivate
5. Creativity
6. Sense of humour
7. Enthusiasm
8. Love of children
9. Communication
10. Lifelong learner

#### 4. Application

The fourth theme (application) forms part of the *time chronologies* of constructing the identity of the music teacher through early influences, transition to teacher training, pre-service courses, transition to workplace and beyond initial training. The *time chronology* draws together responses to provide a succinct resolution to the second research question (How do these qualities contribute to constructing music teacher identity?). Each of these phases requires further elucidation to reflect the depth of responses from pre-service and experienced teachers:

### **Early influences**

Typically these were family, studio teachers, class music teachers and ensemble directors. The role of the third environment (i.e., not home or school) and extra-musical influences was also noted.

### **Transition to teaching training programs**

Experienced teachers and pre-service specialists commented on the need for some form of gate-keeping at entry to music teacher programs. Some referred to the benefit of formal transition programs. These included a range of options, with the most prevalent being an interview/audition approach. The interview would allow an opportunity for teacher educators to observe whether the attributes above were present or capable of being developed, while the audition would have a similar function in relation to musical skills. The dual role of music teacher/musician was a recurring theme throughout. The ideal appeared to be a balanced but flexible acknowledgment of both roles, and a team approach where the musician/teachers skills could be complementary between individual team members.

### **Pre-service Course Content and Delivery**

The role of universities and university teachers came under scrutiny here. It was acknowledged that it is not possible to deliver all the desirable components in the time frame available, and that professional learning beyond initial training was essential. In relation to course content, the following areas were frequently referred to:

- Curricular and co-curricular planning
- Voice management

- Understanding of technology
- Broad-based historical knowledge, covering western, culturally diverse, popular genres
- Practical and written musicianship
- Pedagogical skills – how to teach specific concepts
- Understanding of diversity

Comment was also made on the need for quality university teaching staff, a view that reflected much of the literature in the field.

### **Transition from University to workplace**

Responses here focussed on issues related to the timing of practicum (Andrea: “I believe we should let pre-service teachers loose as soon as possible”) and to the influence of school-based supervisors as role models (Carrie: “I think some teachers would become more inspired to become more passionate about teaching if they’re in the right environment and have the appropriate sort of mentorship, but I don’t know whether you can actually teach it”). Another facet raised by pre-service and experienced teachers was the notion of ongoing mentoring in the form of “professional years”; similar to medical internships or pilot licensing (Terry, Carrie) and that full licence to teach should not be granted until this process has been followed.

Teachers and students also mentioned the significance of gate-keeping at the transition from university to the workplace, with interview and observation of teaching practice forming part of the teacher registration process.

### **Beyond initial training**

The early-career years have been the focus of a recent in-depth study by Ballantyne (2004, December, 2005, 2006). The reflections of experienced teachers in this study support the findings of Ballantyne and advocate the importance of mentoring (by university and experienced teachers in the field) through modelling, professional development and postgraduate study options. The most pressing content needs in the postgraduate field were

seen to be conducting, co-curricular management and staying abreast of latest trends in technology.

The construction of music teachers' identity could be represented as a flowchart with elements of the *chronology* from early influences, through pre-service training to the workforce. The author intends to develop a flowchart that provides a connection between the identification of appropriate qualities and the acquisition of these qualities in the shaping of teacher education.



## CHAPTER NINE

### IMPLICATIONS FOR MUSIC TEACHER EDUCATION

The findings of this project are of little value unless they are applied to teacher education. The responses of teachers in both pre-service and in-service environments described in Chapter Eight indicate that some of the essential elements required for music teachers cannot be “taught” in the traditional sense: The instruction that takes place in the *Pre-service Course Content and Delivery* phase is one aspect of the construction of music teacher identity construction. The quotes above clearly indicate that much of the learning is through less formal means. Howard (1992) proposed that artistic learning takes place through means of *instruction, practice, example* and *reflection*. Jorgensen (2003) notes the themes tend toward the formal aspects of learning and extends them to incorporate less formal aspects. *Instruction* is complemented by *osmosis*, *practice* is balanced by *participation*, *example* is paired with *observation* and *reflection* is partnered by *sensibility*, perhaps the most intangible theme. In adding these additional dimensions, Jorgensen aims to include the more informal qualities that form part of music education.

In order to fully understand the implications of Howard’s (1992) and Jorgensen’s (2003) artistic learning paradigms, it is necessary to expound the meanings of each category. These definitions are paraphrased from Jorgensen’s explanations (2003, pp. 103-107):

*Instruction* refers to the teachers’ formal or didactic exposition by which the student grasps knowledge.

*Osmosis* entails absorbing knowledge without direct instruction or learning through indirect or informal instruction.

*Practice* is viewed in the more restrictive sense of acquiring knowledge or construed as “the way things are generally done by competent practitioners.”

*Participation* is the process of taking part as a member of a particular musical group regardless of whether they are intended to be educational.

*Example* is informal and formal instruction that focuses on showing something rather than telling about it.

*Observation* focuses on the perception of an event and refers to the process whereby by the learner receives information through their senses, processes it and reflects on it without the necessity of physically demonstrating it has been noticed or learned.

*Reflection* focuses on rethinking or reconsideration, mulling things over after the fact and giving them a second, longer or deeper look.

*Sensibility* underscores the lively role of imagination, intuition and sense in the midst of a musical event.

To elucidate further, each of these elements can be employed throughout the various stages of the time chronologies described above (i.e., Early influences, Transition to teacher training, Pre-service Course, Transition from University to workplace, Beyond initial training). The balance of each element could change according to the particular career phase of the teacher. In early influences, for example, *osmosis* may be a strong element while *instruction* might form a major part of the pre-service course. The proportions will vary according to the individual, but each of the features will interact in the formation of the music teacher. By way of example, Musicianship fits into the instruction mode, but it may equally be a part of practice. Conducting might be observed and practiced, but it may also be learned through osmosis.

It is neither practical nor desirable to provide a comprehensive implementation plan through which the findings of this project can be applied. It is possible, however, to provide some suggestions as to how the author will implement the findings in his current situation. While these may not have application in other contexts, it is anticipated that the research will have implications beyond the local environment.

The National Review of Music Education in Schools (2005) provided a timely opportunity for a study into music teacher education. In this study, pre-service and experienced teachers were asked to reflect on their initial training, postgraduate studies, ongoing professional development and on-the-job experiences, to give an insight in some of the desirable knowledge, skills and attributes required of music educators. The intention of this book has been to simulate dialogue between pre-service and experienced teachers, through reflection on their experiences of becoming teachers through their training and “life” experiences. The research presents a framework for creating teachers who can revitalize music education in Australia and beyond in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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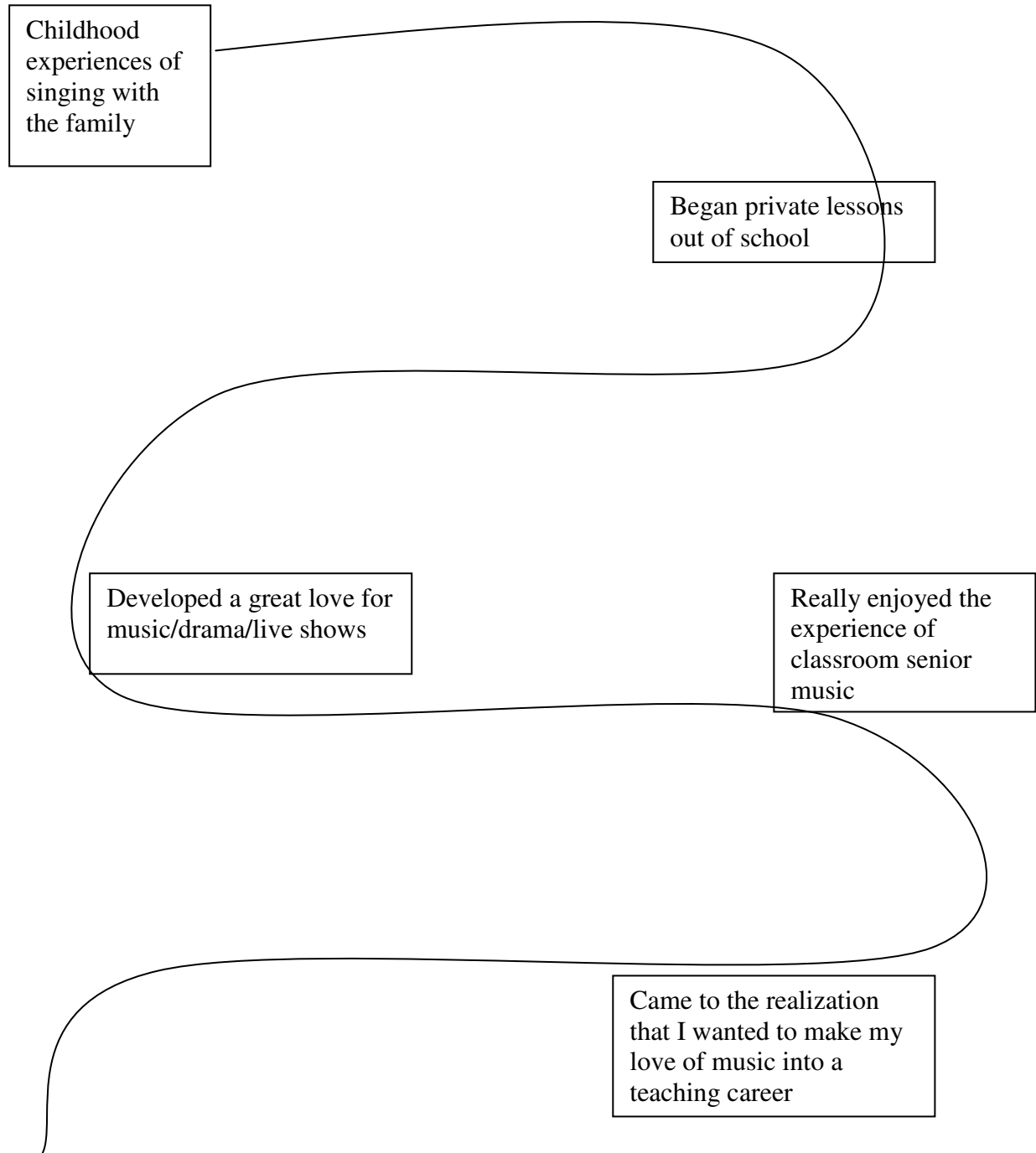


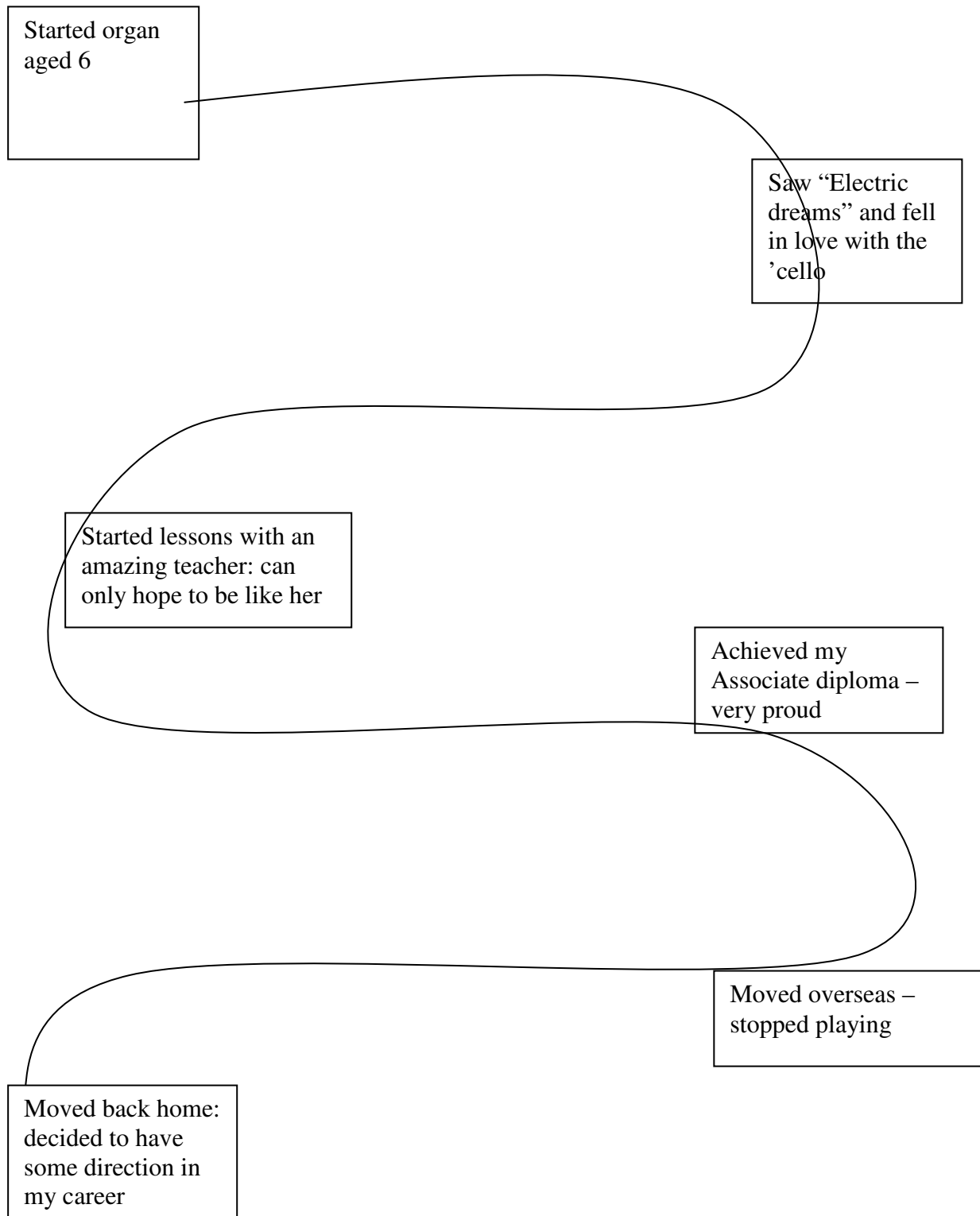
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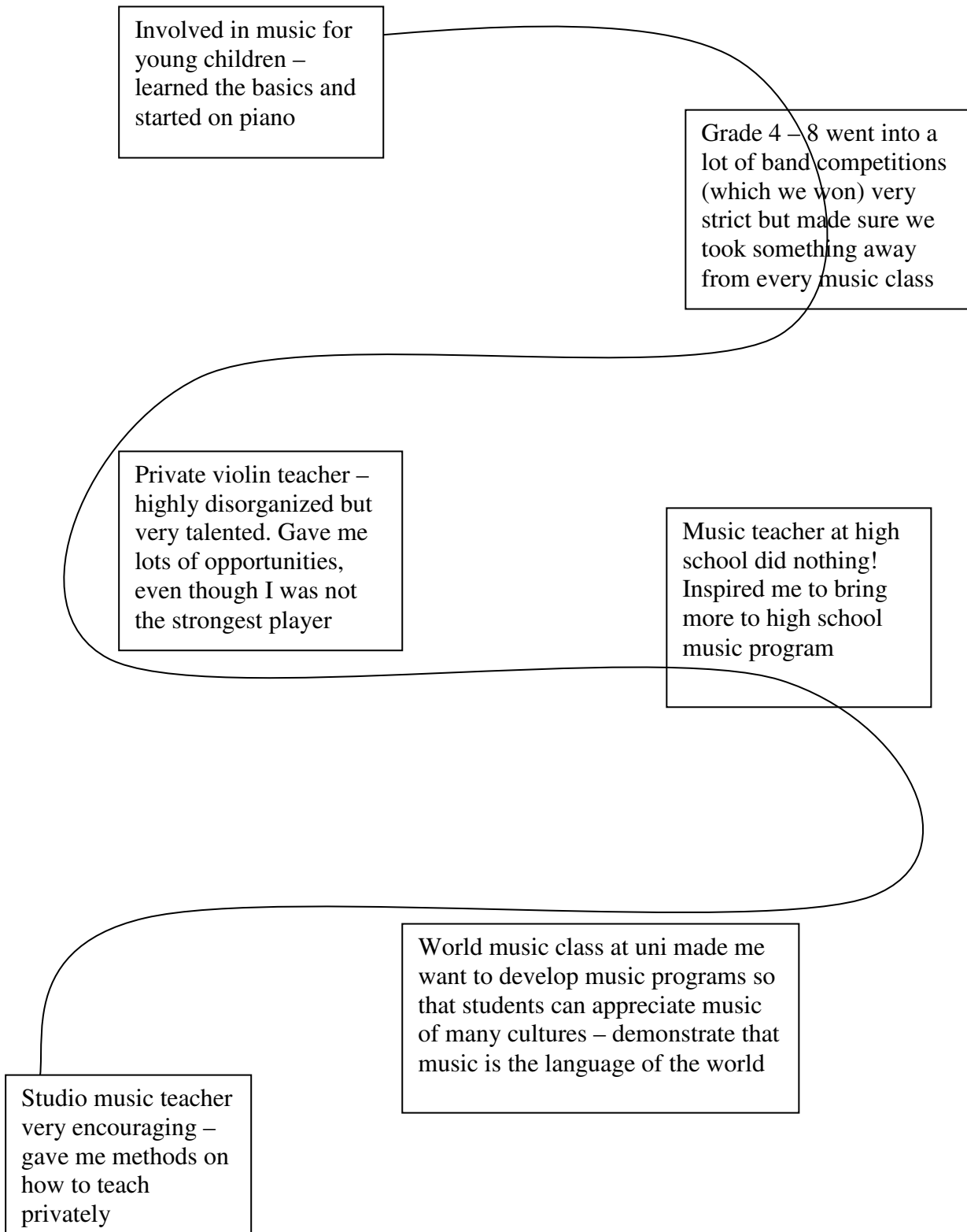
## APPENDIX ONE

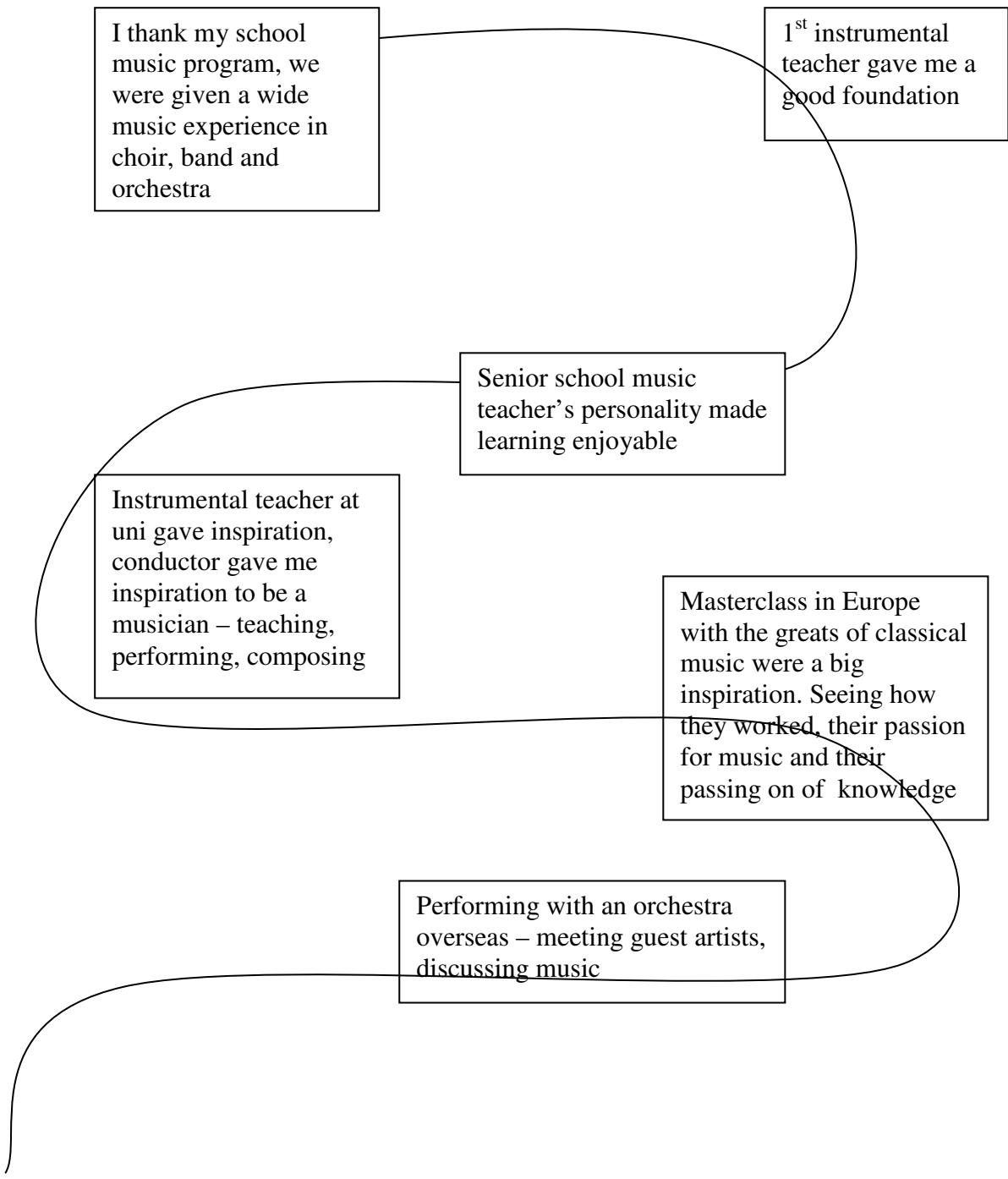
### CRITICAL INCIDENTS FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

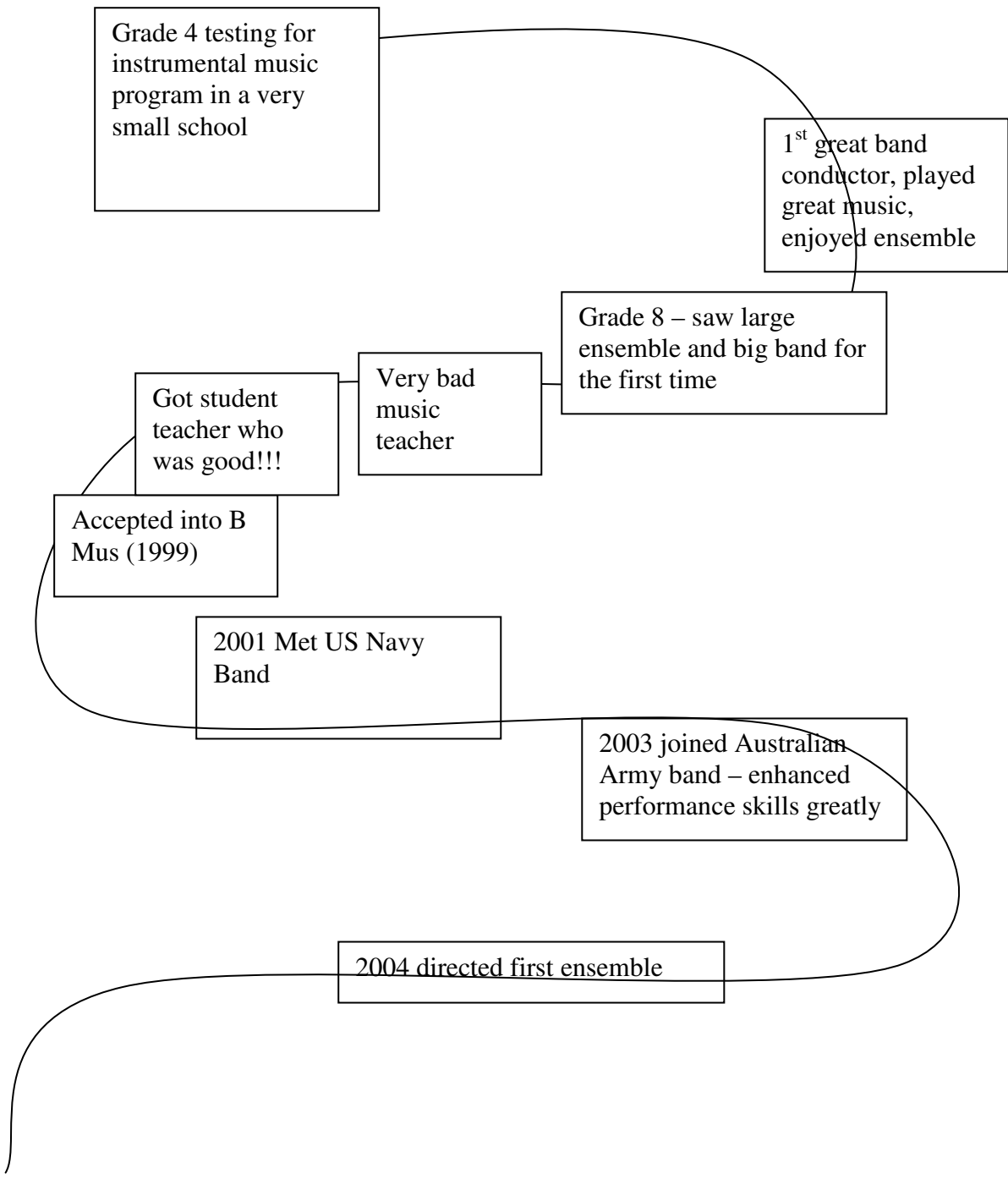
Critical incidents for music pre-service teachers

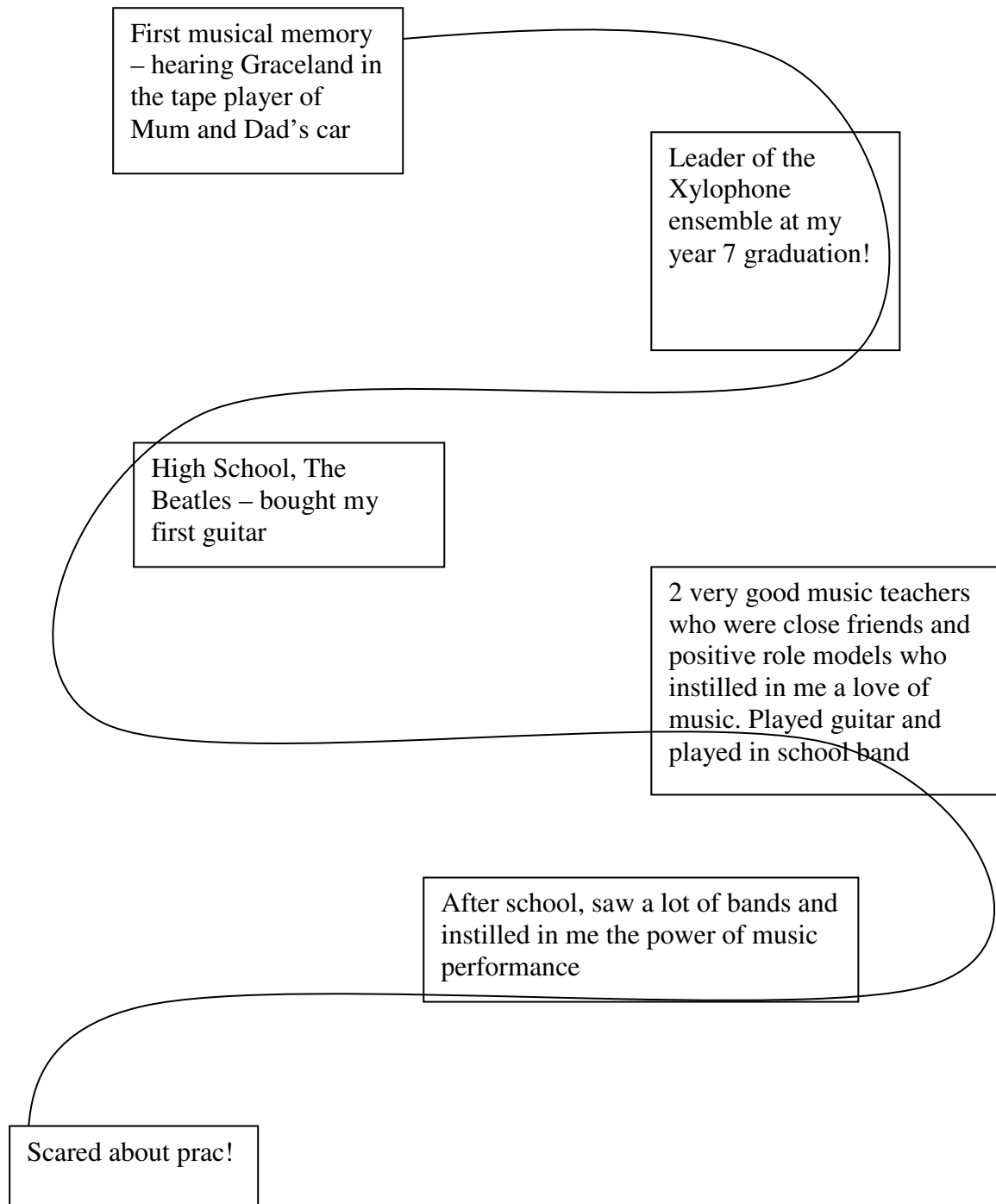


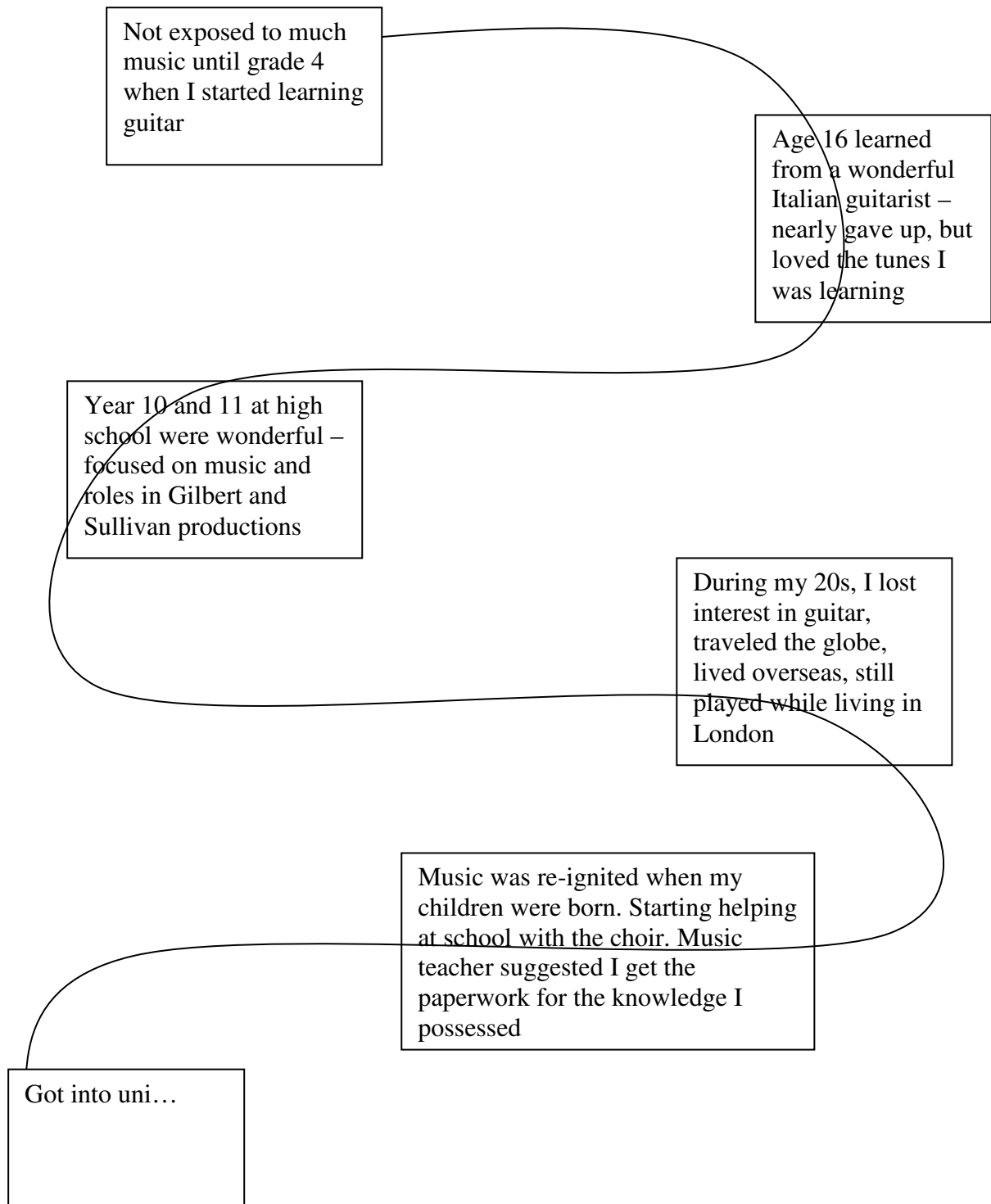




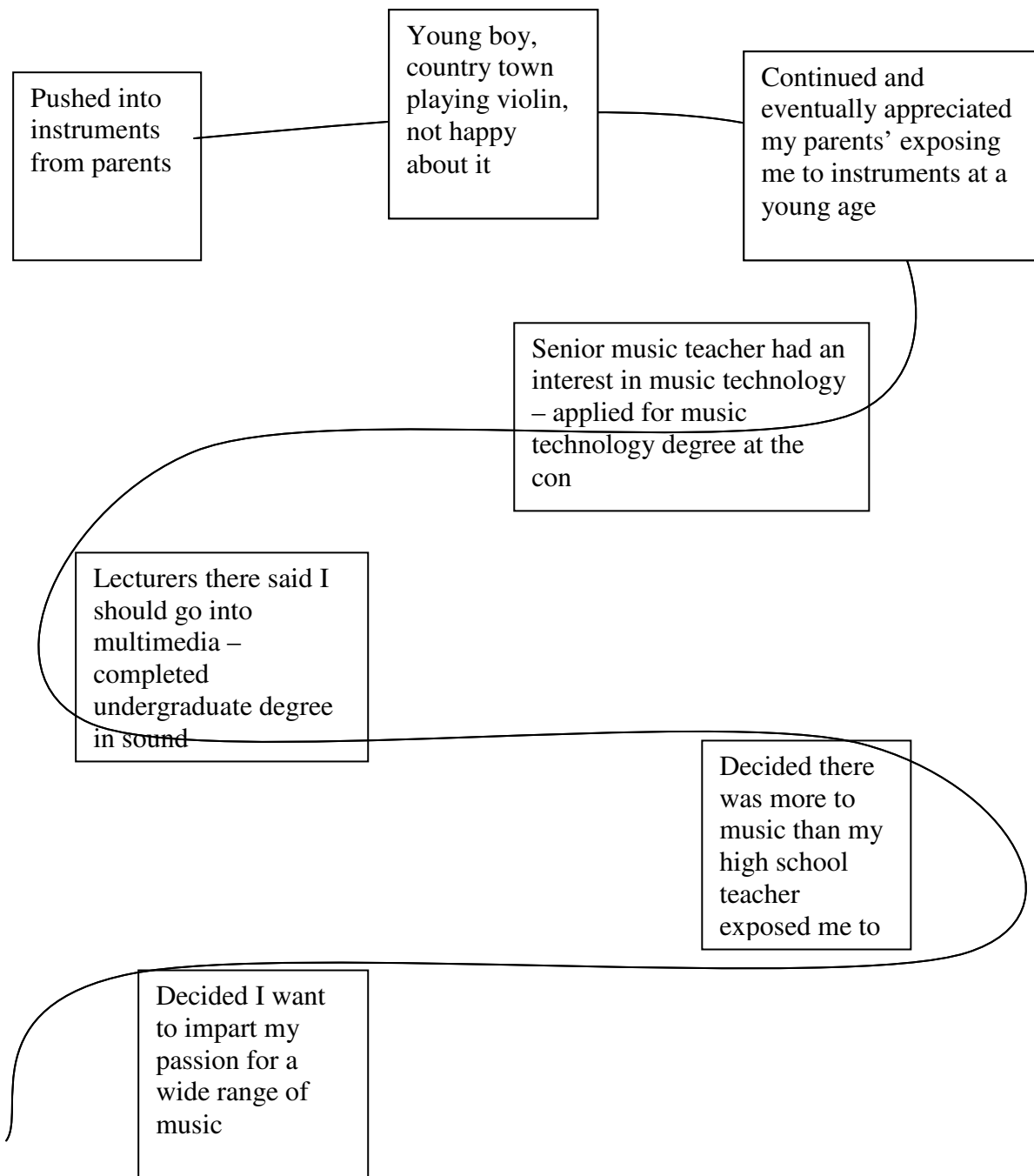








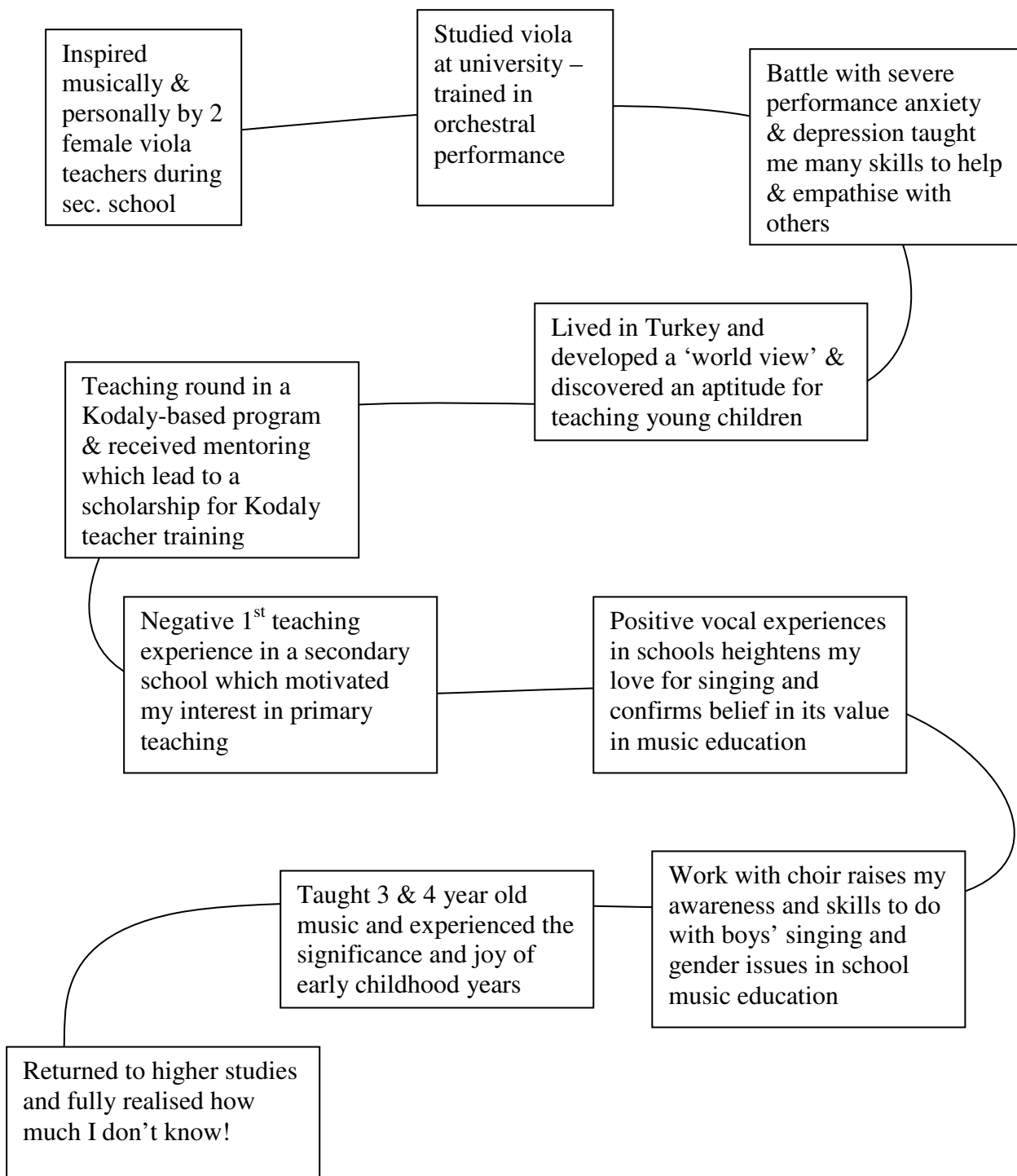




## APPENDIX TWO

## CRITICAL INCIDENTS FOR EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

Critical incidents for experienced music teachers



Swore black and blue I would never work in a shop again!!! Teaching the only viable and time rich job I could do which would allow me to perform and attend uni.

Suzuki teacher training, such an eye-opener.

Finished my Music Degree, finally! Very proud, but now what?

Phase of impoverishment and emotional despair, eventually leading me to:

My Grad Dip Ed, where discovered -

PD and more PD, and yet more! Am I really learning anything?

Got my job at school, yay, a real person again .

Commenced my Master of Music, boy, I'm learning so much!

Began singing lessons again, what an amazing thing.

Approaching the unknown with joy.

### Childhood

Excellent music teachers who had empathy for their students and who instilled a love of music and encouraged a love of performance.

### Adolescent

Teachers who continued with my fascination for and love of 'theory' and also encouraged and supported my love of performance.

### Adult

The teachers at the uni who encouraged my continuing love for music and performance.  
The excellent discipline training I experienced via the Opera School. Performance with professional opera companies.

### Family

Birth of our daughter. My husband became critically ill, I was forced to change from performance to teaching. This proved to be an excellent choice. I love teaching. I had never considered this as an adolescent – I did not think that I would be capable. Teaching Students who shone and achieved in their own right was rewarding. Also the achievements of SEU students who achieved with their 'special' abilities. (These were not acknowledged by the classroom teachers.)

### Maturity

A decision to change from primary teaching to early childhood. This in turn has proved to be the right choice. This year, the added challenge of once again returning to a favourite subject area 'the theory of music' is stimulating and enjoyable. I feel far better equipped to teach this subject now than I would have done as a young adult.

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