Teacher Participation in the National Children's Choir: An Interpretive Study

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed: _____ ID No.: 17213875 Date: 11th January 2023

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
AMD	Assistant Musical Director
AS	Activity System
AT	Activity Theory
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CM	Committee Member (of the NCC)
CoP	Community of Practice
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CRME	Culturally Responsive Music Education
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DAHG	Department of Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht
DE	Department of Education
DEIS	Delivering Equality in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
GoI	Government of Ireland
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
MD	Musical Director
MG	Music Generation
NCC	National Children's Choir
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCH	National Concert Hall
TC	Teaching Council
WAM	Western Art Music

Abstract

Richard Coady

Teacher Participation in the National Children's Choir:
An Interpretive Study

Choral singing has characterised music in Irish primary schools for over 100 years as the dominant musical activity and while current government policy advocates for the creative potential of the arts in schools, music as a curricular subject at primary level continues to encounter many challenges. Established in 1985, the National Children's Choir (NCC) is a choral singing programme for senior primary school children, typically aged 9-12 years in the Republic of Ireland. Offered biennially, the programme involves teachers teaching their classes an extensive collection of songs and then sharing rehearsals and concerts with neighbouring, participating schools. The choral experience is characterised by a challenging repertoire, a range of musical genres, and delivery of the programme by primary school teachers in their classrooms or schools.

The current study explores the concept of teacher participation in the NCC pondering: What is the nature and significance of teacher participation? The study is framed within hermeneutic phenomenology and was conducted across three phases, beginning with preliminary data collection and document analysis, followed by an exploratory phase with teachers and principals from four schools, and finally drawing on in-depth interviews with six participating teachers. The qualitative data is complemented by documentary material and statistical data which locate the NCC in its historical and contemporary context. Bourdieu's (1977, 1986, 1990) socio-cultural concepts, together with Engeström's (1999, 2001) activity theory are employed to frame and critique interpretations and meanings of teacher participation.

Findings indicate that teacher participation in the NCC is a multi-dimensional construct, resulting in multiple outcomes across the domains of teaching and learning, identity, power, capital, and transformation. The data suggests that the nature of teacher participation is broadly positive, where teachers' musical and professional capital and personal identities are valued and enriched in the habitus of participation. However, the hierarchical structures and narrow aims of the NCC suggest the maintenance of a homogenous, replicative vision of musical experience, inconsistent with contemporary music education research and policy narratives. The findings also suggest ambiguity among participants towards considerations of more collaborative, culturally responsive approaches to music education and the musical repertoire. More broadly, the study points to a need to re-examine the purpose of choral music education in primary schools and the role of external arts organisations, such as the NCC, in curricular provision. Given the current focus on curriculum redevelopment at national level, the study provides an opportunity to critique the NCC within the wider primary school curriculum vision and reimagine its place within music education in the 21st century primary school.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Choral singing has characterised the Irish primary music classroom for over 100 years, beginning as part of Revised Programme for Instruction in 1900 (Walsh, 2007). Singing continues to be the dominant musical activity in primary schools today, due to its broad reach within Irish schools and society, and its accessibility as an instrument (Government of Ireland [GoI], 1999b; Sheil, 2008). However, singing in schools is often led by "enthusiastic teachers working in isolation", which can lead to the uneven and unequal provision of music education countrywide and thus missed opportunities for children (Ashley, 2013, p. 2).

The status of music education in Ireland has been subject to much criticism and critique, with various reports and policies identifying weaknesses and advocating for reform (Benson, 1979; Doyle, 2019; Heneghan, 2001; Herron, 1985; Irish National Teachers' Organisation [INTO], 2009). Indeed, arts education in general, and music education in particular, continually justifies its place within the educational context, often for its "desirable cultural influence" rather than its value as a subject in its own right (Fautley & Murphy, 2015; Pitts, 2000, p. 34). Unfortunately, plans for improvement are "often a more accurate reflection of ideological yearning than of the reality of schools and classrooms" (Bresler & Thompson, 2002, p. 153). More broadly, it has been argued that education, through numerous reforms, has become hegemonic and monocultural, leading to a system that is controlled by too few individuals and consumed by neo-liberal ideals (Howard et al., 2021).

Many organisations work in collaboration with schools to support and facilitate musical experiences and music education (Flynn & Johnston, 2017; Kenny, 2014; INTO, 2009). Both internationally and in Ireland, the possibilities of partnerships between schools and external organisations to enhance the provision of music in schools has been noted and advocated (Fahy & Kenny, 2021; Flynn & Johnston, 2017; Partington, 2018). Organisations such as Music Generation, RTÉ's Music in the Classroom, The Cross-Border Orchestra of Ireland Peace Proms and Dublin Diocesan Laudate programme operate in collaboration with schools, promoting and enabling various musical activities, including choral singing, for primary school children. This study is based on a foundational organisation that has worked in partnership with teachers and schools, facilitating choral singing since 1985: the National Children's Choir (NCC).

1.1 The National Children's Choir (NCC)

The NCC is a choral singing programme for primary school pupils in Ireland from 4th to 6th class (traditionally children aged nine to twelve). The choir forms biennially and is offered to schools who can choose to affiliate and participate on a non-commercial basis. Essentially, it

involves teaching a predetermined repertoire of songs to participating classes in a school, joining with local schools to rehearse three times during the school year, and finally performing with other schools at a regional concert for the public. Each two-year cycle culminates in a final showcase of three public concerts at the National Concert Hall (NCH), Dublin. Here a select number of children who participated in the regional concerts combine for a final performance of the repertoire. The choir is led by three musical directors (MDs) alongside a national committee, supported by regional committees and assistant musical directors (AMD) around the country (INTO, 2009). AMDs are experienced teachers who have participated in the NCC and are selected to direct some NCC regional rehearsals and concerts.

The NCC programme was founded in 1985 by the late Dr Seán Creamer, a Department of Education (DE) Inspector of Music, who was the original musical director of the choir. A historical biography of Creamer is contained in Appendix B. The choir was created to perform as part of the European Year of Music in 1985, and Creamer approached teachers with his ambition for a combined choir of senior primary school children. The initial aims of the choir as articulated in the original 1985 programme are:

- The NCC aims to further the cause of music in Primary Schools.
- The NCC aims to expand the repertoire of songs currently taught in our schools
- The NCC aims to highlight the importance of music in the social and intellectual development of children.

(NCC, 1985; Appendix A)

The vision of the choir is to bring "massed choral singing of the very highest quality to the reach of every primary school, regardless of size, pupil numbers or even facilities" (NCC, 2019, p. 2). The musical repertoire performed aims to include pieces that represent Ireland's "cultural heritage, classical genres and the modern musical idiom" (NCC, 2019, p. 2). Following Creamer's retirement, he was succeeded by three female musical directors [MDs], Mairéad Deiseach, Órla Gillan and Anne Purcell, who have co-directed the choir since 2007 (NCC, 2015).

The role of the MDs includes the selection, and sometimes arrangement, of the repertoire, including type setting the scores and vocal parts, recording teaching CDs with vocal lines and piano accompaniment, and advising teachers of their agreed interpretation of the musical works. When the repertoire is prepared, the resources are disseminated to registered teachers and schools. The choir is characterised by the challenging nature of the repertoire, the scale of the organisation, and the high standard of singing required to participate. (Boyd, 1999; McCarthy, 1999a; cf. Appendix A). The Appendix C contains an analysis of the schools and repertoire of the NCC from 1985 – 2019, which contains useful contextual information relating to the makeup of the choir and repertoire. The following sections will consider the origins of the programme, followed by an overview of how one participates in the NCC.

1.1.1 Origins of the NCC

Since the introduction of the National School System almost two hundred years ago, the prevalence of singing as the main musical activity within primary schools has been a constant (INTO, 2009; McAuliffe Ryng, 2005; McCarthy, 2010). This legacy of song singing was endorsed by DE Inspectors for Music during the 20th century. Proinnsais Ó Ceallagh, the Organising Inspector for Cork, established the Córfhéile na Scoile (Choir Festival for Schools) in 1948 and Cantarí Óga Átha Cliath in 1960 (Beausang, 2002; Cork International Choral Festival, 2022). Supporting his colleague, another inspector Briain Ó Dubhghaill led both these organisations as musical director, and was well known with Cantarí Óga Átha Cliath who were renowned for their performances of music from the Western Art Music [WAM] and Irish folk tradition (Adams, 1999; Cork International Choral Festival, 2022). The Organising Inspector system, of which Ó Ceallagh, Ó Dubhghail and Creamer were members, was an important influence on primary school music as they visited schools in their regions, providing support and music courses for teachers (Beausang, 2002). Furthermore, all three inspectors led choral music outside of their roles, each having a choir of their own, which further supported the role of singing as their musical activity of choice.

During the middle of the 20th century in Ireland, the advancement of religious, nationalistic ideals and the Irish language permeated much of the educational discourse and reform agenda (McCarthy, 2010; Walsh, 2012, 2016). The NCC was conceived within this context and amid the backdrop of numerous reports on the failings of music and arts education through the poor implementation of the 1971 curriculum (Benson, 1979; Herron, 1985). In response to these reports, Music was given a prominent place in the revision of educational agendas, culminating in Ireland's celebration of the European Music Year in 1985 (McCarthy, 1999a). Involving country wide activities, one of its key goals was to foster a common European heritage through Ireland's education system (McCarthy, 1999a). The NCC was one of the major musical endeavours of that year, led by Creamer from within the DE.

Therefore, the preoccupation of policy makers with song singing as the musical activity of choice emerges from a variety of factors co-existing at the same time. McCarthy argues that projects such the NCC "whose end was a stage performance, were responding to the idea of music education as cultural education" (as was endorsed by the European Year of Music initiative) and this endorsed the apparent civilising purpose of music education (1999a, p. 153). The NCC, particularly in its earlier years, attended to the ambitions of high culture and societal ideals desired by politicians and policymakers, promoting the Irish language, religious repertoire, and national identity (McCarthy, 1999; Boyd, 1999; Hollwey, 1987). In the initial concerts, the NCC was named Cór Náisiúnta na nÓg (NCC, 1985; Appendix A). However, that title is no longer used, perhaps due to the existence of the Irish broadcaster RTÉ's children's choir which now uses

the Irish language title. It is noteworthy that at the final NCH concerts the choir performs "Amhrán na bhFiann", the Irish national anthem, prior to the concert starting. A significant mark of respect and identity usually reserved for national sports activities or presidential events, the singing of the national anthem may be a subtle way of aligning the NCC with a broader sense of national identity.

1.1.2 Development of the NCC

Creamer's unique position within the DE and the wider choral music scene in Ireland enabled the NCC to grow and gain considerable attention from many music educators and academics. Drawing on personal communications contained in Appendix A, the eminent musicologist Joseph Groocock referred to the NCC's founding as "surely…one of the most momentous happenings in music in this country", while John Harris of the DE praised the choir for "bring[ing] music alive in schools and giv[ing] young people a love for it". The President of the Cork Choral Festival and the former Association of Irish Choirs, Professor Aloys Fleishchmann referred to the choir as "a great step in bringing children to the joy and fulfilment of choral singing" (Appendix A).

The NCC was supported by ESB during the 1990s which enabled its expansion from approximately 4,000 children nationally to over 8,000 in 1997 (NCC, 2015). There is currently no official sponsor of the NCC as of 2022. The choir expanded geographically from its roots in major urban centres such as Dublin and Cork, and has had participant schools from the 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland, two from Northern Ireland and even one year collaborating with a school in the Netherlands (NCC, 2015). The NCC claim that 1 in every 6 primary schools has participated at some stage over the choir's lifetime, however in 2019 the choir was more centred around Leinster (NCC, 2015; Appendix D).

In the years that followed, many in the Irish education and musical sphere have acknowledge the significant contribution of Creamer and the NCC to Irish primary music education. McCarthy pointed out the success of Creamer's engagement and utilisation of classroom teachers in the delivery of the programme and its aims: "At no other time in the history of Irish primary music education were the national music talents of classroom teachers tapped with such effectiveness as they have been in this creative project" (McCarthy, 1999a, p. 153). In the same year, Brian Boyd of the *Irish Times* commented on the uniqueness of the project within Europe bringing together thousands of children that year in "thundering harmonies". The redesigned curriculum of 1999 includes a picture of the NCC as a notable exemplar of how teachers could use choral singing and public performances to enhance music education in their schools (Government of Ireland, 1999b, p. 87).

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the NCC in 2015, the choir produced a souvenir book "Thank You For the Music" that reflects on the developments and reactions expressed by

journalists, children and others involved over the choir's history (see Appendix A). Following Creamer's death in 2016, another *Irish Times* writer and former NCC member, Una Mullally, wrote that there is "now a part missing from all the harmonies we hear" and summed up his impact on choral music in Ireland "immeasurable" (2016). The 2019 NCH programme pays tribute to Creamer saying, "the flame lit in 1985 still burns as brightly as ever" (2019, p. 2).

While the historical context of music in Irish primary school during this time will be discussed in Chapter 2, this section concludes with brief outline of how schools, teachers and children participate in the NCC.

1.1.3 Participation in the NCC

As outlined above, the NCC programme takes place biennially, with teacher participation occurring over a full school year. Preparation and planning by the MDs and the National Committee occurring in the preceding year. At time of writing, the NCC has not performed since May 2019 and therefore the outline presented below are the typical events of an NCC cycle but may not be representative of future cycles. Table 1.1 outlines the main parts of the two-year cycle, Year 1 being the year preceding participation and Year 2 being the year schools and teachers participate. The outline of the cycle is based on the researcher's own experience of the programme in addition to the contextual interviews conducted with the MDs and NCC CMs.

Year 1	September – January	MD select the repertoire.
	September – April	MDs trial songs with their own schools.
	January – April	Scores prepared and teaching recordings created.
	July	Teachers participate in an optional summer course.
	September	Schools register and begin teaching the repertoire.
Year 2	November	1st Regional Group Rehearsal
	January	2nd Regional Group Rehearsal
	February	3rd Regional Group Rehearsal
	March – May	Regional Concerts
	Late May	NCH Concerts

Table 1.1: *Typical NCC Cycle*

In Year 1, the MDs consider the repertoire for the following year, working with some or all the children in their own school to trial songs and establish a balance of difficulty level and range of genres for the programme. In addition to trialling the repertoire, they also arrange the scores for printing, agreeing the division of soprano and alto parts for each song and ensuring a

clear and uniform interpretation of the repertoire is presented to teachers through the sheet music. Further standardisation of the repertoire occurs as they record a set of teaching recordings, with each part recorded together with piano accompaniment. These are then split into teaching CDs containing Soprano and Alto parts only, alongside a recording of the solo piano accompaniment and the full performance. The score and CDs therefore make up the resource pack for schools, which will guide teachers in the teaching and interpretation of the repertoire.

In early July, teachers are invited to attend a DE approved summer course in Dublin for five days to learn the repertoire facilitated by the three MDs. This course grants teachers three Extra Paid Vacation days during the school term as a reward for attending the course, however each course must adhere to DE guidelines on content, links to the curriculum and quality control. During this week, teachers learn and perform the entire repertoire as a choir. The MDs provide teaching notes for individual pieces, as well as modelling choir rehearsals and facilitating questions from participants at various stages during the week. Teachers receive the repertoire and teaching materials during this week also. The week-long course allows teachers to experience the music first hand and learn to perform it as a choir. In this way, participating teachers become intimately familiar with all the elements of participation in the NCC in an immersive, social environment. Participation in the summer course is highly recommended by the MDs but is not a prerequisite to participation. Additionally, day-long refresher workshop(s) are usually held in the Autumn, primarily outside Dublin. These are offered to affiliated teachers who could not attend the summer course or for those who require extra support.

In Year 2, schools affiliate with the NCC in early September and schools begin dividing their participating classes into soprano and alto groups and teaching the repertoire. During the academic year, the children take part in three regional group rehearsals with neighbouring schools. The regional group clusters are organised by a volunteer regional organiser, supported by a regional committee, who liaises with schools to facilitate a rehearsal in a host school with a hall. These rehearsals are led by either one of the MDs or Assistant Music Directors (AMDs), and involve practising a set group of songs, working on difficulties that arise, ensuring uniformity of interpretation among participating schools, and modelling good choral practice for the attending teachers.

In Spring of Year 2, all the affiliated schools will take part in a regional concert, organised by their regional committee, which will be accompanied by an orchestra and conducted by an MD or AMD. The Dublin concerts take place first and are conducted by the three MDs in rotation, followed by other regional concerts. Most children's participation in the NCC finishes after their regional concert. Following these concerts, the National Committee invites all schools to select approximately 10% of the children who participated in the regional performances to perform in one of the three NCH concerts in May of Year 2. These children have two more

rehearsals (one regional and one the day of the concert in the NCH) and perform with the full NCC orchestra conducted by one of the MDs. These concerts are considered a showcase of the work completed by schools, teachers, and children during the NCC year, and complete the two-year cycle.

1.2 Research Context

The NCC has been noted for embodying best practice in the field of school-based singing, in that it is delivered by primary school practitioners who also have choral experience or expertise (Doyle, 2019; McCarthy, 1999). To date, over 160,000 children have participated since its inception almost forty years ago (NCC, 2019). The programme has changed little over its lifespan, and many of the members who were involved in or linked to the initial concerts still occupy senior positions within the choir.

However, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA] notes that primary school children, primary classrooms and wider society have evolved and changed considerably since the NCC's inception. In their introduction to the proposed new curriculum framework, the NCCA note that education and schooling must respond to:

- Global developments such as climate change, migration, and sustainability.
- Irish societal developments including the increasingly diverse nature of learners, encompassing various ages, abilities, cultures, ethnicities, religions, identities.
- Educational developments such as the implementation of education and special educational needs legislation, the formalisation of early childhood education provision, the impact of the Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life strategy, the revision of the Junior Cycle curriculum, and the introduction of the new Primary Language Curriculum.
- Learning developments such as the increasing focus on developing competencies such as digital literacy and creativity, employing child-led methodologies and the introduction of new areas of learning such as wellbeing, coding and modern foreign languages at primary level (NCCA, 2020).

A reimagined primary school curriculum must also respond to the criticisms of the current primary curriculum, including curriculum overload and the existence of subject hierarchies (Fahy & Kenny, 2022; Gubbins, 2021; Hallam et al., 2010; NCCA, 2010, 2020). Regarding music education, primary school teachers, schools and policy makers continue to face numerous challenges in 21st century primary classrooms. There has been a sustained critique of the content of school music programmes which are often drawn from a dominant, school-music culture containing repertoire from the Western Art Music (WAM) tradition, rather than music that

resonates with children's own experiences and interests in music (de Quadros, 2015; Green, 2002, 2006, 2008; Murray, 2022; Spruce, 2015). The literature has also been critical of the homogenous nature of some music programmes and curricula within increasingly diverse, multicultural classrooms (Kelly-McHale, 2013; Spruce, 2015). It is argued that music education must move beyond preservation and remain contemporary and open to change, responding to the wider global trends of sustainability and inclusion, and new educational agendas which embrace student voice and culturally responsive pedagogies (Finnerty, 2017; Holdhus et al., 2021). However, much of the literature argues that music classrooms and curricula have been found to facilitate traditional, teacher-led experiences, perpetuating a dominant form of capital that is culturally and historically static (Wright, 2015a, 2015b).

In addition to the curricular challenges, much has been written about the problematic place of teachers in primary school music, including a consistent lack of perceived confidence among generalist primary school teachers, which impacts the quality and content of music education facilitated in schools (Hennessy, 2017; INTO, 2009; Mills, 1989; Seddon & Biasutti, 2008). In addition to this, it has been argued that teachers' previous musical experiences have a substantial effect on the teaching methodologies used, the genres of music taught, and their attitudes and dispositions towards music education and its purpose (Bresler, 1998; Kenny, 2017). It is argued that teachers teach as they were taught and carry their positive or negative mindsets regarding subjects into the classroom (Stakelum, 2008b).

Currently policy places creativity at the centre of future arts education curriculum, establishing the Creative Ireland and corresponding Creative Youth and Creative Schools programmes (GoI, 2016; 2017). Additionally, curriculum reform is underway following on from the Primary Language Curriculum. There will be a revised Mathematics Curriculum introduced from 2023 and a redesign of the curriculum structures and time allocations are currently underway, with extensive consultation on the future of the primary curriculum completed in 2020 (NCCA, 2020). Finally, both academics and policy makers advocate fostering meaningful links between school music making and external organisations in the community to promote learning of the arts through creative and collaborative opportunities and partnerships (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht & Department of Education and Skills, 2014; Fahy & Kenny, 2021; GoI, 2017; Kenny, 2014; Partington, 2018; Pitts, 2017). In summary the global, national, societal, educational and policy environments have evolved considerably since the NCC began, and the research will now reflect on the place of the researcher within the NCC and research context.

1.3 Researcher Positionality

It is important to state at the outset that the researcher's engaged, subjective, and substantial presence in the study and organisation is viewed as key to the interpretation of this research (Van

Manen, 2014). The researcher aims to be reflexive and use their experience and insight to capture a holistic understanding of the phenomenon of participation. Therefore, it was important to reflect on my own experiences and background, providing a context and rationale for my place within the research and my positionality as the researcher.

I am a musician and a teacher, with a newly formed researcher identity. I have played piano since I was seven years old and became serious about music after third year in secondary school. One day at school, I was asked to accompany the choir and piano accompaniment has been my main performance activity ever since. I have completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music, specialising in performance. I then completed a Master in Education degree focusing on assessment in music education and curriculum reform in the Junior Cycle. When I returned to study to become a primary teacher and subsequently in my job search, music was always central to my perceived role and identity as a primary school teacher. During my teaching career, I have participated in the NCC, taught piano to children privately and conducted various school choirs, while also working part-time with pre-service teachers at a third-level institution for many years. This involved me delivering lectures and workshops relating to primary music methodologies and content. I am fortunate to have taught music in four distinct educational contexts: primary, secondary, tertiary, and private instrumental tuition.

Over my twenty-five years of music making, I have performed, taught, and enjoyed a variety of music genres, albeit primarily through the lens of notation based WAM. I began learning popular songs from the ‘sixties, ‘seventies and eighties with my late elderly piano teacher, before joining a music conservatoire to complete my grade exams with the Associated Boards of the Royal Schools of Music. In secondary school, I accompanied choral repertoire with the school choirs alongside musical theatre and popular genres with the school musical society. I have performed as an accompanist with numerous soloists, choirs, chamber groups and musical societies. I also enjoy participating in choirs, although mostly behind the piano, and have always enjoyed group music making. I have sung with the Irish Youth Choir, RTÉ Philharmonic Choir and Ramparts Male Voice Choir.

From my early experiences in post-primary school, third level education, and throughout various professional events, as well as in my teaching career, I have always believed in the transformational power of music and the benefits experienced by many who take part in group music making (Hallam, 2010; Pitts, 2005; Turino, 2008). I believe that everyone can participate in music and become more musical. Solo performance, while my specialism during my degree, was never as fulfilling as group work. I enjoyed working with children and teachers, trying to develop their understanding of the musical elements through performing, listening, and composing activities. While music literacy, graded examinations and WAM made up a large part of my childhood music education, my experience since has involved me working with many ways of

making music. Most of my experience has been with groups who have not been exposed to the traditional Western based music education that I received. What I have learned is that to sustain one's interest, engagement and enjoyment in music, participants must feel part of the music making. From this viewpoint, active participation in music has always been important in my conceptualisation of what music education and life-long engagement in music should be and in my approach to teaching and learning in music education (Pitts, 2017, p. 20; Pitts et al., 2015; Spruce, 2015; Stakelum, 2008a).

In my initial years participating in the NCC, I helped to teach the repertoire alongside other colleagues, before being asked to lead our school's participation and accompany local rehearsals. My involvement with the NCC progressed to becoming an AMD and leading regional rehearsals, performing in the Dublin Regional and NCH concerts as part of the orchestra and joining the Dublin organising committee. I believe that my background in music has enabled me to participate effectively in the NCC. My experience in the NCC allowed me to return to my original passion of piano accompaniment, which was developed through my pre-teaching musical studies but has since been dormant. Working with the NCC allowed me to interact with a wide variety of schools and teachers sharing a vision of what music in schools should or might look like. The large numbers of teachers and schools who participate in the NCC suggest that the practice of participation is varied and diverse. It is this ambiguous nature of participation, viewed within the current research context of policy and curriculum renewal, alongside the recognised benefits of creative and collaborative partnerships in music education, and the continued success of the NCC, which led to the consideration of the research problem.

1.4 Research Problem and Rationale

Given what is known about contemporary music education research and policy, the researcher questioned the nature of teacher participation in the NCC, within the changing context of music education in primary schools, and sought to explore what are the outcomes of teacher participation in the NCC, what are the missed opportunities of participation, and ultimately what does teacher participation reveal about teachers' musical teaching and learning, the NCC as an organisation, and the wider music curriculum and policy landscape.

Drawing on the description of the NCC earlier, the choir appears to be a well organised, streamlined organisation with a clear outcome in mind for all teachers and children who participate. It enjoys broad support from many stakeholders in education, including policy makers, with a historical legacy dating back to the DE Inspectorate. Therefore, the choir occupies a significant position within the minds of many in music education in Irish primary schools. However, with the programme approaching 40 years old, much has changed in the field of music

education and reconciling teacher participation with the changing nature of primary school music education is problematic.

Personally, I have seen the dedication of participating teachers and the pride that they receive from involvement in it. I have also witnessed the efficient way in which teachers can learn the repertoire, be supported informally in their schools and through rehearsals, and ultimately teach a difficult collection of songs to the children in their classes. In doing this, it is accessible to a broad range of students and teachers, working homogeneously towards a shared target. On the one hand, I have enjoyed the challenge of teaching the programme and witnessed the achievements of teachers and children who participated in the programme and persevered to perform in the final concert. However, my work with many of the teachers both informally and as an AMD, has revealed much ambiguity among them regarding the implementation of the current curriculum and their engagement with contemporary music education philosophies, suggesting a narrow view of music education that focuses on presentational and performance-based music making that they feel aligns with participation in the NCC. This relationship between teachers, the NCC and music education and curriculum required investigation.

On a broader level, it would appear that there has been no significant published research conducted that relates to the NCC or the participating teachers. Given the significant scale and history of the programme and the research problem outlined above, my research focus will explore the nature and significance of teacher participation in the NCC. Furthermore, while teacher participation in the context of team teaching (Kerins, 2019), mentoring student teachers (Clarke et al., 2014) and in Continuous Professional Development [CPD] programmes (Hoban, 2002; Tarc, 2012) has been examined in the literature, their participation in extra-curricular programmes or alongside partnership organisations operating within schools has rarely been examined, with the focus typically centred on the children's experiences of these programme. In this research, it is argued that as teachers participate equally alongside children in the NCC and other initiatives, the nature of their participation is worthy of consideration. Therefore, given my own identity as a musician, a teacher, a researcher, and an NCC member, I sought out to question the nature of teacher participation in the NCC and what implications this could have on future policy and curriculum, as well as for the organisation itself.

1.5 Research Question

The research question emerged from this research problem which prompted me to examine the phenomenon of teacher participation, informed by other contextual data gathered as part of the study. Willig's (2012) work on qualitative research in general, and phenomenology in particular, focuses on understanding of the nature, meaning and significance of participation in extreme sports. Inspired by this, the research aim of this study is to investigate, understand and interpret

the nature of teacher participation in the NCC. From this central research aim, a two-fold research question emerges: ***What is the nature and significance of teacher participation in the NCC?*** In addressing this question, the researcher's objective is to understand how teachers participate in the NCC by considering the historical and cultural context of the phenomenon, examining of the various levels, trajectories, and hierarchies of teacher participation within the organisation, and finally critiquing and interpreting the nature and significance of teacher participation in the NCC.

1.6 Conceptualising Participation

The central construct under investigation in this study is participation. The interpretation of this study is informed by a theoretical framework which considers the multiple outcomes and influences on participation which shape the nature and significance of participation. This final part of the introductory chapter will conceptualise what teacher participation means in the context of this research and the various outcomes of participation. In doing so, this section will consider the theoretical, philosophical, and pedagogical underpinnings that inform the researcher and this study's theoretical framework. This in turn will advise the perspectives consulted in the literature review and the resulting conceptual framework that emerges thereafter. Before all of this, participation as a construct will now be defined.

To conceptualise what participation is, it is helpful to start as Wenger does with Webster's definition: "To have or take a part or share with others in some activity or enterprise" (1998, p. 55). Key here is the notion of sharing with others as participation is not a solo endeavour. Also, participation is not a fixed construct, but one that is negotiated with others within the context of the world (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Turino's work considers the concept of participatory performance, whereby he examines the value of participation in music and the significance of participating in music with others. He explains that "participatory music-dance is such a strong force for social bonding [that]… leads to diminished self-consciousness, because (ideally) everyone present is similarly engaged" (2008, p. 29). There is an implied equality therefore in everyone participating together and experiencing the same outcomes. However, Spruce (2015) and Wright (2015b) argue that participation alone can be limiting when aiming to facilitate a socially-just music education. McCarthy and Jinnett (2001) write that participation in the arts is not "dichotomous" and that there are multiple factors that influence one's level of participation, encompassing personal, community and socio-cultural dimensions. They also explain how participants will draw on their previous experiences to inform any future participation (McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001).

Considering participation more broadly, Reed et al. (2017) note that the likelihood of beneficial outcomes from participation depends on the context, design, power implications and scale of the activity. They argue that for positive results, all participants' values and contributions must be valued and that the design and context of the engagement should facilitate and encourage

learning as well as changes in attitudes and mindsets (Reed et al., 2017). Furthermore, Ten Dam and Blom explain that teacher participation can be "both a learning objective and a means of learning" (2006, p. 658). They explain that participation allows teachers to experience a real problem and work to find a real solution (Ten Dam & Blom, 2006). This study considers participation as a process but also as an outcome of the NCC. Therefore, it is argued that one cannot simply predetermine or predict the outcome or result of participation, as it depends upon numerous factors, as outlined here, which frame the positive or problematic nature of the participation.

In summary, participation is not experienced in the same way for all people and has multiple outcomes and influences. In the context of this research participation is a social activity, engaged in with others, that is also negotiated through the context and environment in which the activity resides. In conceptualising teacher participation, this study is underpinned by certain philosophical, theoretical, and pedagogical mindsets that implicate how participation in education is experienced, how teachers participate in education and music education, and what is the significance of this teacher participation. The philosophical, theoretical, and pedagogical underpinnings of this research will now be considered.

1.6.1 Philosophical Underpinnings

In this section, the philosophical underpinnings of education in general and music education in particular are discussed. One of the key philosophers considered within the field of education during this research is John Dewey. His work advocates for the link between education and social renewal, the importance of child-centred aims in education and for education to be a "reconstruction or reorganisation of experience which adds to the meaning of experience" (1916, p. 76). More specifically, Dewey tells us that meaning and the emergence of meaning from experience becomes practice (Maattanen, 2003). In this way practice and learning are closely linked, and meaning emerges and is influenced by previous experiences, in addition to potential future experiences (Maattanen, 2003). Building on Dewey's work, R.S. Peters explains education as "intentional transmission of what is worthwhile" (1966, as cited in Beckett, 2018, p.383). The worthwhile knowledge or experience that is valued by teachers is transferred to children through experiencing a common world over time (Becket, 2018).

However, Dewey is critical of societies and education systems that view the "maintenance of established customs as their measure of value" and what is worthwhile (1916, p. 79). The link between practices and meaning led to teachers and systems creating only what is valued in education, which can significantly impact the type of education they provide and their students (Lave, 2009). Therefore, Dewey's conceptualisation of education as being a power for social transformation and a dialogue between teacher-as-learner and child-as-learner is challenged by

some society's desire to reproduce previous experiences and maintain the status quo. Furthermore, Dewey cautions that not all experience is educational and that participation in education does not automatically result in learning. Therefore, as alluded to above, participation and experience in education is complex and one cannot assume that growth and learning will automatically stem from participation. Education is value laden and what is meaningful within a society and education system may not be meaningful for an individual learner.

This question of what is valued in education is influenced by one's *lifeworld*. Heidegger (1996), one of the key philosophers to embrace the term, explains that "as human beings we will always be in-relation-to the world that surround us…exist[ing] in our mutual relationship and involvement with the other" (Skibsted, 2020, p. 294). Indeed, one's lifeworld is shaped primarily through their experiences, with Hörberg et al. terming a lifeworld as "a world of experiences" (2019, p. 58). As mentioned earlier, participation only in these experiences does not automatically result in the "lifeworld expansion", with a diverse range of learning experiences necessary to cultivate learning as opposed to transmit knowledge (Barab & Roth, 2006). In short, each learner will have their "specific learning horizon" which is shaped by their "values, interests and perspectives" (Hörberg et al., 2019, p. 59). Therefore, participation in education should be meaningful to the individual and seek to engage, challenge, and broaden the lifeworld of the teacher and the learner, avoiding replicating the "established customs" warned against by Dewey earlier.

1.6.1.1 A Philosophy for Music Education

Considering music education specifically, there are many contrasting philosophies as to the aims and rationale of participation in music education within the wider school system. A substantial volume of literature has tried to agree on a purpose or aim for music education in both the primary school and wider contexts, with some common characteristics emerging (Pitts, 2000). These include the facilitation of performing (Campbell et al., 2007; Georgii-Hemming, 2011), the centrality of practical music making (Georgii-Hemming, 2011; Plummeridge, 1991), the importance of exposing children to a variety of musical genres (Green, 2002, 2008), the importance of recognising an inherent human need for music and therefore music education (Lamont, 2002, 2011), and the encouragement of music as a lifelong activity that is underpinned by the foundations laid in schools (Elpus, 2018; Georgii-Hemming, 2011; McQueen & Varvarigou, 2010; Pitts, 2017).

Therefore, the literature above presents two differing but linked purposes for music education in primary schools: the musical outcomes from participation in musical activities and the possible extra-musical outcomes from participation. Mills explains that "we teach music in school primarily because we want children, all children, to grow as musicians" (2005, pp. 5–6).

By, we can facilitate learners musically, as well as personally and socially. With this philosophical stance, musical education's purpose is to offer school-based opportunities and experiences to learners so that they develop as musicians (Jeanneret & DeGraffenreid, 2012; McCarthy & Goble, 2002; Stålhammar, 2006).

However, in addition to musical aims, many writers advocate for the extrinsic benefits or outcomes of music education. These are linked to participation in musical activities, but their purpose is to facilitate broader academic, social, and personal benefits. These include literacy and oral language development (Csapó & Asztalos, 2014; Hallam, 2010), numeracy (Heyning, 2010), students' perceptions and attitudes towards the arts (Mills, 2005; Pacheco & Milhano, 2007), their ability to collaborate and work as part of a team (McCoy, 2012), one's mental health and self-efficacy (Lonsdale & Stewart, 2016; Ritchie & Williamon, 2011). More broadly, McQueen and Varvarigou (2010) write that music education can lead to societal benefits, lasting long into adulthood following formal schooling. The aim of music education can therefore offer a trinity of benefits: "personal, social and musical" (Pitts, 2005, p. 141). By offering school-based opportunities to participate in music education, the intended aims are both musical and extra-musical (Jeanneret & DeGraffenreid, 2012; Stålhammar, 2006).

Closely linked to the purpose of music education is the search for a rationale for music education. McCarthy in her examination of music history summarises the liberatory possibilities of music education, suggesting a more socially-just rationale for music education:

> [Music aims] to provide a socio-cultural good, to maintain social control, to contribute to socio-political ordering, to build international harmony among nations, to represent the interests of marginalised groups, and to enrich the lives of youth from lower socioeconomic or underserved populations.
>
> (McCarthy, 2015, p. 30)

Similar to Dewey's value-laden and meaningful view of education, music education, and performance skills in particular, have been viewed as desirable goals for young people, particularly in Western cultures (Campbell et al., 2007; McCarthy, 2015; McCarthy & Goble, 2002). Bowman (2018) writes that much of the historical literature on music's place in education stems from advocacy, maintaining the stance that music should be included in formal education with little consideration of any arguments against its inclusion. Within education, music was not always advocated for its musical benefits or musical knowledge, but for another societal or political cause (Fautley & Murphy; 2015; McCarthy, 2015). In understanding the nature of participation, the rationale for music's inclusion in formal schooling, at least historically, was often for societal good rather than individual's musical education.

In the Western world, music in schools has historically been linked with preparing students to be better citizens, to build a sense of national identity and create a socially cohesive

society. This was the case in England, through the encouragement of patriotic unity and cooperation (Saunders et al., 2010), America, through the use of folk songs in education to rescue immigrants who were outside the cultural norms of the time (McCarthy, 2015), and indeed in Ireland where music was intended to be "a pleasant and living element of school life, as a vital means of self-expression, as a preparation for social life and as a basis for further musical appreciation and creation." (T. Walsh, 2012, p. 274). Hence, while the aim of music education may have included musical benefits and extrinsic benefits, the rationale was more aligned with political, cultural, and societal ideals and desires.

Building on this philosophy for music education, participation in primary school music programmes in Ireland the UK continues to be closely linked with religious participation (McCarthy, 2010; Saunders et al., 2010; Welch et al., 2009). Welch found in his study of Canterbury choral schools that music and singing was "a central part of the children's education and induction into religious life" (2010, p. 226). In Ireland, a similar rationale for music involved the cultivation of religious unity among Catholics in the newly formed republic, alongside promoting the Irish language and sense of Irish identity (McCarthy, 2010). Historical accounts (B. Walsh, 2016; T. Walsh, 2007, 2012, 2016) present considerable evidence of an Irish school system influenced by the church, and the use of music to promote the agendas of political and religious leaders over the past century. In summary, the rationale for music in the Irish sense is outlined by McCarthy here:

> Music held a firm footing in the curriculum, less as a subject in its own right and more as a servant to the advancement of nationalist ideals of language revival, the development of a Catholic ethos in school and society and the improvement of Ireland's musical image and culture. (2010, p. 71)

The wide-ranging purpose of music education outlined thus far presents a problem for policy makers and writers who perhaps yearn for a unifying purpose to music education in primary schools. Pitts admits that music curricula in the UK (and arguably in Ireland) includes many "powerful claims" which can lead to a "misunderstanding" of its purpose (Pitts, 2017, p. 160). Bowman (2018) found that music education and educators continue to advocate for music's place within primary and secondary schools without always being able to clearly outline its purpose amid a crowded curriculum built on accountability, outputs and objectivity. Fautley and Murphy (2015) detail their experience of "well-meaning responses" when asking about the benefits of music. They warn that "if music is only there to make you better at something else, why not just do something else instead?" (Fautley & Murphy, 2015, p. 120). Pitts explains that, in her view, the "search for a general goal for music education will inevitably fail if it assumes that the aims and outcomes will be the same for all" (Pitts, 2000, p. 40). The possible individualisation of music education is noteworthy in that the one-size-fits-all approach, which historically may

have been adequate, is arguably out of date in the contemporary context of 21st century schools (Spruce, 2015).

In conclusion, while the aim and purpose of music education in primary schools involves musical learning and activities alongside extrinsic social, psychological, and personal benefits, the deeper rationale can be traced back to a time when music served the desires of stakeholders and was a vehicle for societal and cultural progress. While the current Irish music curriculum aims and rationale will be discussed in Chapter 2, the philosophical ideal that this research presents is one where education facilitates meaningful, learner-centred experiences and practices that engage learners' lifeworlds, values, and dispositions. Participation in music education, it is argued, should therefore draw on these assumptions and facilitative musical and extra-musical outcomes from participation, rather than become "mis-educative possibilities" (Dewey, 1916, p. 79) that serve societal and political desires for a type of upward mobility through the musical enculturation of learners. These philosophical underpinnings of participation in education are embodied in the work of three social theorists whose work informs the theoretical framework of teacher participation in this study.

1.6.2 Theoretical Underpinnings

In this section the key theorists that underpin the literature review, design of the research, formulation of the conceptual framework and analysis of the study are outlined. This research draws heavily on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), and his three socio-cultural concepts *capital*, *habitus*, and *field*, to understand and interpret the nature and significance of teacher participation in the NCC. Bourdieu's work underpins many of the studies in the literature review (Kingsbury, 1988; O'Toole, 2013; Perkins, 2013b; Prior, 2013; Stakelum, 2008b; Valenzuela & Codina, 2014; Wright, 2015a, 2015b) and therefore is key to explaining participation in the context of this research.

This is followed by an examination of the power implication of participation, drawing on the work of Michel Foucault relating to the power structures of organisations, from prisons to schools (Foucault, 1991). His thinking around schooling is rooted in Heidegger's understanding of education as being value laden and Foucault explored the conditioning possibilities of those who shape and influence learners' lifeworlds or habitus (Bonnett, 2001). The final theory considered is a socio-cultural theory of learning, drawing on situated learning theory first articulated by Lave & Wenger (1991) and refined in Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice model. In this tradition, learning is linked to participation and is mediated by the social and cultural world in which the learning occurs. As outlined earlier, this learning is linked to practice and is influenced by past experiences, members of the learning community, and can continually evolve and change.

1.6.2.1 Bourdieu's Capital

Bourdieu (1986) presents two forms of capital: cultural capital and social capital. He argues that cultural capital can be acquired through conscious means, once time and sustained effort is exerted and can alter one's place and position on the societal hierarchy, possibly leading to social mobility (Pollard & Alexander, 2019). Cultural capital allows what is usually learned through experience by one person or group, to be externalised, hold status and value, and therefore be passed on and preserved by wider society (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu asserts that "to ensure the perpetuation of cultural resources which would otherwise disappear with the agents who beat them, [the education system] has to resort to inculcation" (1990, p. 125). It is argued that participation is mediated by different types of capital which can reproduce culturally valued practices or knowledge and preserve dispositions and institutions through cultural capital's three distinct states:

- in the embodied state, in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body
- in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods
- in the institutionalised state, a form of objectification

(Bourdieu, 1986, p. 17)

In its embodied state, cultural capital is linked to social class, society and ultimately power (Bourdieu, 1986). It can be acquired informally and unconsciously through learning, education systems, parents, etc. and is closely tied with one's identity and habitus as will be explored. Linked very closely is the objectified state, whereby objects, books, repertoires, etc. are infused with cultural capital that is desired and valued. These resources help participants to acquire cultural capital through participation and help to pass on cultural capital to others through the exchange of these cultural goods. In the case of this study, procedures, routines, repertoires, guidelines, etc. could all be considered objective forms of cultural capital. Finally, in its institutionalised state, cultural capital holds its status and value through its association with an institution. Bourdieu explains that this type of capital, "confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legal guaranteed value with respect to cultural, social alchemy" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). This type of capital can be prestigious and desirable, depending on the status of the linked institution, and is evident in all areas of education from elite universities, organisations, excellence programmes, etc.

Considering these three states, we see cultural capital as being embedded within one's everyday life and interactions as part of their "cultural DNA" (Wright, 2015b). Participation in an esteemed institution and interacting with culturally valued goods and practices, opens teachers and society to desirable and valuable capital. It is argued that not all cultural capital is valued equally, and there are "better cultural capitals", dependent upon what is valued in the agent's society (O'Toole, 2016, p. 36). One reason for the valuing of some capitals over others is the impact of the resulting social capital which stems from participation and which provides

opportunities for social mobility and obtaining future economic capital (Grenfell, 2012). This is important in the conceptualisation of participation as an unequal construct and the potential advantaging of those participants who desire and can obtain these valued forms of capital.

Social capital relates to the connections that are afforded to those who are a member of a group, organisation, or culturally respected practice (Bourdieu, 1986). It consists of the "information or the reinforcement of educationally instrumental norms, which can be accessed within one's social networks" (Barrett & Martina, 2012, p. 251). In this way, the broader societal value of various forms of capital contribute to the desirability of such capital. The opportunities and connections provided through music institutions have been extensively written about, particularly the possibilities for social mobility and transcending class barriers (Kingsbury, 1988; Nettl, 1995; Perkins, 2013a, 2013b). By mixing with like-minded peers in schools, social capital assimilates and is reinforced, supported by the inherited social capital of families and communities. More widely, the reproduction of social capital is achieved through socialisation, with the goal being to further the networks and opportunities for capital transfer of all kinds to occur, thus maintaining the value of the capital with a particular social group (Bourdieu, 1986).

Therefore, participation can manifest itself as the preservation and promotion of middle-class values, in the social context of the participation with like-minded peers and through the passing on and preservation of cultural capital such as resources, traditions, structures, etc. This aligns with the philosophy of participation in music education as a possible civilising endeavour. In this way, participation can positively affect those who wish to acquire these forms of capital, while presenting a barrier to those who may exist outside the social network or those with differing ideologies and conceptualisations of the types of capital that should be valued. The nature of participation is further influenced by the habitus and field of participation through which the different forms of capital are exchanged and promoted.

1.6.2.2 Habitus and Field of Participation

The second of Bourdieu's widely used socio-cultural concepts is *habitus*. This is defined as "history transformed into nature" and a "way of being, a habitual state and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination" (Bourdieu, 1977, as cited in Throop & Murphy, 2002, p. 187). Brändstörm explains the significance of one's habitus when participating in an activity:

> Habitus integrates the individual's earlier experiences, and its physical roots will cause people to be drawn to and prefer to be in environments that are in harmony with habitus, environments where people feel at home and can experience physical balance and well-being. These circumstances are integral parts of social and cultural reproduction and essential contributions to the existence of the social world. (1999, p. 56)

Important here is the multiple influences on one's habitus, drawing participants to a place where they "feel at home" (Brändstörm, 1999). Bourdieu uses habitus to explain the tension between an individual's own experiences, values and dispositions and their relationship with the structures and experiences out there in the world (Throop & Murphy, 2002).

The negotiation of this position shapes one's identity and establishes a sense of comfort and belonging within the habitus of participation. Bourdieu (1986) argues that our capacity to act independently is limited by a menu of choices referred to as structure, and our behaviours therefore become part of our habitus and we forget their origins. Stakelum (2008a) and Jorgensen (2012) similarly argue that in education, teachers can reside comfortably within their habitus of familiar practices, allowing for the cultivation of a strong sense of identity and belonging, reinforcing a static, narrow field of experience. The habitus of participants can therefore be a "mixed blessing" which may encourage insularity and close-mindedness among members of the community (Jorgenson, 2012). As Brändstörm notes above, habitus is an integral part of the social world and in the context of this study, the socio-cultural habitus and lifeworld of teachers arguably affects the nature of their participation in the NCC, and the resulting nature of the music education within their classrooms.

It is implied therefore that a teacher's habitus affects the formation of their identity, shaped by their previous experiences and by other like-minded members in their community. Teachers who are comfortable in the habitus of participation may develop a badge of identity that emboldens them to reproduce extant practices and routines, rather than encourage them to move outside their comfort zone. This is further complicated when one considers the final of Bourdieu's constructs, *field*.

Bourdieu describes the field as a game:

> In a game, the field (the pitch or board on which it is played, the rules, the outcome at stake, etc.) is clearly seen for what it is, an arbitrary social construct, an artefact whose arbitrariness and artificiality are underlined by everything that defines its autonomy – explicit and specific rules, strictly by deliminated and extra-ordinary time and space. (1990, p.67)

From Bourdieu's definition, two noteworthy points emerge in relation to exploring participation in an organisation like the NCC. The field as an "arbitrary social construct" implies that organisations are not organic but are established as "an artefact" or an object in its own right, bound by the rules and procedures that define it, whether they be explicit or implicit (Bourdieu, 1990; Wenger, 1998). Wright (2015a) describes how players within this field need to understand their position and the boundaries which define it. Secondly, as alluded to earlier, participants on the field are not equal and their position is defined by their habitus and capital (Grenfell, 2021). Perkins (2013) describes players trying to maximise their experience and their hierarchical

position within the field. Therefore, the multiple positions within the field have corresponding power implications. These powerful players can either seek to "conserve or transform the structure of relations of forces that is constitutive of the field", informed by their values, habitus, and capital within the field (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 39). In this way, participation can reimagine and challenge the limitations of the field or protect and maintain them.

Therefore, Bourdieu's work underpins the lens through which teacher participation is conceptualised, as a construct that can be used to maintain capital, habitus, and the rules of the field, or transform it. The various forms and hierarchies of capital and rules of the field suggest another important theoretical concept which has implications for understanding participation: *power*.

1.6.2.3 Power Implications of Participation

It has been argued that capital offers "social and cultural advantage and disadvantage" (Moore, 2008), and subsequently there are power implications when one considers who and what is advantaged and disadvantaged. Participation can be understood as a way of endorsing and maintaining the power of those whose experiences, identity and habitus align with the dominant social and cultural field (Clark et al., 2012). Bourdieu explains how this dichotomy is key to understanding "the dynamic relationship between education and the reproduction of class groups" (1977, p. 50). In examining school participation by "mainstream and non-mainstream backgrounds", Barrett and Martina found that:

> [Students navigate] through the rules governing the institutional life of the school and are less likely to have 'picked up' the implicit knowledge and social and cultural capital selectively valued and rewarded in schools through socialisation within their immediate family or social context. They are therefore less likely to be successful in school as this requires not only academic competence, but also the knowledge and ability to decode the system and to play by 'the rules of the game'. (2012, p. 251)

In this example, students who are outside of the game are disadvantaged in participation, and therefore cannot access the capital which could advantage them. It is not suggested that this is deliberate but the power dynamics of institutions such as schools, groups and organisations mean that participants can reside outside of the system due to their lack of social capital, while the institutions can be protected by those comfortable within their habitus in the dominant cultural field.

Participation therefore can also manifest as a form of power and control whereby participants and organisations in positions of power decide the type of capital that is valued, and therefore who is advantaged by the rules of the field. Foucault's work focused on "the power/knowledge relations", viewing humans as subjects who are "disciplined" by society and, for younger children, by what he termed "the pedagogical machine" (Ball, 2018; Peters, 2001, p.

174). While this language is strong, Foucault's writings were intended to be metaphorical, understanding humans as being confined within inevitable structures (Ball, 2018; Dwyer, 1995). He explains his work as "a critique of what we are, …[an] analysis of the limits that are imposed on us…and the possibility of going beyond them" (Foucault, 1997, as cited in Ball, 2018, p. 3). Therefore, Foucault understands power dynamics as a constant part of organisational structures in our society, and constructs such as schooling or music making are confined by their very design and through the types of capital that are valued or unrepresented.

Considering participation in music education specifically, research by Kingsbury (1988) on how power and hierarchies manifest within music conservatories is useful in understanding how power structures protect dominant cultural capital (e.g. musical repertoire, practices, organisation structures). He discusses the meritocracies that support individuals who have talent bestowed on them by those in power within the social hierarchy (Kingsbury, 1988). Going further, he explains that "the notion of talent is that of differentiation: some people have tremendous amounts of talent; some have little or none….[it] is a representation of differentials of potential for certain socially valued behaviours" (1988, p. 63). Therefore, the concept of talent is just another type of capital granted elevated status by those in power (not through any objective means). Nettl (1995) reveals how in a similar setting, repertoire on concert programmes and certain musical instruments are ranked hierarchically by those within conservatoires, with those in power deciding the most prestigious instrument or musical genre.

Therefore, participation in these "socially valued behaviours" reinforces hierarchies between "higher and lower status" musical genres and activities (Green, 2002, p. 22). Participants are rewarded through the high status that emerges from participation in revered practices in their school, community, or other social arenas. This aligns with the work of Bourdieu whereby more valued cultural capitals and those comfortable in the habitus of participation will be enabled to participate more easily, and therefore inherit the power to preserve or transform participation for other members. Tarc (2012) supports teacher agency over power whereby teachers have the power to be agentic in their teaching rather than implementing mandated practices handed down from hegemonic structures. Therefore, a key theoretical juncture for this study is to consider if and how participation in the NCC empowers or disempowers teachers to explore and transform the capital, habitus, and field of participation, and how participation fits with the philosophy of education and musical learning outlined at the outset.

1.6.2.4 Socio-cultural Theory of Learning

Having considered the concepts of capital, habitus, field and power, this section concludes by exploring the link between participation and learning. In the case of this study, learning through participation draws on theories of apprenticeship or "situated learning" conducted in the early 1990s (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Considering the importance of social

interaction within participation, alongside the context of participation, it is argued that a socio-cultural theory of learning is most appropriate when exploring teacher participation in the NCC. Originating from the work of Vygotsky, socio-cultural learning theory "reveals the intersection between the [individuals] and the group by acknowledging the individuals" role in shaping the community as well as the community's role in shaping the individual" (Van Lare & Brazer, 2013, p. 384). Broader still, a socio-cultural vision of learning involves responding to the world and being shaped by our worlds (Edwards, 2005). Therefore, participation as learning involves working with others in the community while being influenced by one's habitus and others in the field of the organisation as one participates and learns.

Building on this socio-cultural view of learning, Lave and Wenger (1991), and later Lave (2009), detail the characteristics of situated learning whereby learning involves an "emphasis on comprehensive understanding involving the whole person rather than "receiving" a body of factual knowledge" about the world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 33). The characteristics of situated learning, according to Lave, are:

1. Knowledge always undergoes construction and transformation in use.
2. Learning is an integral part of all activity.
3. What is learned is always complexly problematic.
4. Acquisition of knowledge is not simply taking in knowledge.

(2009, p. 203)

Considering these parameters, the constant reconstruction and transformation of the complex and problematic notion of situated learning is therefore not simply about ensuring one is in close proximity to a more knowledgeable master, but takes account of "action, thought, feeling, and value and their collective, cultural-historical forms of located, interested, conflicted, meaningful activity" (Lave, 2009, p. 202). This deeper theory of learning moves from surface level knowledge about something, to making sense of something and where it fits within our world (Edwards, 2005). When considering the nature of teacher participation, one must ask if participation involves surface level learning or something more complex and meaningful to learners.

Aligning with the work of Dewey above, it argued that in this social, situated learning space, all participation in everyday life or in a particular activity may lead to a change in practice, and therefore future learning (Lave, 2009). Wenger explains that "practices evolve as shared histories of learning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 86). The development of practice can be a desired outcome of learning, particularly if the learning involves observation, imitation, and modelling (Wenger, 2009, p. 217). However, Edwards (2005) cautions that learning through participation can simply involve reproducing what is already known, missing opportunities for new transformative learning. In Lave and Wenger's (1991) work, they add the qualifier that participation must be legitimate for newcomers to learn through practice, in contrast with

participation focused purely on access. Legitimate participation in a programme such as the NCC would often be accompanied by a sense of belonging among members, whereby members align with each other sharing views, dispositions, and values (Wenger, 1998). This further supports the concept of learning through participation as a socio-cultural construct, much deeper than acquiring a particular knowledge or being able to simply access participation.

Regarding teacher participation in the NCC, the research suggests a link between teachers' values and interests, which may lead them to participation and affect their ability to learn from participation. Oral argues that to become a teacher "one must inhabit the teacher's world authentically" (2013, p. 222). Consequently, participants must also try to inhabit the world of the child or learner, including their voices and lifeworlds within the design of the learning experiences and curricula (Barab & Roth, 2006; Skibsted, 2020). Barab and Roth advocated for diverse and contextualised learning experiences as opposed to "disciplinary formalism" based on acquiring knowledge (2006, p. 3). Therefore, learning can stem from participation in personally and culturally valued practices, especially those which engage the learner's lifeworld and the wider socio-cultural learning space (Engeström, 2001).

Therefore, practice is "learning by doing" (Wenger, 1998) which in the case of music is linked inextricably to the cultural and social world in which the learning occurs. Practices are then legitimised through a sense of belonging and ownership within a community. This socio-cultural view of teachers' participation in learning experiences notes the multiple influences on teachers, including their students, schools, families, communities and wider society in which they work (Edwards, 2005; Kelly, 2006; Wenger, 2009). Problematically, participation as learning can range from simply replicating practices and acquiring skills from a more knowledgeable master, to developing new transferable and transformative practices (Edwards, 2005). The implication being that teacher learning may follow a training model, whereby knowledge is passed on from master to apprentice, rather than aiming to challenge existing practices and improve pedagogies and outcomes for learners. In musical terms, participation may be an expression of one's musical accomplishments and demonstrate an attained standard. However, a more meaningful conceptualisation of learning may open participants to a deeper, more legitimate form of participation which develops practice and learning by acquiring, sharing and extending knowledge individually and as a community (Wenger, 1998, p. 102).

In conclusion, the socio-cultural constructs of capital, habitus, and field (Bourdieu, 1986; 1990), power (Ball, 2018; Dwyer, 1995; Foucault, 1991), and "learning by doing" through situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lave, 2009; Wenger, 1998) all underpin the conceptualisation and exploration of participation considered in this study. The positive and problematic nature of these constructs within participation can lead to various outcomes for teachers and they all point to a context rich theory of participation that is influenced by the past

and present experiences, by family and friends, by individuals and societies, and by values and desires.

1.6.3 Pedagogical Underpinnings

The final consideration in constructing the theoretical foundation of this study explores the pedagogical approaches to teacher learning and musical learning. In this section, teacher learning and CPD will be discussed, using Kennedy's (2005; 2014) model of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to explore the different types of teacher learning, with a particular focus on learning and participation within communities of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998).

Following this, the pedagogical implications of two contrasting approaches to musical learning, music education and musical training, will be compared. It will be argued that any theory of participation in music education will be influenced by the nature of the musical learning and should resonate with the aims and rationales for music education as outlined above.

1.6.3.1 Teacher Learning and Communities of Practice (CoP)

Teachers learn throughout their careers; in Initial Teacher Education (ITE), during their early careers as Newly Qualified Teachers, and continue to learn at varying intervals during their teaching life (The Teaching Council [TC], 2016). In her study of Irish CPD, McAuliffe defines teacher learning as "all learning experiences, both formal and informal, engaged in by teachers throughout their teaching careers, which enhance their pupil's learning" (2004, p. 15). As argued above, teachers learn within a situated, social learning context, and how they participate and learn through CPD programmes is influenced by the model of CPD being used and the philosophical and theoretical rationale for a programme (Gray, 2004; Lave, 2009; Tarc, 2012).

Tarc (2012) finds that much CPD is associated with curriculum change and the nature of the participation and knowledge is mandated by policymakers rather than being teacher centred. This form of teacher learning is aligned with what Kennedy describes as a training model with the aim of "introducing new knowledge" (2005, p. 238). Recalling the theoretical constructs earlier, in this transmission-based form of CPD the rules of the field and the capital (i.e., learning, knowledge, and skills) are predetermined and controlled by policymakers who maintain the power and often seek to reproduce the dominant cultural habitus. Kennedy argues that teacher learning focused on addressing a perceived deficit in learning or practice is usually delivered in a "decontextualized setting" where the teachers are merely "in a passive role as recipients of specific knowledge" (Kennedy, 2005, p. 238).

Problematically, this is at odds with the meaningful, socio-cultural nature of learning described earlier, and fails to consider the value of "teacher talk", "hands-on" activity, and exploring context rich, situated learning with teachers (Tarc, 2012, p. 96). It is argued that these ad-hoc, practical forms of teaching and learning emerge from informal collaboration and communities of learners adapting to the dynamics of the classroom (Lave, 2009). Furthermore, they neglect the voices, perspectives and dispositions of teachers and learners which are central to meaningful and transformational changes in practice (Barab & Roth, 2006; Skibsted, 2020). Therefore, a divide exists between what Kennedy terms the different purposes of CPD as seen in Table 1.2:

Model of CPD	Purpose of Model
The training model The award-bearing model The deficit model The cascade model	Transmission
The standards-based model The coaching/mentoring model The community of practice model	Transitional
The action research model The transformative model	Transformative

Increasing capacity for professional autonomy

Table 1.2: *Models of CPD* (Adapted from Kennedy, 2005, 2014)

Transmissive models of CPD, as described above, are viewed as flawed or inadequate, because they ignore the complex processes involved in educational change (Fullan, 2006; Hoban, 2002). Hoban argues that due to the decontextualised, ad-hoc nature of these programmes, there is "no clear framework to guide long-term teacher learning" (2002, p. 39). Transmission and standards-based models are used for implementing top-down reforms and ensuring accountability, whereas transitional and transformational models aim to change practice and policy through empowering and supporting teachers (Kennedy, 2014). In advocating for teacher learning through participation, Kennedy's table above shows that the level of teacher autonomy is low within transmission models of CPD. Liu (2020) cautions that more far-reaching changes are difficult and require time and resourcing to generate transformational learning opportunities within teacher learning, however this study's theoretical framework recognises the value of good quality, transformative CPD that improves the learning and educational experience for both teachers and students. This type of transformational teacher learning encourages reflective practice, agentic teaching and learning, and challenges pre-existing hegemonies within society, cultures, and education systems, resulting in greater career satisfaction (Ethan, 2016; Gray, 2004).

One of the models of learning considered in Kennedy's (2005) CPD framework is a Community of Practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). This approach to organising learning was useful as it built on the initial work of Lave and Wenger (1991) relating to situated, apprenticeship learning while reinforcing the importance of communities (within one's habitus or the wider field) in the understanding of knowledge and learning.

While there is no definitive definition, an extensive review of the relevant literature by Stoll et al. agreed that a CoP can be defined as "a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-orientated and growth-promoting way" (2006, p. 223). In a school context, McLaughlin and Talbert added that as well as encouraging collaborative reflection on current practices, CoP "make changes that improve teaching and learning for the particular students in their classes" (2006, as cited in Teague & Anfara, 2012, p. 58). In the broadest sense, Wenger says that CoP "are everywhere…at home, at work, at school [and] in our hobbies" (1998, p. 6). Therefore, they are collaborative groups focused on learning and they aim to improve teaching and learning through reflection on their practice in an inclusive, collaborative way.

While the organisational and structural dimensions of CoP are considered in the literature review, the pedagogical underpinnings of Wenger's (1998) view of learning aligns with the philosophical and theoretical construct of participation explored here. Considering this research's focus on participation, CoP are useful in that they "share their competence with new generations through a version of the same process" (Wenger, 1998, p. 102). They are usually created when there is a domain of knowledge (e.g., how to participate in a particular programme) which is explored or learned by a community of people (e.g., teachers) by engaging in a shared practice to have command of this knowledge (e.g., participation) (Wenger et al., 2002). This notion of social learning and practice aligns positively with the conceptualising of learning outlined earlier, with active participation, community, and cognitive processes all coexisting (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These socio-cultural dimensions of CoP have been refined in the domain of music education and musical partnerships through Kenny's (2014, 2016) work on communities of musical practice, which will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

In addition to participation as learning, CoP theory regards the concept of reification as an equally important element of learning. Described by Wenger as "the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into 'thingness', it lives in 'duality' with experience and participation" (1998, p. 58). In general terms, reification solidifies what has been experienced (i.e., as a form of capital) and is both a process and product of learning from experience (Wenger, 1998). An example of reification in practice could be the documents and guidelines that make up school curricula, created by teachers within the community from years of

experience and learning. The work of schools and teachers then refine these guidelines, in response to learning from experience and participation. In the context of this research, resources and repertoire of the NCC could be viewed as reified artefacts of participation, These artefacts are important to the continued existence of any CoP as members are jointly responsible for and benefiting from the learning through participation and reification (Wenger, 1998).

In summary, learning through participation in a valued practice alongside others and learning reified through artefacts or the pre-existing "rules of the game" (Wright, 2015a, p. 83) are important considerations within the conceptualisation of participation underpinning this research. The next section explores how two approaches to musical learning with different foci can influence the nature and significance of teacher participation and build on the philosophical perspectives of music education emerging in the theoretical framework.

1.6.3.2 Models of Musical Learning

Building on the aims and rationale of music education outlined earlier, it was important to consider the types of musical experiences and approaches that underpin the various philosophies of music education that currently exist. Bowman (2018) distinguishes between what can be termed music training and music education. While sometimes used synonymously, the term music training suggests a more traditional model of education focused on "developing appropriate action habits" that will lead to technical proficiency at a musical instrument whereas music education is perceived as involving more dynamic approaches, embracing ideas such as autonomy, criticality, and valuing the learning process over outcomes (Bowman, 2018, p. 30). While there is arguably some overlap between both approaches, the discussion here will consider the differences in these emphases, and the nature of participation explored through either model.

The first approach considered is what Bowman (2018) refers to as musical training. De Quadros found that music education in many general education programmes is often "focused on the acquisition of skills and knowledge…[through] key competencies and technical facility" (2015, p. 501). Therefore, the goal of this form of music education could be the production of a musical product or performance, with children and learners becoming curriculum consumers or a valued musical good (Finnerty, 2017; Spruce, 2015). This pedagogical approach focuses on training the learner to "apprehend music", celebrating technical knowledge and proficiency in the accurate transfer of the musical object from teacher to student (Lave, 2009; Nettl, 2018). This is often achieved through methodologies such as learning from notation, and then replicating and memorising musical pieces (Nettl, 2018; Spruce, 2015). The parallels between this model of musical learning and the transmission-based, power and capital focused nature of participation discussed earlier are obvious and present a theory of participation that is focused on reproducing culturally valued practices from more powerful others.

In contrast, much contemporary music education literature supports the facilitation of the learner to take an active role in music making, developing their musicianship through the various roles of performer, composer, etc. (Dolloff, 2013; Georgii-Hemming, 2011; Spruce, 2015). This music education model is more liberal and holistic in nature, embracing a broader purpose of music education beyond technical proficiency (Green, 2002). As discussed earlier, the education of students ought to involve both musical and extra-musical outcomes, with the aim of educating learners in and through music in its broadest sense (Bowman, 2018). While music education often involves working towards technical proficiency and engaging in scales, aural training, and other musical activities, the musical object is not the only outcome or purpose of music education. Stakelum, in her examination of the Irish music curriculum noted that there was a need to "challenge the notion of music as delineated skills" and advocated for a move from the student as an apprentice, to the student as an active agent and co-constructor of the curriculum (2008b, p. 281).

Therefore, music education viewed as the acquisition of "atomised skills" passed on to a learner has traditionally been a common approach to music education, with musicians being viewed as intrinsically linked to the production of a product (Stakelum, 2008b). However, a more holistic conceptualisation of teacher participation may include not only the development of certain skills and practices but could also encompass the development of the musical and extra-musical dimensions of the learner, expanding their habitus and lifeworld. In this way, participation in music education could be more than simply learning to play an instrument or singing a song, but fostering a broader range of benefits on social, personal, and psychological levels through a variety of musical activities. This conceptualisation would shift the role of the teacher as holder and distributor of musical knowledge to the student as the co-constructor and co-participant in the music education process. These alternate models of musical learning are represented in Figure 1.1 which provides a useful reflection when one considers the pedagogical implications of teacher participation in a programme such as the NCC and where participation may reside on the continuum.

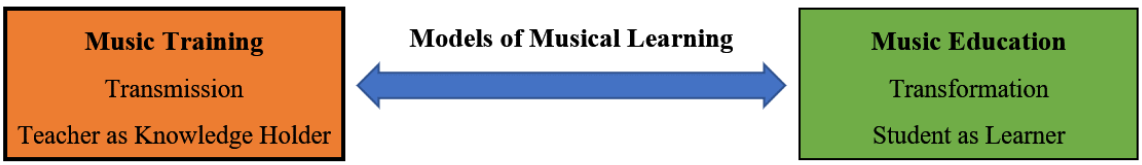


Figure 1.1: *Models of Musical Learning*

1.6.4 A Theoretical Framework for Participation

Thus far, the philosophical, theoretical, and pedagogical underpinnings which inform the conceptualisation of teacher participation in this study have been considered. What emerges is a multi-dimensional construct of participation that can lead to a generally meaningful and purposeful education and a musical education that develops the musical and broader extrinsic benefits of participation. In this way, participation can be a transformational force emerging from collaborative, critical and reflective practices and learning by teachers who desire to empower their students and challenge the status quo of their habitus, identity and community, and the wider rules and structures of the field.

However, the theoretical framework also suggests a more problematic conceptualisation of participation as a vehicle for replication, based on learning as the transmission of knowledge and skills by knowledgeable others in power. This notion of participation is maintained by the field of the activity or organisation, which values a dominant form of capital that is advantaging and unequal. Musically, participation therefore aligns with a training model of music education which focuses on producing musical products. In this model, the student and teacher voice are secondary to maintaining the cultural and historical status quo through education and music education. The cultural and historical perspectives of teachers' participation in music education are important outside influences on the nature of participation and will be explored in the next chapter, further enhancing the context of participation in this study.

In conclusion, I present a theoretical framework for participation which encompasses the philosophical, theoretical, and pedagogical considerations for this study (Figure 1.2 below). This outlines the positionality of participation within the context of this research and suggests that participation is a multi-dimensional construct with multiple outcomes. Drawing on the theories and theorists above, the study posits the potential for teacher participation to be a form of learning, identity, power, capital and transformation. This framework will be expanded upon in the conceptual framework (Chapter 3) which merges the theoretical constructs and empirical literature and structures which will be used to explore, interpret, and critique the nature and significance of teacher participation in the NCC. An overview of the dissertation completes this introductory chapter.

Theoretical Framework of Teacher Participation

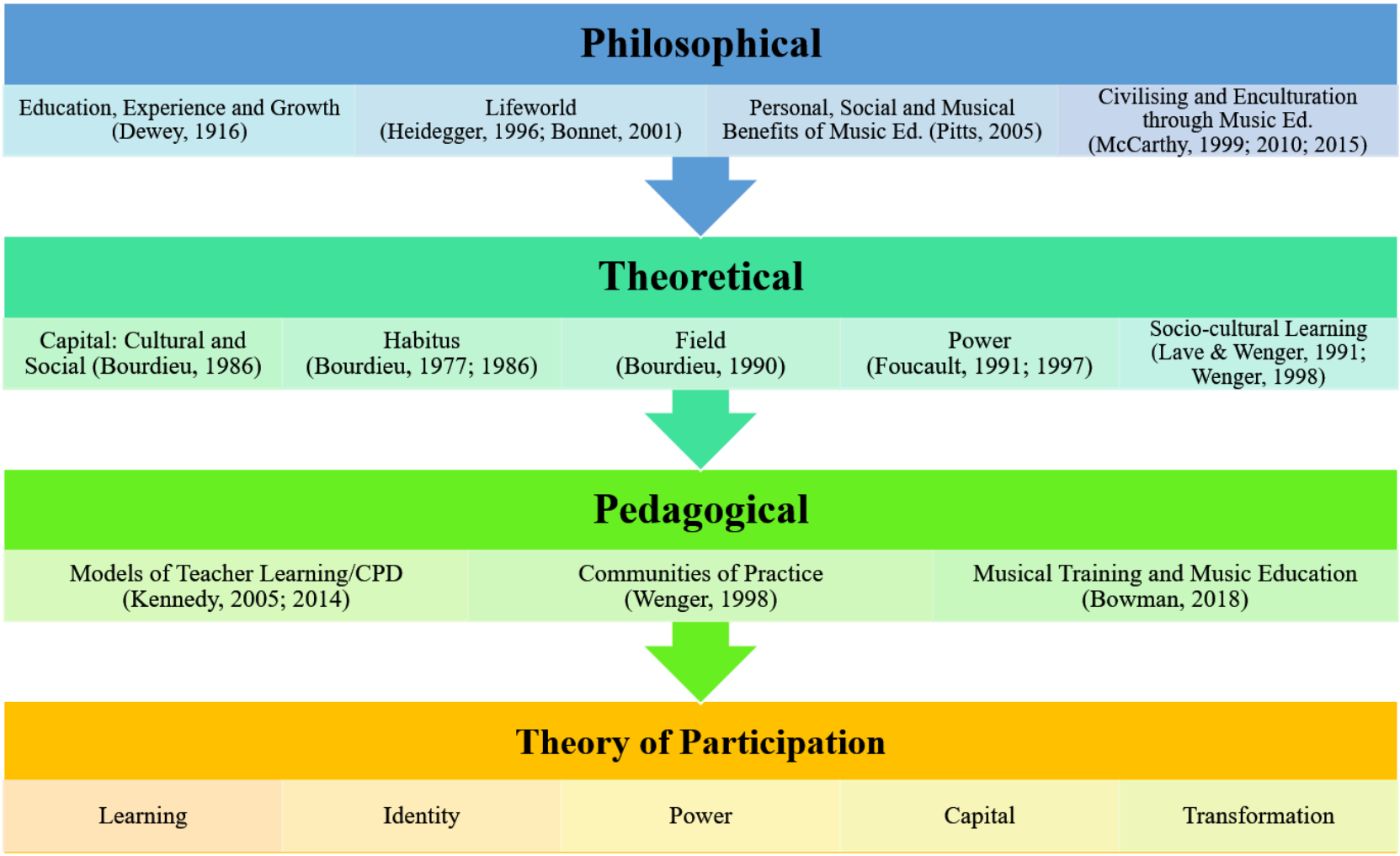


Figure 1.2: *Theoretical Framework of Teacher Participation*

1.7 Dissertation Overview

In this chapter, I have presented an overview of the NCC as an organisation and initiative operating in Irish primary schools. I have outlined the research context and my own positionality as the researcher which contributes to the articulation of the research problem and research focus. The research question has been stated and the philosophical, theoretical, and pedagogical underpinnings which inform the theoretical framework and worldview of the study have been described.

Chapter 2 considers the empirical literature informing this study. This includes an overview of the historical, curricular and policy context of music within the Irish educational system since the NCC was formed. Following this, teacher participation in music education is problematised and the various challenges that impact the nature of teacher participation and broader issues in the music education landscape are considered. Finally, the organisational theory and learning structures that inform the examination of the NCC as a phenomenon are considered, namely Wenger's CoP Theory (1998) and Engeström's AT theory (1999, 2001).

Chapter 3 begins with the discussion of the conceptual framework for the study, which is drawn from the empirical and theoretical findings of the literature review and will underpin the interpretation of the research findings. Next, the methodological rationale and design of the research are outlined, considering the research focus, aim, paradigm and the use of phenomenology. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the research process which explains the various data collection phases and participants in this study. The interview design and data analysis processes are also considered, followed by the limitations of this research.

Chapter 4 contains the analysis and discussion of the research data, culminating in the interpretation and critique of the nature and significance of teacher participation in the NCC. The chapter first considers teaching and learning through participation, both from the perspectives of teacher learning and from the viewpoint of the NCC as a curricular methodology and replacement. Next, the theme of identity is discussed, with the exploration of multiple co-existing identities and the influence of community on participation. The levels, roles and hierarchies of participation are then considered, leading to a consideration of the NCC as an AS constrained by historical and cultural artefacts and the power implications of this system. The capital that is exchanged and valued through participation is also discussed. Finally, the possibilities of participation as a transformative musical, personal and professional experience are explored.

In the final chapter, the main findings and conclusions of the research are discussed, namely the multi-dimensional nature of teacher participation and the significance of participation in the NCC in the 21st century primary school. The recommendations of the research from the viewpoint of teachers, the NCC and the wider music education landscape are considered. Then,

some possibilities for future research are outlined before a final coda reflecting on the research completes the dissertation.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the research context, problem, and question were articulated, establishing the rationale for this research. This chapter aims to examine the wider context in which this study exists and is organised in four main sections, all of which contribute to framing and informing the interpretation of the nature of teacher participation as it emerges later in this study.

Firstly, music education in Irish primary schools will be discussed, drawing on historical, curricular, and policy perspectives from the literature and state agencies. This will add to the historical and cultural context in which the NCC operates within the Irish primary school system and will influence the conceptual nature of participation later in the research. The current and future policy trends in Irish music education, such as the emergence of partnership, creativity, and a model of culturally responsive music education are considered. Then, the long-established place of song singing in primary schools, its provision in music education, in both primary schools and other contexts is explored.

Following this, the next section will problematise teacher participation drawing on perspectives and studies from the field of teacher learning and identity. These will include the challenges facing teachers of music at primary school level including the poor provision of teacher musical CPD, the perceived lack of confidence among generalist teachers, the outsourcing of music education to specialist teachers and the problematic identity formation of multiple identities for teacher-musicians. Additionally, the broader issues impeding the evolution of music education and the transformative potential of teacher participation including the dominance of Western Art Music (WAM) and enculturation possibilities of music education will be outlined.

The chapter will conclude by examining the organisational theories and structures that govern participation, considering Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice (CoP) concepts and structures which are helpful in conceptualising teacher participation in the NCC. Also, the multiple levels of participation within CoP theory will be discussed. Following this, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 1999, 2001) will be described and utilised to frame the NCC as an activity system (AS) and to investigate teacher participation through the structures of activity theory. Particular attention will be drawn to the interactions among constituent parts of the activity system (AS) model and the tensions and contradictions that emerge through these interactions. It will be argued that the multi-dimensional nature of teacher participation as the outcome of the NCC is influenced and informed by the tensions and contradictions that occur within the AS conceptualised through CHAT, which provides for the

analyse, critique and interpretation of teacher participation within the NCC as it emerges from the data later in the thesis.

2.2 Music Education in Ireland

This section aims to consider historical, cultural, curricular and policy perspectives on Irish music education and music within Irish primary schools. An examination of music's inclusion within the primary school curriculum, the implications of the cultural and societal context of the 20th century on music as a curriculum subject, and an outline of the current curriculum and policy landscape is presented. It also considers current and future trends in Irish arts and music education policy, including the emergence of partnership between teachers and others in arts education, the centrality of creativity and learner agency in teaching and learning, and the use of culturally responsive music education (CRME) as a model for contemporary music education. The section concludes with an examination of the enduring significance of singing within the Irish music education landscape and the wider choral traditions in music education, given the nature of participation in the NCC as a choral singing activity.

2.2.1 Historical Perspectives of Music Education in Ireland

Music education has occupied a prominent but not always central part of the education system in Ireland. For over 100 years it has been part of the formal primary school programme, beginning in the pre-independence national school system focusing on singing, music literacy and aural training (Grennan, 2017; B. Walsh, 2016). It existed as an optional subject at first, before being promoted to a compulsory subject around the turn of the 20th century (Stakelum, 2008b). Singing was included for the first time in the Revised Programme (1900) as a reaction to the payment by results system that had largely removed practical and arts subjects from schools (T. Walsh, 2016). As discussed earlier, McCarthy (2010) writes how music was first advocated for its value in contributing to the moral, religious, and social formation of national school pupils. The curriculum at the time was seen as broadly child-centred, with music and other arts subjects being introduced to ensure "education in the truest sense [would be] broader and deeper than mere formal instruction in the three R's" (Commission on Manual and Practical Instruction, 1898, as cited in Grennan, 2017, p. 42). The parallels therefore between the early establishment of music within the Irish primary curriculum, and the extrinsic, holistic aims of music education outlined earlier are apparent in the 1900 Revised Programme.

As Ireland entered its independent years, the tide turned for music education, moving from the enlightening, child-centred vision expressed above to a curriculum that would help cultivate a sense of national and religious unity in the newly formed republic (McCarthy, 2010). The curriculum was focused on song singing, influenced by Fr. Corcoran of University College,

Dublin who advocated for Irish language songs and plainchant as essential elements of the new programme (Stakelum, 2008b). McCarthy (2010) notes the extensive use of hymns in schools in the 1920s, coupled with a preoccupation with the Irish language and a desire to promote civilising, middle class ideals within schools, significantly narrowed the scope of primary school music in the early 20th century. The 1933 Notes on Music document notes that music education should be for both "physical and mental pleasure… and as an important element of the Gaelic and national renaissance" (B. Walsh, 2016, p. 161). Music's purpose, and primary schooling more generally, were to act as vehicles through which a new Irish, nationalist people would be moulded.

The preoccupation of schools with wider historical, political, and societal issues prevented much change in music education or indeed other curricular areas (B. Walsh, 2016). Despite repeated attempts to establish a modern, progressive education system, economic challenges often meant that these aspirations remained unrealised on policy makers' shelves (Walsh, 2016). Indeed, while teachers publicly endorsed the child-centred, progressive pedagogies of various curricular revisions, the classroom experience remained didactic and uninspiring due to poor training, teacher's reluctance to change "encultured practices" and the underfunding and under resourcing of music in crowded schools (B. Walsh, 2016, p. 26). Thomas Walsh similarly wrote of the "dichotomy between [teachers'] endorsement in theory and their implementation in practice" (2012, p. 335). Therefore, despite the pleas of many, the shift back to a child-centred, holistic, and inclusive music education in Irish primary schools never occurred due to poor training, oversized classes, and a lack of resources. These factors may explain the dominance of singing due to the affordability of its facilitation, which will be explored later in this chapter.

Further hindering reform in music education were the broader societal issues which impacted primary schools. The importance of religion, the focus on national identity and the promotion of the Irish language were significant barriers to reform in education in general, and music education in particular. Religion within the education system, despite being kept separate for most of British rule, co-existed with State support for much of the 20th century. Seen as a "badge of ethnicity" to distinguish Irish Nationalists from other denominations, the centrality of religion allowed the church to mould Irish society starting with school children (B. Walsh, 2016, p. 11). Furthermore, this struggle for national identity was coupled with a strong emphasis on promoting the Irish language within primary schools, despite a lack of qualified teachers and an absence of significant support for Irish outside of the school system (B. Walsh, 2016). All this created a society and an education system which viewed holistic education and the lifeworld of child as less important than the creation of a Catholic, nationalist Irish-speaking society which provided for the "strengthening of the national fibre" of the new independent nation (GoI, 1925, as cited in B. Walsh, 2016, p. 21). Therefore, schools became a tool for nationhood building, with

Thomas Walsh concluding that the imaginings of curriculum designers at the time were "unrealistic in the society and educational context of the time" (T. Walsh, 2012, p. 337). Music education at this time was therefore shaped by religious and national ideals, rather than curriculum designers or pedagogues.

In summary, the historical context of Irish music education presents a landscape that is preoccupied with nation building and nationalist ideals, neglecting the practical and pedagogical needs of schools and teachers. A lack of a coherent plan to support teachers and educational reform, combined with poor funding, resources, and training, meant that traditional practices in the early years of music education provision of primary school were not challenged, and later, more progressive, revisions of policy remained unrealised. As the NCC was established following this complex historical period, it is argued that this context directly influenced the focus of the programme on a teacher-led, didactic, choral classroom model of music education, which perhaps still permeates within the fibre of the organisation today.

2.2.2 Music Curriculum in Irish Primary Schools

The historical context above provides the foundation to consider the design, content and implementation of the current music curricula and its predecessors. Given that participation in the NCC takes place within Irish music curricular time, one must understand the development of curriculum and policy in Irish music education before and throughout its existence. Therefore, this section describes the Irish primary school curriculum from 1971, the developments that led to the curriculum's evolution in 1999 and beyond, and the significance of the curriculum positioned alongside the NCC.

Many historical accounts detail the turbulent design and redesign of various curricula during the 20th century, as schools and society grappled with the changing cultural and societal context outlined above (Grennan, 2017, Kerins, 2019; T. Walsh, 2012). The 1971 curriculum tried to move away from the top-down approach of teaching music that had preceded it and aimed to address the challenges of teacher confidence and knowledge that existed in schools (Gubbins, 2021; Kerins, 2019; Stakelum, 2008b). It recommended a child-centred approach, focused on celebrating creativity, individuality, and teacher autonomy (Kerins, 2019; T. Walsh, 2012). For the first time it placed music making activities beyond singing and literacy within the curriculum objectives, incorporating music appreciation and creative work (Kerins, 2019). However, its implementation, as had happened previously, did not live up to the vision of its designers (T. Walsh, 2016). Curriculum development at the time was constrained by teachers who "seem to endorse a child-centred rhetoric while practising a more formal pedagogical style" (Sugrue, 1997, as cited in T. Walsh, 2016, p. 26). It is unsurprising therefore that many reports emerged detailing the failings of music teaching in primary schools at this time.

In response to the poor 1971 curriculum implementation, numerous surveys by groups such as the INTO, DE and the Conference of Convent Primary Schools were held in the 1970s. Their consequent policies and reports detailed similar issues that had historically impeded music education such as teacher confidence, lack of technical knowledge to interpret the curriculum and an absence of creativity in the delivery of the curriculum. The INTO found that over 50 percent of class teachers were not teaching the subject, instead handing the responsibility over to a colleague, an outside music specialist, or neglecting to teach it at all (T. Walsh, 2012). In response, the DE employed a limited number of specialist music inspectors, including NCC founder Seán Creamer, to support teachers and schools, with limited success (McAuliffe Ryng, 2005). The Arts Council advocated for a broad arts curriculum positioned centrally in state-funded education (Benson, 1979). Some years later, they produced their infamous Deaf Ears? Report which revealed that the overall state of music education was a "little short of appalling" (Herron, 1985, p. 2). The report reveals that some children are only experiencing music primarily outside school and the majority are leaving school "musically illiterate" (Herron, 1985, p. 2). Herron's report did not consider creative work, suggesting a persistent dominance of performing among policy makers and commentators as the musical activity of choice. His comments reveal that, despite the child centred nature of the 1971 curriculum, the focus of primary music education remained on developing musical competence and literacy, and that even these aims were not being meaningful achieved. The publication of Herron's report was the year in which the NCC was established, which perhaps positioned the NCC as a programme which could encourage music making in schools, endorsed by the DE through its links with the Inspectorate.

During the 1990s, the DE responded to these reports in the form of the White Paper on Education which promised to introduce a "broader range of competencies within an integrated curriculum, particularly in the teaching of the arts" (DE, 1995, p. 130). The report strengthened the many purported benefits of the arts in education within its aims including fostering the social, personal, and artistic development of the child (DE, 1995). In the same year, a large multi-disciplinary debate entitled the Music Education National Debate (typically known as MEND) was underway, facilitating conferences, hearings, consultations, and speakers from all areas of music education in Ireland to pave a way forward for music education. It found that in contrast with the new vision for arts and music education put forward by the DE, "the inherited and prevailing culture in education is that music is low in priority" (Heneghan, 2001, p. 376). While the number and scale of these debates on the future of music education is noteworthy, the findings underpinned the general dissatisfaction with primary music education in Ireland during the 1980s and 1990s. This evidence contributed to the development of the current Primary School Curriculum which was launched in 1999.

This new music curriculum aimed to be part of "a balanced curriculum which aimed to develop the whole spectrum of children's intelligence" (GoI, 1999a, p. 5). Its aims are outlined below:

> • to enable the child to enjoy and understand music and to appreciate it critically.
> • to develop the child's openness to, awareness of and response to a wide range of musical genres, including Irish music.
> •to develop the child's capacity to express ideas, feelings and experiences through music as an individual and in collaboration with others.
> • to enable the child to develop his/her musical potential and to experience the excitement and satisfaction of being actively engaged in musical creativity.
> • to nurture the child's self-esteem and self-confidence through participation in musical performance.
> • to foster higher-order thinking and lifelong learning through the acquisition of musical knowledge, skills, concepts and values.
> • to enhance the quality of the child's life through aesthetic musical experience.
>
> (GoI, 1999a, p. 12)

We can see that these aims align with the dual focus and rationale for music education outlined in the theoretical framework, to foster the child's musical self as well as the broader extrinsic benefits of music education through participation. These include developing children's higher-order thinking, lifelong learning, self-esteem, and self-confidence (GoI, 1999a). It was underpinned by several principles including active music making, sound before symbol, the spiral curriculum which encourages the building on of the child's previous experiences, the centrality of the class teacher as the most appropriate person to teach the curriculum and the importance of integration and linkage across the curriculum and the whole school (GoI, 1999a). Although the entire curriculum was launched in 1999, the music curriculum was not introduced in schools until the 2003-2004 academic year, following in-service training for teachers across the country (McAuliffe Ryng, 2005). It is organised around three strands of activity: Performing, Composing, and Listening and Responding to Music. Through engagement in learning activities within these strands, and their corresponding strand units, children would explore and develop their understanding of nine musical concepts (GoI, 1999a). Table 2.1 provides a brief overview of the curriculum:

Strands	Strand Units
Listening and Responding to Music	Exploring Sounds
	Listening and Responding to Music
Performing	Song Singing
	Literacy
	Playing Instruments
Composing	Improvising and Creating
	Talking About and Recording Compositions
Musical Concepts	
A sense of pulse	A sense of structure
A sense of duration	A sense of timbre
A sense of tempo	A sense of texture
A sense of pitch	A sense of style
A sense of dynamics	

Table 2.1: *The strands, strand units and musical concepts in the 1999 Music Curriculum* (GoI, 1999a)

The musical concepts are developed through learning activities and experiences across the strand and strand units, through engagement with the content objectives as outlined for each class level (see Appendix I for 5th and 6th class objectives).

In its first year in schools, the curriculum was praised for putting teachers central in the delivery of the curriculum and recognising the importance of embracing the principles of active music making and sound before symbol (O'Callaghan, 2003). The focus on sound before symbol aimed to remove the barrier of literacy for those who lack musical confidence or knowledge, encouraging the making of music over the reading and writing of it. However, Stakelum (2008b) warned of the need to recognise teachers' own contexts and relationship with music which they will inevitably bring to their teaching of the new curriculum. She hopes that "teacher knowledge is no longer determined solely by external agents but is grounded in the realities of what the practitioners themselves consider to be of value" (Stakelum, 2008b, p. 291). The acknowledgement of teachers' previous experiences and identity within the curriculum interpretation process had been absent in the policy landscape thus far, however its influence on the nature of curriculum implementation is a key consideration in this research, given the research's focus on teacher participation and the possible significance of teachers' previous experiences as they emerge from the data.

While praised for its general breadth of content when compared to earlier iterations, the curriculum's implementation has also faced challenges (INTO, 2009; O'Callaghan, 2003). There are two main areas which continue to impede the success of music education in Irish primary schools. Firstly, problems stemming from the school community including challenges around teacher self-confidence in teaching music (INTO, 2009; Kenny, 2010; O'Callaghan, 2003; Stakelum, 2008b), lack of adequate CPD (INTO, 2009; McAuliffe, 2004) and lack of resources and time (Russell-Bowie, 2009). More broadly, there are legacy, systemic barriers to effective music education such as the poor status of music in Irish education systems (Heneghan, 2001), coupled with low public opinion on the arts in education (Kenny, 2010), and a lack of "coordinated or comprehensive plan of action" to address the shortcoming in music education across all education and societal levels (The Arts Council, 2007, as cited in INTO, 2009, p. 32). These challenges will be considered later in this chapter however it is unclear whether the 1999 curriculum has been successful in broadening the aim and rationale of music education in Ireland among teachers or addressing the shortcomings outlined thus far.

2.2.3 Policy Developments since the 1999 curriculum

Having considered the music curriculum as it currently exists in Irish primary schools, the discussion progresses beyond the 1999 curriculum. Various programmes and initiatives have been launched to enhance the provision of arts in schools, most notably the Arts in Education Charter (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht & Department of Education and Skills, 2014), which advocated for joined up thinking between different policy makers, artists, and schools, through the facilitation of *Arts Rich Schools*. This initiative seeks to "incentivise and recognise those schools which in a range of ways make the arts a key part of school life", through the engagement of outside school agencies such as MG, The Arts Council, local authority arts offices, and artists working in the field to create and promote art in education (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht & Department of Education and Skills, 2014, p. 5). At the same time a report by Music Network, who supports live music concerts through Ireland, called for similar outreach partnerships between musicians and schools to enhance children's music education (Kenny, 2010). However, the Arts in Education Charter and corresponding Arts Rich Schools initiative made little reference to teachers' role in implementation or realisation of their aims, and ultimately lacked political will and clear implementation plans to meaningfully affect practice in schools (Grennan, 2017). Once again, the prevalence of aspirational policy documents without clear practical steps to enactment continue to be a barrier to reform in primary music education.

The Arts in Education Charter was then subsumed within the Creative Ireland programme and distilled for the education system through the establishment of the Creative Schools initiative which would support schools to "embrace the arts and creativity, ensuring a positive experience and strong outcomes for children and young people" (The Arts Council, 2020). Established as part

of the 1916-2016 centenary commemorations, the Creative Ireland programme aims to "facilitate an ecosystem of creativity" and "place creativity at the centre of public policy" (GoI, 2016, pp. 5–7). One of its primary commitments is to enable each child to have access to music, drama, and arts tuition (GoI, 2016). The programme has also published its child-focused strategy, Creative Youth (2017, 2021), which supports the development of "collaborative networks" between artists, teachers and community projects, including teacher/artist partnership as one possible CPD model (2017, pp. 6, 27). It also specifically references choral singing as an important outcome of the programme however little detail is given as to how it will be developed. One way that policy makers are influencing the arts and music education in primary schools is through the provision and funding of partnerships between artists (known as Creative Agents) and schools (Fahy & Kenny, 2021). These contemporary factors within music education will be discussed in the next section, however before that, the review will now consider the latest policy development underway to revise the primary curriculum for the first time in the 21st century.

As of 2022, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is currently consulting on the redesign of the primary school curriculum, following the introduction of an outcome-based curriculum in English and Irish in 2018 (NCCA, 2022). They outline the challenges that they aim to address in the new curricula:

> Looking across these developments since 1999, the extent and pace of change is striking. Diverse classrooms, ever-increasing and changing demands of a primary school experience, a crowded curriculum, policy changes and new findings from research on teaching, learning and assessment combine to create both a need and an opportunity to revisit the primary curriculum as a whole. (NCCA, 2020, p. 5)

An important point in the context of this study relates to curriculum overload and subject hierarchies, and how these might impact on the arts and other subject areas in primary schools (DE, 2011; Fahy & Kenny, 2022; Grennan, 2017; Gubbins, 2021; NCCA, 2010). In recent policy documents, it has been acknowledged that music and other arts subjects have had to compete with other subjects for a fixed amount of instruction time, however they also agree that there ought to be compromises and prioritisation of particular subject areas, especially given the recent focus on literacy and numeracy (DE, 2011; NCCA, 2010).

Reflecting on the many demands on primary schools, it is unsurprising that the challenges facing curriculum and policy in Ireland have not yet been resolved. Walsh (2016) writes how in the past, the omission of key stakeholders in the curriculum design process has led to a disjuncture between theory and practice inside the classroom. In keeping with Stakelum's (2008b) desire for teachers to be involved in policy design, an extensive consultation is currently underway at time of writing by the NCCA, allowing teachers and other stakeholders voice their views on the future of the primary school curriculum.

At time of writing, there is no information relating to the proposed content or structure of music within the new primary curriculum framework (NCCA, 2020). Subsequently, it remains to be seen how a redesigned music curriculum is represented within a curriculum framework encompassing broad subject areas based on outcomes and skills, rather than content and objectives (NCCA, 2020). This research argues that any new programme must reflect the new emphases in music education, namely the increasing prevalence of partnerships between artists and teachers, the centrality of creativity and learner agency in teaching and learning, and the need for a culturally responsive and inclusive approach to music education as outlined below. By exploring the multi-dimensional nature of teacher participation in the NCC it is envisaged that this research can critique and contribute to the discussion around any future primary school curriculum and consider the place of the NCC within any future policy revisions. The discussion of the literature will now consider some of the dominant perspectives on contemporary music education, presenting possible alternative approaches to music education worthy of reflection when examining teacher participation in the NCC.

2.2.4 Contemporary Perspectives on Music Education

This section considers the noteworthy policy developments and contemporary music education discourse emerging from experts and practitioners within the field. As alluded to above, the prevalence of partnerships in music education in Irish educational policy (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht & Department of Education and Skills, 2014; Flynn & Johnston, 2016; GoI, 2017; GoI, 2016) is an important consideration when conceptualising music education in the 21st century school. In contrast to the centrality of the class teacher in teaching the curriculum in primary schools much research over the past two decades has advocated for the value of partnerships between artists and schools (Fahy & Kenny, 2021; GoI, 2017; Kenny, 2010; Kerins, 2019; Sheil, 2008).

Reflecting on the early implementation of the Creative Schools programme, research by Fahy and Kenny (2021) has evaluated the effectiveness of artists working in partnership with classroom teachers, to enhance both teachers' and students' experiences of music education. Their initial review of partnerships operating outside of Ireland found that arts partnerships with teachers were effective when there was mutual trust, prolonged engagement, professional exchanges between members and a common understanding of the mutual benefits (Fahy & Kenny, 2021). When facilitated correctly, they argue that a partnership initiative such as the Creative Schools programme could act as a professional development initiative for teachers, improving the teaching of the arts (Fahy & Kenny, 2021). Their initial studies have positively framed the Creative Agents initiative within schools, despite some variation in how the different schools and artists interpret the programme (Fahy & Kenny, 2021).

However, research in the USA has found that teachers who are in partnership with a specialist musician or music teacher but fail to meaningfully engage can "perpetuate socially constructed notions about musicality being for the gifted few in the minds of both teachers and children" (Partington, 2018, p. 159). Therefore, the balance between simply outsourcing music education, as was the case in late 20th century Ireland, and supporting both teachers and artists to work meaningfully together is delicate in the participation of educators in such partnerships. The extent to which teacher participation in the NCC is a form of learning through partnership will be explored alongside the data later, noting the place of knowledgeable experts (in this case the MDs and others) working with teachers throughout their participation in the project. The policy of partnership in primary music education also led to the establishment of one of the largest organisations currently facilitating music in primary schools, Music Generation (MG).

MG launched in 2010, enabled by the philanthropic support of the band U2, and have established themselves as "Ireland's National Music Education Programme" (Flynn & Johnston, 2016; MG, 2022). They operate music education partnerships employing musicians and arts practitioners in 25 areas of Ireland engaging with over 67,000 children (MG, 2022). They aim to facilitate "specialist music partnerships with schools and focus on performance-based music education that accommodates a diverse range of aspirations for music" (Flynn & Johnston, 2016, p. 85). It is noteworthy that the Creative Ireland programme references MG as the central music education programme in its policies, with the DE increasingly becoming the primary funder of the programme (GoI, 2016). This suggests an endorsement of MG and other similar partnerships' place within the music curriculum, education, and policy landscape. Recent studies examining some MG programmes have praised the scale and reach of the programme, building pathways for musical progression, however they encourage MG educators to be flexible in their teaching, to consider the socio-cultural influences on the learners, and to work with teachers and schools ensuring that their role moves beyond simply passing on instrumental skills (Fahy & Kenny, 2021; Murray, 2022). A key reflection as raised by Fahy & Kenny (2021) is to what extent are MG and similar organisations supporting teachers in the delivery of the prescribed curriculum, rather than simply replacing it.

Creativity and agency are considered together as they both emerge in parallel from recent policy discourse (Doyle, 2019; GoI, 2017; INTO, 2009) and literature (Biasutti et al., 2015; Burnard, 2008, 2012; Sharp, 2014; Spruce, 2015). Creative practices require the development of imagination, originality, productivity, problem solving and the production of a valued outcome (Sharp, 2004, p. 5). Biassutti et al. describes teaching creativity as using "approaches based on imaginative thinking and learner-centred teaching (2004, p. 148). Kenny (2017) & Sharp (2014) both confirm that in addition to teaching methodologies and approach, there is a need to provide creative environments for children to work, with ample time and space for practice and reflection. Therefore, the research confirms that a move away from didactic, teacher-led work was essential

to encouraging creative practices, and that the learners were at the centre of any creative educational endeavour.

This places student voice and student agency centrally within creative music education. In her advocacy of informal music learning practices, Green (2008; 2016) encourages the development of student's agency by allowing them to choose the musical styles and activities that they are drawn to, and to integrate the musical activities of performing, listening, and composing through one creative process. This would place "the responsibility for learning in the hands of the child", moving away from predefined objectives to open-ended tasks (Green, 2016, p. 11). Spruce believes in the importance of student voice in music education calling for children to be allowed to be creative and agentic as they co-construct the curriculum with teachers and become "musical leaders…[who can] disrupt powerful hegemonies and create more democratic spaces" in music education (2015, pp. 287-8). In the Irish context, Finnerty examined the musical cultures of children in Cork and found that "many of the decisions on the provision of music education for children are made by adults" (2017, p. 220). In her recommendations, she encourages teachers to embrace child-led, unstructured music education activities that draw from in-school and out-of-school musical contexts (Finnerty, 2017). The contemporary discourse seeks a rebalancing of power and control of music education from teachers to students, with all areas of education requiring reflection to meaningfully support creative, agentic practices in schools.

Therefore, this type of creative, agentic musical participation and education requires each educational setting to consider what creativity means to them (Burnard & Fautley, 2014, p. 265). Sharp (2004) argues that presently creativity in educational settings is stifled by overly prescriptive, teacher-centred learning environments. Also, some authors have cautioned against the illusion of learner consultation and over-promising of creative education which do not have supporting structures or genuine impetus to change (Bresler, 1998b; Burnard, 2008; Spruce, 2015). In any case, the advocacy of creative, agentic music education is worthwhile and timely, leaving behind the traditional, transmission-based philosophy of music education outlined in the opening chapter.

The final perspective that this study draws on to conceptualise a model for participation in 21st-century music education is culturally responsive music education (CRME). Swanwick wrote that "pupils are inheritors of a set of cultural values and practices" (1988, p. 10), and therefore teachers should aim for "validation, emancipatory and comprehensive" pedagogy that recognises "each student's cultural and social capital" (Bond, 2017, p. 155). Aligned with the creative and agentic mindset outlined above, CRME relies on student's musical repertoire and experiences being embraced, rather than imposing the repertoire and practices of the dominant culture or power holders (Bond, 2017). Furthermore, in her review of the research relating to American public schools, Bond warns that a random inclusion of various musical genres to

appease the need for diversity is not sufficient, with tokenistic treatment of unfamiliar cultures and communities viewed as worse than omitting the culture in the first place (Bond, 2017, p. 162). In this way, the authentic treatment of musical genres and contexts is important, pushing beyond the Western aesthetic that has dominated formal music education (Nettl, 2017; Spruce, 2015). CRME involves the attending to issues such as race (Grant & Vonzell, 2008; Kelly-McHale, 2013; Southgate & Roscigno, 2009), gender representation (Freer, 2015; Sweet, 2010; Welch, 2010) and languages and culture (Barton & Riddle, 2021) through carefully designed music making opportunities. These issues all affect the nature of participation and CRME criticises the reproduction of a limited, dominant form of capital through participation and promotes the transformation learner's mindsets and learning by "expanding our repertoire and curriculum [to] better serve the student" (Kelly-McHale, 2013, p. 212).

If we take the view that schools are places of enculturation, where teachers, schools' and society's values and beliefs are passed on through music education, there is considerable scope for an inclusive, progressive approach to music education which could enact positive change for participants. As Spruce explains: "one of the defining characteristics of a socially just approach to music education is taken to be the opportunity for students not only to 'participate' in music education, but also to be 'included' in it" (2015, p. 288). CRME enables a rich exchange of cultures through schools, broadening and challenging the capital and experiences of the dominant classes and minorities (Bond, 2017). McCarthy writes that music education is the dialogue between learner and cultural institutions, which if conceptualised responsively, is well positioned to "contain the seeds of action for a socially just school and community, with carryover into lifelong engagement with issues of social justice through and with music" (2015, p. 41). Pitts has written about the power of music participation to sustain "musical life for future generations", and in the case of this study, a contemporary model of music education should embrace all musical experiences and styles, including all participants today and into the future, whether they be teachers or children (2005, p. 143). These findings have important implications for this study when one considers the extent to which teacher participation in the NCC is inclusive, authentic, and culturally responsive for 21st-century teachers, schools and learners.

In conclusion, current literature and policy discourse encourages the development of a contemporary model of music education which includes partnerships between musicians and schools, the authentic assimilation of creative and agentic mindsets and perspectives within music education programmes and interactions, and a culturally responsive lens inclusive of all learners, backgrounds and musical genres. Therefore, the historical, didactic model of music education which has been criticised earlier in this review stands in contrast with this learner-centred, integrated and process-led approach to music education. These pedagogical models as outlined in the theoretical framework, will inform the interpretation and critique of the nature and

significance of teacher participation in this study, especially the possibility for participation as a form of learning to be transmissive or transformative.

2.2.5 The Place of Singing within Music Education

The final part of this historical and contemporary review of music education in Ireland considers the role of singing within music education. Given the centrality of singing within the NCC programme and many education systems, this section examines the place of singing within the academic literature, as well as the benefits and challenges facing singing as the dominant musical activity within schools. Following this, an overview of the wider choral culture, traditions and singing programmes operating in Ireland and elsewhere is presented. Finally, singing within the Irish primary music curriculum and policy landscape is discussed. This will rationalise the focus on singing within the education system and explore how choral singing as it currently exists may be difficult to reconcile with the contemporary music education perspectives outlined above.

Singing as an activity occupies a lasting place within formal education systems, especially primary schools, and has remained a constant of music education curricula for over 100 years, contributing to both the musical and extra-musical benefits of participation (GoI, 1999b; Grennan, 2017; Kenny et al., 2016; Kerins, 2019; Sheil, 2008). Similar to what has been discussed earlier regarding the wider aims and outcomes of music education, the literature identities a range of benefits linked with singing including physical (Clift & Hancox, 2001), psychological (Pacheco & Milhano, 2007; Pitts, 2014; Welch et al., 2014), social, (Busch, 2012; Dabback, 2016; Lonsdale & Stewart, 2016), musical (Welch et al., 2009), and educational (Heyning, 2010; Mills, 2005; Welch, 2012). Children who engage in choral singing enjoy being part of a community of like-minded others and report feeling proud, motivated and more confident when singing (Ehrlin, 2016). It has also been found to support children's sense of social inclusion and cultivates a positive self-image irrespective of ages, sex or ethnicity (Welch et al., 2014). Musically, a study of the Sing Up! programme in the UK found that choral singing improved the vocal range and vocal development when compared with a control group (Welch et al., 2009). Finally, singing nurtures the child's musical identity, allowing them to see themselves as a musician (McCoy, 2012; Pitts, 2000). This myriad of benefits is perhaps one reason why teachers participate in and use group singing so regularly in their teaching.

However, singing within the educational system is not without its shortcomings. Dolloff (2013) concedes that choral singing within music education embodies a traditional concept of the teacher-led classroom. She writes that "the teaching follows the pattern of 'teacher initiates, student responds, teacher verifies'. This is a transmission model of teaching" (Dolloff, 2013, p. 90). This is an interesting observation given the wide range of musical and extra-musical benefits linked with singing above, achieved through what some argue is a training and transmission based

musical activity (Bowman, 2018; Dolloff, 2013; Kennedy, 2005). While there are arguably many benefits to musical training through participation in choral singing, by its nature it is usually led by a single conductor with few opportunities for learner agency or creativity (Lamont et al., 2012).

Moving beyond the use of singing as an approach for music education, some have criticised the absence of coherent structured singing programmes within schools with little collaboration between educators and conductors, leading to "enthusiastic teachers working in isolation" (Ashley, 2013, p. 2; Sheil, 2008). Furthermore singing, as alluded to earlier, has historically become entangled with political and religious agendas. It has been used to strengthen religious faiths across Europe, to promote folk and art music in Kodály's Hungary, and for the enculturation of emigrants in America (Bresler, 1995; Folkestad, 2012; Swanwick, 1988). Notwithstanding the centrality of singing within many education systems, it is not without its limitations and is only one part of a number of possible musical activities and approaches available to teachers.

2.2.5.1 Choral Culture and Choral Music Education

Throughout the twentieth century, choral singing in Ireland was encouraged and developed by various national musical institutions including the Feis Ceoil, the Cork Choral Festival and the establishment of the RTÉ choirs. Much of this choral activity has been coordinated by Cumann Náisiúnta na gCór (now known as Sing Ireland) which was founded in 1980 and aimed to "promote and develop choral singing in Ireland" (as cited in Sherlock, 2018, p. 98). Sing Ireland, of which the NCC is a member, continues to lead, enable and connect communities of singers in Ireland, and has supported many choirs, including the NCC, through the provision of grants for commissioned compositions.

The NCC's founding in the 1980s was situated alongside the establishment of many important and significant organisations still operating in the Irish choral and music education sphere today. These include the founding of the Irish Youth Choir (1982), the Contemporary Music Centre (1985), the New Ross Choral Festival (1986) and RTÉ's Cór na nÓg children's choir (1987) (Sherlock, 2018). This was followed by the establishment of the Kodály Society of Ireland in 1993, which introduced among other things summer courses for primary school teachers linked to choral singing, as well as an annual choral conducting summer course open to primary teachers now led by Sing Ireland at the University of Limerick (Ó Conchubhair, 2022; Sherlock, 2018). These organisations demonstrate the strength and vibrancy of the choral culture in Ireland around the time of the NCC's founding.

A rich tradition of children's group singing and children's choirs permeate many jurisdictions outside of Ireland. These include the many renowned children's choirs worldwide including the Glen Ellyn Children's Chorus (USA), Guangzhou Little Petrel Children's Choir (China), Los Angeles Children's Choir (USA), National Youth Choir of Great Britain (UK) and Tygerberg Children's Choir (South Africa). These choirs are distinct insofar as they are auditioned and take place outside of the school context. While they perform repertoire of a very high standard and demand choral etiquette and discipline, similar to the NCC, they are specialised in their provision of a particular musical experience within a Western choral tradition and do not profess to facilitate a wider, generalised form of music education (Dolloff, 2013).

In comparison, there are classroom singing initiatives that take place within the school day, similar in their operation to the NCC, that have been operating in primary schools for many years. These include programmes such as Sing Up! (UK), Count Us In (Australia) and Open Schools (Denmark). In America there exists a large choral tradition with programmes such as The North Wall Choral Development Project and Project Sing! (Dolloff, 2013) developing singing with children in schools. Australia's Count Us In and Denmark's Open Schools promote links between schools and community music organisations and schools, with the focus being more on a national celebration of singing, marked in Australia with an annual Program Song sung on the National Celebration Day (Doyle, 2019, p. 18). The collaboration between community and schools is even more evident in the US, with teachers and children side by side in the music making process. This enables the children to make their own musical decisions with teachers facilitating, while being mentored by a large community of music educators (Dolloff, 2013). Returning across the pond, Sing Up! in the UK is perhaps most comparable to the NCC as it is primarily delivered by generalist class teachers, has a dedicated collection of songs, and is supported by extensive CPD and digital resources to aid the teachers (Doyle, 2019; Welch et al., 2009). It was established to "reignite interest in singing" and includes "singing playgrounds" in school yards and a national Sing Up! Day held every year (Saunders et al., 2010, p. 76).

The existence of music programmes such as these demonstrates further the dominant and positive role of singing within primary music education, but each programme presents a slightly different role of the participating teacher as leader, observer or co-participant in the music making. For example, the Sing Up! programme is geared towards the teaching of songs by classroom teachers, whereas programmes in the US link teachers, children, and community musicians together. Therefore, the foci and emphases of the programmes will be different, as will the resulting musical aims, outcomes, and approaches. The NCC, when considered in the conclusion of this study, may align with some of these organisations through its structures, desired aims and outcomes. This broad picture of the classroom choral traditions leads this review to consider the place of song singing within the Irish primary school context.

2.2.5.2 Singing within Curriculum and Policy

The DE teacher guidelines presents this rationale for the inclusion of song singing in the primary school curriculum:

> The voice is everyone's first instrument. It surpasses all other instruments in terms of accessibility, flexibility, portability, and cost. In this respect it forms the key to access to music education in the classroom. (GoI, 1999b, p. 70)

Song Singing is contained within the Performing strand of the curriculum (see Table 2.1) alongside Playing Instruments and Literacy. The teacher guidelines acknowledge the link between song singing and developing musical literacy through the exploration of the musical elements (GoI, 1999). As described above, it's versatility and efficiency as "everyone's first instrument" means that singing is "an activity that is within the range of virtually anybody who aspires to it" (Shiel, 2008, p. 5), while Jeanneret and DeGraffenreid (2012) found that generalist primary school teachers feel more comfortable teaching singing than any other area of music. It is unsurprising therefore that it has been the dominant musical activity in primary schools for most of the 20th century (Stakelum, 2008b). This is reasonable given the efficient mode of delivery and relatively few resources required to teach a song, a practical response to the lack of resources and support referenced in earlier critiques of Irish music education provision (Benson, 1979; Herron, 1985; INTO, 2009).

Under the Creative Youth plan, the central place of singing in schools is recognised as a key priority in the implementation of the plan (GoI, 2017). Action Point 9 aims to develop a strategy with "key partners to encourage creative and sustainable engagement with singing and choral music for young people", including the establishment of a national singing programme (GoI, 2017, p. 28). This, it is argued, could contribute to the delivery of the school curriculum in music through singing, alongside advancing other key policy areas such as fostering creativity and wellbeing, while also embracing digital technologies to considerably expand the prevalence of singing in schools (Doyle, 2019). Therefore, singing could occupy a powerful place within future music curricula, particularly through partnerships between schools and programmes such as the NCC and others.

Policies relating to singing in Irish primary schools often draw attention to and inspiration from programmes and organisations operating outside of the curricular mesh (Doyle, 2019; McCarthy, 1999a; Sheil, 2008). As referred to in the introduction, many choral singing initiatives operate in Irish schools and are taught within school time. These include the NCC, the Peace Proms, the Hallelujah Chorus, and Dublin Diocesan Laudate programme to name a few (Doyle, 2019). In addition to the work of class teachers, external partnerships and festivals such as the Mary Immaculate College Children's Choir (Kenny et al., 2016), Singfest (Music Generation, 2020) and the Cór Fhéile (Heneghan, 2001) also encourage and support teacher conductors and school choirs.

The future of singing in primary schools would appear to centre on the development of a National Youth Singing Project, drawing from various aspects of the models outlined above (Doyle, 2019). It remains unclear if the aspirations of this Creative Youth singing project will take its lead from the programmes like 'Sing Up!' in the UK whereby high-quality digital resources are made available to teachers who teach songs in their classes or focus more on a partnership model between expert musicians outside of the primary school and teachers. Regarding the NCC as a possible model, Doyle acknowledges the success of its operating model in that it is led by classroom teachers with the support of the MDs as "advocates and models of practice" (2019, pp. 7, 17).

One key feature of many singing initiatives outlined here, including the NCC, is their focus on what Flynn & Johnston (2016) call performance music education, whereby the aim is to produce a performance or concert (Doyle, 2019; Turino, 2008). The DE guidelines state that participation in musical events, festivals and choirs are "a very valuable experience for children… [and] can complement *rather than replace* classroom music" (GoI, 1999, p. 87; emphasis added). This suggests that singing within schools ought to contribute to the lived music education of students rather than take the place of the curriculum aims and objectives in primary schools. Recalling the models of music education considered in the theoretical framework, it may be problematic that many singing programmes, which are very popular and successful within schools, adopt a transmission-based, teacher-led model of musical learning focused on preparing learners for a final concert or performance. Conversely, given the limited time available to music within a busy curriculum, it may be unrealistic to participate in these "valuable experiences" while also ensuring the content of the curriculum as it is outlined by the DE is taught (GoI, 1999b; INTO, 2009). Furthermore, the efficient nature of participation focused on producing a music performance is valued by many and may be an accepted trade off by teachers and schools (Flynn & Johnston, 2016; Turino, 2008). Therefore, it is argued that any future singing project or curriculum redesign should utilise singing as a "pedagogical tool" within a broader, contemporary approach to music education (Doyle, 2019, p. 36).

In this section, the historical, curricular and policy developments of music education in Irish primary schools have been discussed. This includes an overview of the main curriculum developments and changes that took place in tandem with the social and political contexts of the late 20th century. In addition, the current policy and curricular trends within Irish primary schools were examined, including the ongoing revision of the primary school curriculum and the centrality of partnership organisations such as Creative Ireland and MG in government policy. Various contemporary perspectives on music education were considered, including the success of partnerships in music education, the facilitation of creative and agentic methodologies and approaches in primary school music classrooms, and the conceptualisation of a culturally responsive form of music education that is inclusive, authentic and learner-led. Finally, the place

of singing and choral music in music education was explored, including the challenges and limitations of singing as a model of music education and the possible provision of a national singing programme under the Creative Ireland umbrella. As the NCC is focused almost exclusively on performance through group singing, it is argued that singing benefits students both in their musical learning and across wider dimensions, while being primarily teacher-led and product focused. In any event, the centrality of singing as an activity within the Irish primary school demonstrates an opportunity for singing to be a substantial part of future curriculum development. These historical and contemporary, traditional, and innovative approaches to music education and choral singing will be problematised further in this chapter and alongside the data in the discussion later in this thesis.

2.3 Problematising Participation in Music Education

This section explores further the issues and challenges facing musical education and teacher participation and will problematise teachers' musical learning and the multiple identities of teacher musicians. The challenges that impact the nature of teacher participation as a form of learning include the poor provision of teacher musical CPD and the perceived lack of confidence among generalist teachers. Then the ambiguous identity formation and negotiation of teachers' musical, teacher, professional and personal identities will be explored. as well as the outsourcing of music education to perceived specialist music teachers. Finally, the broader systemic issues impeding the evolution of music education such as the dominance of WAM, the poor status of music and the enculturation possibilities of music education will be examined. The tensions and issues explored here relating to teacher participation in music education will inform the conceptual framework presented in the next chapter and influence the interpretation of the multi-dimensional nature and significance of participation.

2.3.1 Perspectives on Teachers' Musical Learning and CPD

As the NCC summer course is one of the primary entry points into participation in the choir, and is a sanctioned CPD course by the DE, it is useful to consider the issues relating specifically to the musical learning of teachers. Considering musical learning as it appears in the literature, this section explores two perspectives whereby teacher's musical learning is obstructed: and the perceived lack of confidence among generalist primary teachers and the problematic provision of teacher CPD in general and poor provision of CPD in primary school music in particular.

As has been argued above in the Irish context, music education in primary schools has long been viewed as inadequate (Benson, 1979; Herron, 1985; INTO, 2009; Kenny, 2010; O'Callaghan, 2003; Stakelum, 2008b). Many of these studies and policy documents report a consistent lack of confidence in teaching music among primary school teachers, which has been

noted in many Western primary school contexts (Biasutti et al., 2015; Gubbins, 2021; Hennessy, 2017; Holden & Button, 2006; Seddon & Biasutti, 2008), and in the Irish primary school system since the middle of the 20th century (Grennan, 2017; B. Walsh 2012, 2016). The reasons for low musical confidence include the perceived inadequate music education classes provided in ITE institutions and therefore the lack of musical knowledge and skills among the generalist teacher population (Benson, 1979; Herron, 1985; INTO, 2009; O'Callaghan, 2003). In addition to this, a lack of practical experience teaching music as student teachers (Hennessy, 2000, 2017) and the perceived specialised nature of music as a subject further limits teachers' confidence (Gubbins, 2021; Holden & Button, 2006; Partington, 2018). The importance of teacher confidence and competence levels was noted by research in the UK, with Saunders et al. finding "the quality of pupil achievement [in music] inevitably reflected the teacher's confidence as a musician" (2010, p. 73). The implication being that even with transformative, progressive music education models, a lack of confidence could block any meaningful teacher learning through participation.

CPD has often been heralded as the answer to poor musical subject knowledge and confidence (INTO, 2009; McAuliffe, 2004; Mills, 1989). In the Irish context, CPD is frequently associated with curriculum change mandated by policy rather than responding to the needs of teachers (Dolan, 2012). Historically and currently, most compulsory CPD is in the form of in-service training days for teachers delivering new curricula, most recently with the introduction of the new Primary Language Curriculum. This notion of CPD is aligned with what Kennedy describes as a training model with the aim of "introducing new knowledge" (2005, p. 238). Recently in Ireland, this training model of CPD has come under increased scrutiny and future policy advocates for life-long learning, professional learning communities and reflexive practice to be at the heart of teacher learning (Dolan, 2012; Grennan, 2017) and policy (Dolan, 2012; The Teaching Council [TC], 2012, 2016). This renewed focus on a dynamic model of teacher education is more in-line with policy elsewhere (Gray, 2004; Kennedy, 2005; Tarc, 2012), however its implementation has yet to be studied. Furthermore, reflecting on the historic rhetoric of change outlined earlier, it remains unclear if a shift from transmission-based learning to transformational teacher participation in learning will realistically occur in the Irish CPD landscape.

Unfortunately, music and the arts within Irish CPD is poorly attended to, remaining absent from the six key learning areas identified as necessary for teachers in the new national CPD framework (TC, 2016). The DE announced in 2022 that new summer courses could only be sanctioned in the areas of literacy and numeracy and special education due to an "over representation" of other curricular areas (Drumcondra Education Centre, 2022). A recent informal audit found that in 2022, out of 188 summer courses across 12 education centres, only four offered a music course, with six music courses being offered in 2019 (Usher, 2022). This would appear to stand in opposition to the over-representation reported by the DE and supports claims

that music education is under-resourced within the Irish primary school context (INTO, 2009; McAuliffe, 2004). This claim of under-resourcing extends to post-primary level too as Bowe has accused the DE of "deserting its people" in the provision of supports and guidance in music education (2016, p. 21).

Powell (2019) argues that change in music education must be a "bottom-up endeavour" with teachers and students conceiving the changes necessary and therefore informing policy. To deliver this level of change, McCarthy (1999b) recommends that teachers' musical learning should draw on their own experiences, aligning with theories of socio-cultural learning outlined earlier (Lave, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Considering teachers' (and children's) musical learning, Green advocates for (2002) and successfully implements (2008) informal learning practices in post-primary music classrooms as a way of engaging and enhancing musical learning. She recommends that teachers embrace the learning styles of popular musicians by encouraging group learning, aural imitation, the integration of listening, performing, and composing, and giving students control over the choices of musical genres. In this way, the teachers become musical learners alongside the students, rather than relying on traditional, top-down approaches in both CPD music programmes and in teacher-student interactions. These different emphases on how learning takes place for both teachers and children reflect the ambiguous aim of music education outlined in the beginning of the thesis.

Building on the work of Green, Pitts argues that such informal learning settings are usually viewed as incompatible with formal classroom music. Her review of the literature on learning through participation reveals that "school music education has much to learn from these 'outside' contexts where high levels of motivation and commitment reveal musical learning processes at their most effective" (Pitts, 2007, p. 770). Therefore, teacher's musical learning may involve looking outside of the constraints of the current learning environments and frameworks and considering amalgamating these inside and outside school musics. McCarthy provides a vision for teacher's professional development in music that many CPD programmes, including the NCC, could aspire to: "Tapping the musical impulses of these teachers or student teachers, nurturing their self-confidence, building their self-identity as musicians, and developing in them a personal conviction of the value of music in their own lives and in their students' education ought to be the main goals of preservice and in-service education for primary teachers" (1999b, p. 47).

2.3.2 Identity and Teacher Participation

Having considered how teacher participation can be viewed as a form of learning, it is argued that teacher participation in an organisation such as the NCC can become an important part of one's identity and contribute to one's sense of belonging within a community. People have many concurrent identities (as I outlined in my personal background in the introduction) and the

literature argues that various events of participation and experiences help shape our sense of identity (Wenger, 1998). Wenger writes that identity is shaped by practice and participation, characterised as “lived, negotiated, social and a learning process” (Wenger, 1998, p. 163). In this way, identity formation is never complete but emerges and evolves from learning through experience and working with others, implying a link between learning and identity.

Regarding teacher identity, Akkerman and Meijer explain its formation as a dialogical process, during which a teacher engages in an “ongoing process of negotiating and interrelating multiple 'I' positions in such a way that a more or less coherent and consistent sense of self is maintained” (2011, p. 315). In this context, the multiple ‘I’ positions might include a musician, a teacher, a school leader, an audience member, etc. The ongoing negotiation process starts in the home and continues right throughout teachers’ lives. These multiple positions all impact the nature of teacher participation, the purpose of teacher participation and the significance of teacher participation, with multiple identities developing and evolving as teachers question, rationalise and challenge their own experiences.

When referring to music education, the factors that influence the formation of identity have been recognised by the literature, with the values, tastes, skills, knowledge, and dispositions of teachers impacting their own understanding of their musical identity and shaping the musical identities of those they teach (Green, 2011; Gubbins, 2021; Lamont, 2002; Murray, 2022; Pitts et al., 2015; Welch et al., 2009). Folkestad (2012) goes further, claiming that musical identity is also influenced by personal factors such as experiences, age and gender, alongside broader societal, cultural, religious and national contexts. McCarthy (1999) writes about how one’s identity emerges from local traditions, national identity, and common musical interests within communities. She writes about organisations such as Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the Gaelic League in the Irish context that use communities to transmit musical traditions and develop a growing sense of national identity (McCarthy, 1999). In short the entire socio-cultural context of one’s past and present experiences impacts their personal and professional identity.

Considering the multiple identities of principals as teachers, leaders and, in some cases, participants in music education, the literature has found that they are often the main “gatekeepers” to the school and thus they can have a significant impact on the musical traditions and music education approaches adopted within schools (Finnerty, 2017; Murray, 2022). In her study, Murray (2022) found that a principal who was a classical trained musician was more likely to sign up to a string performance programme, fulfilling a personal desire to have an orchestra within their school. She also found that a change of principal could lead to a pivot in the school’s music making, for example from WAM towards Irish traditional music, demonstrating the potential impact of one’s identity on the musical landscape of schools. The negotiation and manifestation of principals’ musical identities through the musical outputs and activities of their schools, leads

to the reinforcement of their personal, professional and musical identities through the promotion of familiar and valued musical practices (Bowe, 2016; Murray, 2022). This may be problematic if the power and influence of the principal as school leader dampens teachers' expression of their identity and sense of agency to facilitate their own vision of music education.

Returning to the importance of community discussed above, Wenger (1998) writes about the concept of belonging within a community and how identity formation is shaped by three distinct modes of belonging: through *engagement*, *imagination*, and *alignment*. In these ways, a sense of belonging is formed through engagement with others who have a common interest, imagination of the possibilities of participation and reimagination of one's identity, and alignment with the perspectives and systems of a community who share a sense of purpose. These modes of belonging can be positive in encouraging participation but also problematic in maintaining the status quo through alignment with static communities. To summarise, there are personal attributes and experiences that shape one's musical identity alongside broader societal and systemic influences. These factors are reminiscent of the historical and socio-cultural contexts which underpin the theoretical basis of participation under investigation in this study.

The term musician is often used narrowly as only representing one who plays a musical instrument, possessing some "innate talent" or a "musical ear" (Seddon & Biasutti, 2008). The work of Kingsbury (1988) and Perkins (2013a) found that musical talent is often viewed as fixed and a prerequisite to the adoption of the title of musician. Bernard (2004) in his study of secondary music teachers found that some viewed musician and teacher identity as separate, while others shared their personal musical identities through their professional teaching lives. Similarly, regarding the perennial question of who should teach music, a specialist or a generalist classroom teacher (Hallam et al., 2009; Holden & Button, 2006; Seddon & Biasutti, 2008), the innateness of musical talent can reinforce the idea music is for the "gifted few in the minds of *both* teachers and children" (Partington, 2018, p. 159, emphasis in original). Therefore, in this section the multiple co-existing identities of musician and teacher, and specialist and generalist music teachers will be reflected upon in the context of teacher participation through these multiple identities.

2.3.2.1 "Multiple 'I' Positions"

The existence of both teacher and musician identities, as well as teachers' professional and personal identities, contribute to the nature and significance of teacher participation. Bernard's study referenced earlier, examined post-primary teachers in ITE and asked whether they were "music teachers or musician-teachers?" (Bernard, 2004, p. 283). In seeking to elicit which identity emerges as dominant among participants, she found that teachers tended to either keep their teacher and musician identity separate, respectively alongside a professional-personal divide, or synthesise the two through the incorporation of personal, music making activities as part of their teaching. In a similar context, Hargreaves et al. (2003) found that two types of

identities emerge for music teachers: “music in identities” whereby music personally impacts one’s sense of identity, and “identities in music” which refers to the professional way in which individuals work in music as teachers, performers, listeners, etc. Their extensive research project with post primary student music teachers found conflicting identities emerged in their ITE influenced by the context in which their engaged in music (i.e., viewing performing musicians as one identity distinct from the classroom music teacher) and the genres and musical activities they engaged in (i.e., popular, out-of-school music or formal, school performances) (Hargreaves et al., 2003, p. 178). As a result, there is no consensus whether teachers embrace both their musician and teacher identity or keep them separate. Furthermore, as alluded to above, some teachers feel unworthy of the title musician due to the perceived specialist nature of music education which manifests in what I term the specialist versus generalist debate.

Much literature has considered the role of specialist teachers operating within primary schools (Gubbins, 2021; Hallam et. al., 2009; Holden & Button, 2006; Partington, 2018). It is the view of some that generalist music teachers view music as too specialised to teach, and therefore they pass the task to someone else (Hallam et al., 2009; Holden & Button, 2006; Seddon & Biasutti, 2008). Positively, the use of specialist music teachers inside schools has been noted for raising the profile of music among the school community, allowing other teachers to upskill and challenge their own perceived shortcomings and weaknesses in music, while also engaging them in team teaching and mentoring (Gubbins, 2021; Hallam et al., 2009; Plummeridge, 1991). However, Partington found in her examination of partnerships in UK primary schools that specialist teachers can also negatively impact generalist class teachers by “eroding their already fragile musical confidence” (2018, p. 161). McCarthy summarises the debate placing teachers on a continuum “ranging from the generalist teacher, whose attitude to, self-confidence in, and competence to teach music leads him or her to pay minimal attention to music in the curriculum, to the specialist teacher who approaches the subject as a discrete discipline, isolated from other learning” (1999b, p. 47).

An interesting consideration for this study is where do teachers reside on these continua from specialist to generalist, or musician to teacher, and what effect do these multiple ‘I’ positions have on their participation in the NCC. In advocating for teacher partnerships in music education Kenny (2017) hopes that through a social process of participation and learning over time, specialist musicians and music teachers working within classrooms could help to build competence and knowledge, and therefore foster confidence within generalist teachers. However, as some have suggested (Fahy & Kenny, 2021; Kenny, 2014; Partington, 2018), teacher-specialist partnerships can be ineffective due to the specialist replacing the teacher in the classroom, which must be kept in mind when considering the potential outcomes from teacher participation and where they may reinforce differences in identity and inequalities in participation.

2.3.2.2 "Badge of Identity"

Hargreaves and Marshall (2003) wrote that different values, tastes, and genres in music are a "badge of identity" that underpins the manifestation and understanding of teachers' identities. These embodied principles are influenced by their past and outside school experiences. This badge of identity can be problematic when one considers how participation can further reinforce one's identity and reaffirm dispositions and practices valued or inherited by teachers (Pellegrino, 2014). Kelly-McHale (2013) found that even when teachers are very open and aware of the diverse needs of their classroom, they can often default to replicating their own musical experiences in their teaching. Stakelum found that teachers "tended to reproduce the practices which they valued as relevant in their own lives", usually supporting their own understanding of a musical identity (2008a, p. 99).

Building on the discussion of multiple identities above, a teacher who themselves plays an instrument is highly likely to participate in musical activities that involve instruments and reinforce the idea that musician equals instrumentalist (Seddon & Biasutti, 2008). Similarly, Swanwick asserts that teachers who have been musically trained in a particular genre are very confident in passing on this knowledge "within these traditional boundaries" (1988, p. 12). In the context of this research, these traditional boundaries can be understood as teacher's comfort in their habitus of participation, leading perhaps to the maintenance of the status quo in their conceptualisation of music education. Identity therefore can be influenced by members of a community who encourage Wenger's sense of alignment and belonging stemming from participation, potentially passing on a badge of identity that is static, hegemonic and "blind and disempowering" (1998, p. 181).

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is rich in explaining the solace people feel in the familiar, but authors such as Green (2008) and Prior (2013) write of how in musical terms, habitus is often synonymous with issues of social class, elitism and "'high' and 'low' musical cultures" (Green, 2008, p. 3). As alluded to earlier, the badge of identity earned, acquired, or reinforced through participation in a particular activity or programme, may strengthen a sense of musical identity that is exclusive and narrow, rather than inspiring a reimagining or transformation of identity and practice (Wright, 2015b). When considered alongside the view of musical learning being beyond the reach of generalist teachers, this exclusive identity could further negatively impact the wider musical education landscape in schools. As Wright explains in her examination of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts within music education: "Any hope for music education to play even a small role in a more socially just society must lie in changing such structures" (i.e., habitus and field) (2015a, p. 354). The influence of past experiences on teacher identity, and therefore teacher dispositions, practices and habitus are an important consideration when critiquing the nature and significance of participation in the NCC.

In summary, the extent to which teachers' personal and professional identities as musicians and teachers are separate, cohabitate, or assimilate will impact the identity formation and reimagination that can occur through participation. Similarly, the positioning of teachers' own identity within the classroom as a generalist or a specialist music teacher, and how this interacts with their sense of what a musician is or should be, affects the nature of participation. In this study, where the NCC programme develops, endorses, or challenges teachers' multiple identities and pre-existing badges of identity will be explored in response to the data later. However, the literature reveals a complex picture, and notably, a dearth of research investigating the musical identities of primary school teachers which this study hopes to contribute to.

2.3.3 The Dominance of Western Art Music

Having considered the challenges facing participation on the level of teachers (i.e., teacher learning and teacher identity), this final section will consider deeper, systemic problems affecting participation in music education, particularly at primary level, beginning with the problematic issue of music genre in music education systems and curricula. Western Art Music (WAM) as it is referred to in this study, represents the classical music of the past 400 years centred around Western Europe primarily "as the pinnacle of a musical pyramid, below which are the other kinds of music" (Nettl, 2001). This culturally dominant classical or folk music is usually notated and absolute, forming the "school music" of curricula distinct from music experienced outside school. (Green, 2002). This music has a high social value and represents the primarily white, middle-class values of Western cultures that permeate many school systems in the Western world (Kelly-McHale, 2013).

Historically, the genres of music present in primary and secondary school classrooms have been a controversial topic (Green, 2002; T. Walsh, 2016). As discussed earlier, the teaching of WAM in classrooms is often seen as a cultivating act with a civilising aim (Green, 2006). For example, WAM was encouraged after World War II with the aim that music instruction based on Western values could civilise the next generation (Green, 2006; McCarthy, 1999a). Immediately the construct of capital is appropriate here as WAM represents a cultural good that has been perceived to improve one's status in society. Therefore, much of the literature finds that WAM is portrayed as a better form of cultural capital (Green, 2002; 2008; O'Toole, 2013), and demands greater respect, prominence and notoriety in education systems.

A study conducted in the late 1980s in the UK found that, while most teachers included both WAM and more popular styles of music within their teaching, the rationale for each genre's inclusion was vastly different (Green, 2002). WAM was taught to develop musical technique, to encourage lifelong learning through music, and to expose children to musical works they would not otherwise be exposed to, thus improving them as citizens (Green, 2011; Perkins, 2013b; Pitts

& Robinson, 2016). In contrast, popular music was to be used as a treat or break from more demanding genres, and to include children of "low ability" (Green, 2002, pp. 137–138). Moreover, Jaffurs identified a perceived hierarchy of musical styles that influenced teachers' planning in music: "[Teachers'] approach to using popular music, however, was similar to giving a child candy. You know it's not good for them, but once in a while won't hurt them too much" (2004, p. 190). It is clear therefore that an inequity exists between music genres and repertoire as a form of capital. All genres can be thought of as an embodied form of cultural capital, however the value placed on one (i.e., WAM) over another (i.e., popular music) reveals much about the nature of capital exchange through teacher participation. The use of popular music in the classroom to encourage participation and engage learners could also represent a form of social capital, building positive associations within the field of music education, but with a different focus to the more important "school music" genres. In this way, teacher participation in an organisation such as the NCC is problematic when one considers the different uses, types and values of capital exchanged.

As outlined earlier, teachers are often influenced by their own musical and educational backgrounds (Stakelum, 2008a; Welch, 2010), and a higher status may therefore be granted to WAM within musical lessons and activities. This is arguably problematic as the types of music that both primary and secondary school children engage with outside of school are often absent in formal music lessons (Barton & Riddle, 2021; Green, 2002, 2006). Across primary (Murray, 2022), secondary (Bowe, 2016; Spruce, 2015) and tertiary levels (Talty, 2019), it has been noted that even if a wide range of genres are included within a music programme, they are often filtered through traditional, notation based, WAM aesthetic and the resulting performance lacks authenticity (e.g. a jazz standard including an improvisational break performed as a notated, SATB arrangement in a concert hall rather than a jazz club). This could give the appearance of a well-balanced mix of musical genres, while also reinforcing the hierarchies between WAM and other musical genres (Nettl, 2017). Talty (2019) advocates for the dismantling of traditional canons of music, through the exploration of diverse, inclusive and cultural relevant repertoire in schools. Therefore, a key finding across the literature is that not only are songs from the WAM tradition more dominant and respected within the formal music curricula of Western countries, but other styles of music are distilled through a classical lens, conforming to standards such as notation and instrumentation and often neglecting the socio-cultural context of the genre.

Pitts notes that the teachers' commitment to a musical genre or experience is often due to their "devotion to a genre with a perceived lack of appreciation in the broader community" (Pitts, 2005, p. 142). This reinforces the findings earlier that teachers can often be content in their habitus and community, and work innocently towards the preservation and promotion of a particular type of capital. Green (2006) reflecting on her earlier work in this area acknowledges that much has been done to close the gap between WAM and other musics in UK classrooms,

however, a deeper consideration of the authentic integration of contemporary and non-Western genres into music education is required to expand the concept of capital that is currently promoted in schools and initiatives. The challenge facing music education therefore is "the breakdown of the school music canon of repertoire" and widening the types of capital valued by teachers and offered to students (McCarthy, 2018, p. 54). In this study, the findings relating to the repertoire and how it shapes the nature of participation, particularly considering the literature explored here, is significant in understanding the nature and significance of the NCC as a phenomenon operating within contemporary primary schools. Also, the power implications of participation as explored in the introduction are further evidenced here in teachers' and school's alignment with or challenging of problematic issues such as the dominance of WAM in 21st-century school programmes.

2.3.4 Enculturation through Participation

Reflecting on all the issues relating to teacher participation in music education outlined thus far, the challenges relating to teacher learning, teachers' identity formation and negotiation, and the problematic dominance of valued capital and the resulting disabling of creativity and authenticity, this section considers how teachers and children may undergo a process of enculturation through participation. It is argued here that a process of enculturation through music education places teacher participation as a vehicle that can either transmit musical knowledge or transform music education within the primary school, depending on the nature of this participation.

McCarthy defines enculturation as "the generational transmission of cultural knowledge, skills and values" (1999a, p. 13). She asserts that "of all the arts, music is perhaps the most sensitive indicator of the culture and is most closely tied to the subconscious attitude and assumptions on which we build our lives within a society" (McCarthy, 1999a, p. 17). Reflecting on the socio-cultural learning that underpins the consideration of participation in this research, the societal values and cultural views inform the "hidden curriculum" that exists within education and schooling (Bresler, 1998). As explored earlier, the political views and historical fabric of a system (Ho, 2010; T. Walsh, 2016), alongside the attitudes and tastes of parents and family members, all contribute to the process of enculturation (Campbell, 2011; Cawley, 2013, 2021; Murray, 2022). In her recent work on enculturation in Irish traditional music, Cawley (2013, 2021) found that musical learning and enculturation occurs in an "ecosystem", within a negotiated community of musical practice. Therefore, through the very nature of the word, enculturation in education is related to the cultural, historical, societal, and political influences on education, and in the case of this study, on teacher participation.

The process of enculturation through education outlined here is neither positive nor negative, but neutral. In Green's work with popular musicians, enculturation is understood as an organic process emerging through informal learning practices, as evidenced in this example: "Terry, who never had an instrumental lesson in his life ... provides the best example for how listening as part of enculturation can turn slowly and imperceptibly into an ability both to reproduce accurate covers and to improvise with feeling and technical proficiency" (Green, 2002, p. 66). She endorses listening as an essential learning activity and in the example here, looks favourably on the enculturation of Terry into a particular musical experience and genre through immersing himself in the culture of aural replication, a culture she feels may be absent in more formal, notation-based practices (Green, 2002, 2006). In a similar way, Cawley explains how participation a musical community "does not require conformity. On the contrary, debate stimulates critical discourse and promotes vibrant communities of practice" (2021, p. 6). Many classical musicians perform in the style of their teachers or mentors, with their musical learning, identity and capital informed by the culture of their habitus (e.g., their particular conservatoire) (Nettl, 1995). Therefore, participation in music involves some process of enculturation in that participants are engaging musically with what is negotiated and embodied within the culture, repertoire, curriculum, and community.

Problematically, music education can therefore become a reproductive cycle for learners, influenced by the hidden curriculum that is transmitted by teachers and society (Bresler, 1998; Wright, 2015b). Small wrote that the dominant musical culture is sometimes promoted as the only sort of "real music", meaning that those who do not identify with it are viewed as not musical (1998, p. 212). Finnerty found that in the Irish primary schools in her research, music education often focused "primarily on preparing repertoire for performance such as religious ceremonies, local festivals and national music competitions and events" (2017, p. 219). This is reminiscent of the religious and nationalistic rationale for music education in the early 20th century, which still permeates as a vehicle for enculturation in some school contexts today.

Without the inclusion of diverse musical genres and experiences, some learners may be excluded from meaningful participation, reinforcing capital hierarchies within a culture (Pitts, 2012). Therefore, enculturation through musical communities such as classrooms, musical groups and online spaces are settings where the meaning, senses of identity and boundaries of society, are passed on and protected (Cawley, 2013; McCarthy, 1999a; Ward, 2019).

Stakelum outlines the difficulties that emerge through the enculturation process which will be reflected on in the consideration of teacher participation as it emerges from this research:

> Each teacher [has] a legacy of cultural practice on which to draw. Their attitude to the cultural practices [is] shaped by their own formative experiences and ranged from negative to positive. From this legacy they have selected which of these cultural practices and skills are worth reproducing in their practice. They tended to reproduce the practices

> which they valued as relevant in their own lives and considered to hold cultural capital for the pupils they teach. (2008a, p. 99)

In summary, teacher learning is limited by an absence of policy support and poor musical CPD that focuses traditionally on a transmission-based model of learning rather than encouraging more agentic, creative learning opportunities for teachers. Teachers' identities and how these identities are formed, challenged, and reinforced through participation is also problematic, with teachers often content in the habitus of participation reinforcing their "badge of identity" (Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003). The existence of "multiple 'I' positions" (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 311) and pre-existing inadequacies of viewing oneself as a musician or a specialist music teacher suggests personal and professional identities as musicians and teachers that can be separate, co-exist or assimilate impacting the positive or problematic outcome of identity that occurs through participation. On a broader level, participation can encourage the reproduction of existing practices, the reinforcement of dominant cultural norms and the maintenance of power through alignment with like-minded others in a community and with broader societal values and dispositions. WAM continues to remain the dominant capital exchanged within many school systems and this has the potential to lead to an enculturation process of learners through the absence of access to alternative forms and genres of music making within schools.

The final section of this literature review will examine the organisation structures that are used to explore and critique participation, drawing on two main writers Wenger's (1998) CoP structures that were introduced in the introductory chapter and Engeström's (1999; 2001) Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) which frames the NCC as an organisation and allows for the interpretation and investigation of the various tensions and contradictions that emerge from teacher participation and interactions in the discussion.

2.4 Organisational Structures for Participation

As already outlined, the aim of this research is to investigate the nature and significance of teacher participation in the NCC and as the choir is an organisation, an important part of the study will be describing how it is organised and how its structures impact participation. Moreover, the multi-dimensional nature of participation alluded to thus far emerges from the interaction of teachers within the NCC as an organisation and therefore by understanding and investigating participation in the NCC on an organisational level, the research can then interpret the nature and significance of these various trajectories of participation using the conceptual framework contained in the Chapter 3.

In this section, the various trajectories of participation will be considered as they emerge in Wenger's (1998) CoP theory. In doing this, a brief overview of CoP as a structure for participation and learning will be provided, outlining the various trajectories of participation

within the theory and problematising where CoP falls short in framing the NCC as an organisation. Following this, Engeström's (1999, 2001) CHAT model is presented and described as the underpinning organisational structure of this research. Important parts of the CHAT framework and its use in music education research are discussed, with particular attention drawn to the usefulness of contradictions and tensions as mediators of action and possible generators of change. In particular, the constructs of Community and Division of Labour within CHAT are discussed for their relevance to the nature of this study and how they build on the shortcomings of CoP theory. Engeström's model will provide the framework through which the interactions of teacher participants in the NCC are explored and critiqued, through its organisation of the conceptual framework in the next chapter.

2.4.1 Participation in a Community of Practice (CoP)

Communities of Practice (CoP) have been used to understand organisational and teacher learning in a variety of contexts (Blankenship & Ruona, 2007; Ehrlin, 2016; Grennan, 2017; Kenny, 2010; Perkins, 2013a; Teague & Anfara, 2012) and despite being a relatively new model for teacher learning in the Irish educational landscape, they are becoming more favourable among teachers (de Paor & Murphy, 2018; Grennan, 2017), researchers (Kennedy, 2014; Vescio et al., 2008) and policy makers (TC, 2016). Various concepts explored in the theoretical framework and literature review of this study are drawn from or form part of CoP theory including participation, identity, community, belonging, power and learning (Wenger, 1998).

In the area of music education, Kenny (2014, 2016) has expanded the CoP model to consider the socio-cultural perspective of musical learning and experience within a community. She uses Bourdieu's socio-cultural concepts, as this study does, to draw insights relating to musical learning and practice from a partnership between a third-level institution and a local school. Building on her work, Cawley (2021) uses Kenny's communities of musical practice to explore beyond a theoretical "utopic collective of musicians" and examine the Irish traditional music community as a CoP filled with discourse and debate (2021, p. 6). Wenger similar cautions against an overly positive reading of community as a concept, instead suggesting that "disagreement, challenges, and competition can all be forms of participation" (1998, p. 77).

Given this study's focus on participation, CoP view learning through participation as a "continual cycle between novices and masters" involving various levels of participation depending on the experience level of participants (Pollard & Alexander, 2019, p. 311). Wenger explains how participation can evolve through engagement in a CoP:

> When newcomers join a community of practice, generational discontinuities spread through multiple levels; relations shift in a cascading process…Last year's trainee now helps the new trainee…You suddenly see all that you have learned because you are in a position to help someone. (1998, p. 90)

In the context of this research, a similar trajectory of participation is evident. Like any organisation, the NCC membership includes what the literature terms "experts" or "old-timers" who have experience through repeated participation in the programme, and "novices" or "newcomers" who seek to participate in the programme, usually under the apprenticeship of the established community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Legitimate Peripheral Participation, coined by Lave and Wenger, provides a way to "speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers…[and] process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice" (1991, p. 29). They explain how, rather than simply being a simple link between working and learning through apprenticeships, CoP involves "participation as a way of learning – of both absorbing and being absorbed in – 'the culture of practice'" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 95). Therefore, these various members are involved in the culture of an organisation, and exist through various "peripheral forms of participation" (Wenger, 1998, pp. 117–118). The four forms of participation considered by Wenger are outlined below and they represent and conceptualise the different levels of teacher participation in the NCC:

- **Full Participation:** Also known as an insider
- **Full Non-Participation:** Also known as an outsider.
- **Peripherality:** Participation enabled by non-participation, which may lead to full participation.
- **Marginality:** Participation restricted by non-participation, which may lead to non-membership of the community or to a marginal position

(1998, p. 167)

These levels of participation are useful in understanding the nature of teacher participation through the various domains of participation investigated in this study. The consideration of how participation as a form of learning, identity, power, and capital may differ for insiders, outsiders, peripheral or marginal participants will be significant in drawing conclusions and implications from this research for teachers, the NCC and the wider education sphere.

Wenger (1998) further describes the trajectories of various forms of participation, which further influence the nature and significance of participation. These trajectories are represented in the diagram below (Figure 2.1)

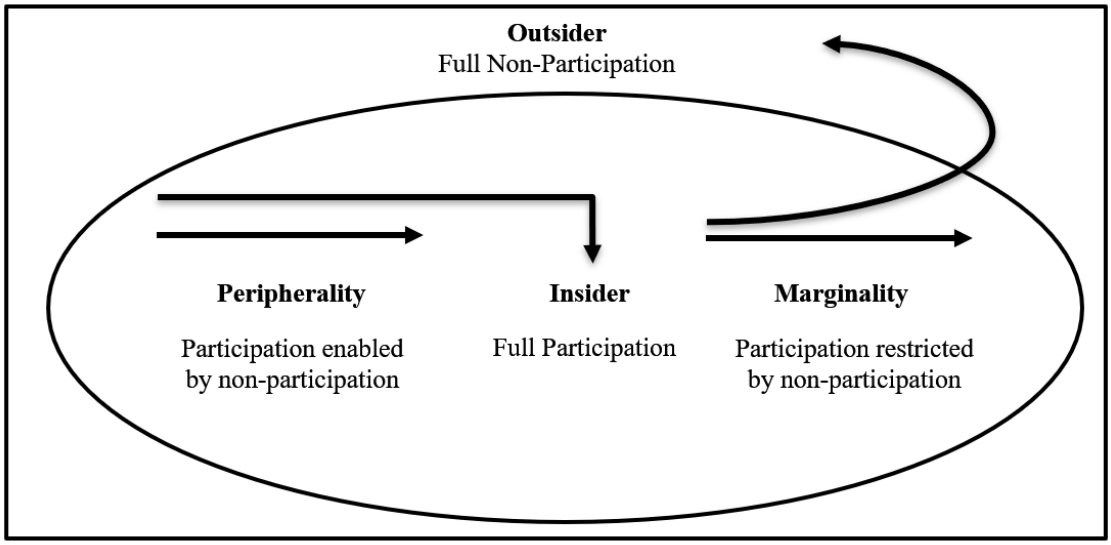


Figure 2.1: *The Trajectories of Participation* (adapted from Wenger, 1998, p. 167)

An inbound trajectory suggests a participant who views Full Participation as the ultimate outcome of participation (e.g., a first-time teacher in the NCC learning through participation with the goal of becoming an expert member). These participants may initially reside on the periphery but are still enabled to learn as their identity is shaped through participation. Conversely, Wenger (1998) argues that members can either choose to or be forced to remain in a marginal position. They may wish to remain outsiders or at the periphery (e.g., a principal who facilitates but does not have any direct involvement in, the NCC) or be kept outside due to other limitations or contradictions within the community or culture (e.g., the lack of a particular type of capital or a different set of values of what music education should entail). In a similar way, progression to full participation may be conditional on alignment with the community's values and practices through a process of enculturation as discussed earlier. In any case, Wenger's description of participants' trajectories is useful in interpreting the nature of teacher participation and the desired form of level of teacher participation and their corresponding agency and responsibility within the organisation, as will be discussed alongside the data later.

2.4.1.1 Problematising Communities of Practice

While the different forms and trajectories of participation in CoP theory frame much of the understanding of the multiple levels of teacher participation in the NCC, there are limits to the usefulness in drawing comparisons between participation in a CoP and participation in the NCC. Firstly, while the benefits for new members are obvious in terms of new knowledge, skills and social connections acquired through participation, Hargreaves cautions that CoP can overpromise in their capacity for transformational learning with some lacking depth of engagement among members leading to a type of "contrived collegiality" (2019, p. 609). The various forms and trajectories of participation could also be viewed as limiting when one considers how realistic it is

that everyone can become a full participant or how much influence one has when working in collaboration with various forms of participation. Furthermore, practices and values within the CoP that are held deeply may lead to the "imposing of one's view, using power or authority" on others, perhaps aligning new members with the status quo through a "blind and disempowering" form of participation for some (Wenger, 1998, pp. 181; 186). Lave and Wenger (1991) conclude that there is a contradiction between achieving continuity in a CoP, which can include the social reproduction of extant practices, and the constant replacement of old-time members of the community which introduces new experiences, knowledge, and identities. Therefore, a key consideration in understanding the nature of teacher participation is where participation in the NCC sits within this contradiction between the preservation and rejuvenation of the community.

More specifically, Wenger outlines three dimensions of practice that are evident within a CoP and therefore, would need to be characteristic of the NCC if it were to be framed as such: mutual engagement with other members, negotiation of a joint enterprise and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). Firstly, it can be accepted that shared repertoire as a concept is evident in the existing structures and previous repertoires of the NCC, in addition to the "routines, words, tools [and] ways of doing things" that are shared between members and form part of participation in a CoP (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). Considering mutual engagement, Wenger tells us that the CoP "exists because people are engaged in actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another" (1998, p. 73). It can be assumed the teachers participating in the NCC work together for the successful operation of the choir and the resulting outcomes of participation, however the democratic nature of the negotiation is questionable given the multiple forms and trajectories of participation. For example, how are the views of newcomers or marginal participants consolidated alongside insiders, given the restrictive nature of alignment and potential process of enculturation outlined above? These interactions and tensions suggest a need for a more complex theory to critique the various forms and levels of participation. Furthermore, the final dimension of practice within a CoP, the negotiation of a joint enterprise, ensures that the enterprise "is defined by the participants" and "creates among participants relations of mutual accountability that become an integral part of the practice" (Wenger, 1998, pp. 77-78). Once again, while the NCC aligns with some dimensions of practice through the lens of CoP theory, the scale of the model and centrality of the MDs and senior NCC members to the decision-making processes mean that it falls short of this definition of joint enterprise.

Therefore, despite CoP theory contributing much to this research in terms of viewing multiple forms and trajectories of participation, in addition to the concepts of identity formation through practice, learning through practice and the power implications of concepts such as alignment within a CoP, it neglects to consider the hierarchical dimension of the community and complex interactions that occur in an organisation of this size. Furthermore, it does not provide for the cultural and historical context of the organisation or the dynamic nature of learning which

ought to feed back to old-timers from newcomers. Therefore, teacher participation in the NCC will be conceptualised as an AS using Engeström's CHAT framework.

2.4.2 Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

CHAT has evolved over three stages, firstly emerging in Vygotsky's triangular model of action, whereby a subject interacting with an object has this interaction mediated through various tools that influence the outcome. Viewed as revolutionary during the early 20th century, it was argued that people act as mediators using tools, language and symbols which impact on individual's interactions with the wider world (Henley, 2015). In the context of this research, an example of this model would be the teacher as the subject interacting with the NCC as the object, which produces an outcome (e.g., participation). However, Engeström explains how this triadic representation of actions "does not fully explicate the societal and collaborative nature" of an AS (2001, p. 30). Therefore, the second generation of AT was developed by Leontiev who recognised the importance of community and labour within the negotiations between object and subject, altering the terminology slightly moving from tools and language to the multiple types of meditating artefacts that impact the interactions between subject and object (Bakhurst, 2009; Engeström, 1999). While not altering the triangular model, the inclusion of community and societal influences provided a broader context in which to view an activity and as a result, the outcome.

The most recent model of AT comes from Engeström's conceptualisation of an AS filled with contradictions, discourse, and multi-directional dialogue (Bakhurst, 2009; Engeström, 1999). This third generation of AT recognises how all interactions are mediated between the subject (or learner) and an object (the intended goal/outcome) (Henley, 2015). The cultural and societal rules that influence subject-object interactions within the AS, in addition to the influence of the wider community, now form part of the expanded structure of the system (Engeström, 2001). Rather than the goal of an activity being simply determined by the actions of the subject, AT allows us to examine and identify "how specific ways of engaging with the object are enabled or discouraged at the level of the activity system" (Edwards, 2005, p. 55). A diagram of Engeström's CHAT framework as presented in the literature is reproduced below in Figure 2.2:

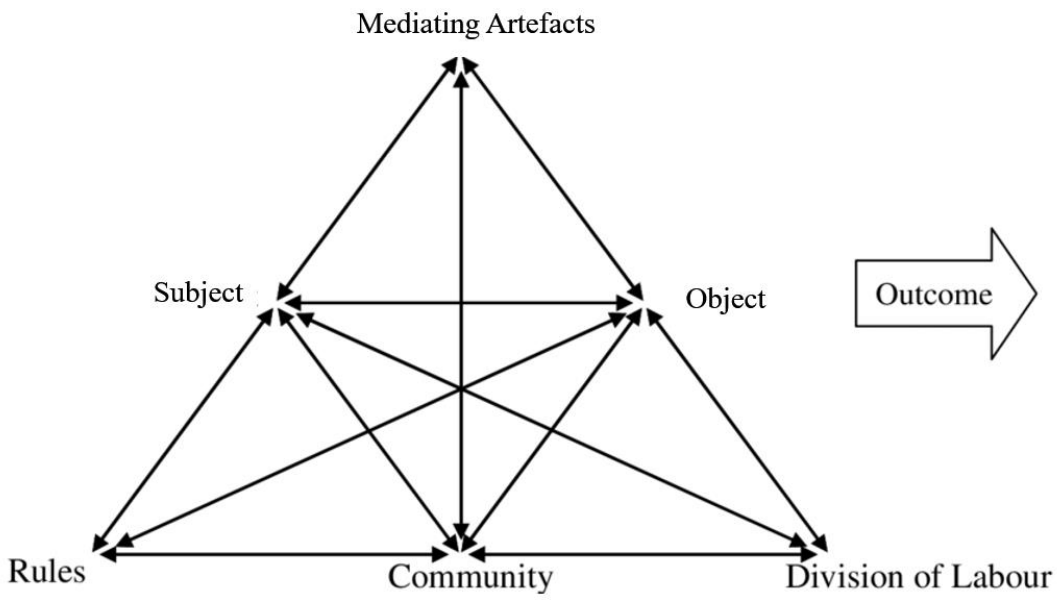


Figure 2.2: *Engeström's Activity System* (2001, p. 135)

2.4.2.1 Understanding CHAT

Henley explains what is happening in Engeström's triangular visualisation of the theory above:

> The subject, the object and the mediating artefacts (also known as tools) interact with the community of the activity, the rules of that community/activity and the division of labour within the community/activity to produce an outcome. (2015, p. 127)

The cultural and historical dimensions of the model focus on the structure of activities as historically constituted entities, which encapsulate the many meanings, values and contradictions of various artefacts interacting with other areas of the system (Bakhurst, 2009; Wenger, 2009). The history of the activity, as Engeström describes, includes the rules and conventions entangled in the artefacts of the activity and the wider theoretical ideas and context of the activity (Engeström, 2001; Welch, 2010). This explains the addition of cultural (C) and historical (H) qualifiers to contextualise the interactions within AT. As discussed above, the inclusion of the broader influences on the activity, alongside the rules and division of labour within the activity or community, provide a richer framework to investigate the nature of teacher participation through the critique of interactions of teachers and the NCC and the significance of the multi-dimensional nature of participation that emerges as the outcome of teacher participation.

CHAT also explicitly recognises the contradictions and tensions created by conflicts between multiple activity structures and the potential of these conflicts to evolve practices (Levine, 2010). In contrast with the mutual engagement and joint enterprise characteristic of CoP

theory, the CHAT model embraces these tensions as "possibilities of expansive transformations in learning…and innovation" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). Further supporting the suitability of CHAT as a framework through which to view participation in the NCC, Jensen's (2014) work within a Danish educational project demonstrates how capital and habitus can resonate with AT providing a macro view of structures surrounding an activity and a micro perspective of the learning practices shaped by Bourdieu's concepts. Therefore, CHAT can capture the socio-cultural context and pre-existing field and habitus of participation, while also providing a lens to view the broader mediating factors.

Importantly, the transformational potential of CHAT is one of the main principles of the framework and therefore can capture the positive outcomes of creative, culturally responsive music education discourse and meaningful teacher learning explored above. As discussed earlier, Lave (2009) explains that situated learning involves knowledge that was always undergoing transformation. Dewey's writings on education also point to the continual "reconstruction and reorganisation of experience" (1981, p. 76). In Engeström's model, he explains that AS has the "possibility of expansive transformations in learning over long periods of time when participation deviates from established norms" (2001, p. 137). In an alternate view of participation as merely maintaining established practices and culturally valued capital, CHAT does suggest the opportunity for participation to be transformative, at least in the literature (Engeström, 2001). This could allow new thinking and ideas to emerge through challenging the tensions and contradictions that emerge from various parts of the AS.

CHAT's use in music education is new but growing (Burnard & Younker, 2008; Henley, 2015; Welch, 2010). The rationale for its use comes from the desire for "new understanding of the relationship between musical learning and personal and social transformations" (Henley, 2015, p. 135). The self-sustaining process of an AS through the continued introduction and enculturation of new members, coupled with the contradictions inherent, theoretically allow musical organisations to ideally maintain a dominant cultural model while presenting the opportunity for expansive, transformative change (Engeström, 1999; Welch, 2010). As Henley (2015) summarises, it provides music education researchers and teachers with a tool for understanding the complexities of music education and learning processes, as well as a potential framework for their further development through the resolution of the tensions that emerge between interactions. This study aims to add to Henley's work using CHAT to understand the influences of members within division of labour and wider community of teachers participating in the choir, alongside the effects of mediating artefacts and rules on the object and outcome of participation. In this way, the multi-dimensional nature of participation emerges as the outcome of the AS, and the interactions and contradictions between various parts of the AS influencing the outcome. Two

components of CHAT that are particularly useful in understanding these disturbances between the subject-object-outcome relationship are community and division of labour.

2.4.2.2 Community and Division of Labour

Engeström's theory places communities, divisions of labour and hierarchies as important constituents of AT worthy of consideration when investigating organisational structures (Levine, 2010). Levine's critique of CoP theory argues that community as a concept in learning has been romanticised and warns of the power of communities to "stifle innovation and the renegotiation of meaning and practices" if not organised jointly and democratically (2010, p. 123). One of the tensions within AT is the contradiction between the validation of existing situated knowledge alongside the on-going transformation of practice (Avis, 2007). This conflict is similar to the differing purposes of community within a CoP, aiming to both ensure the continuity of the community and activity while embracing the next generation of newcomers and knowledge to progress it (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Edwards explains that these conflicts are inevitable parts of the system and that their resolution can lead to learning and innovation: "learning…is explained as an outcome of a contradiction in the system which has been recognized and responded to by the system" (2005, p. 54). Therefore, the subject's learning through interacting with, and overcoming contradictions between, various constituents of the AS can positively impact the outcome or goal of the AS and be transformative for the system as previously held norms are reimagined (Engeström, 2001). In the context of this study, the importance of community to the continuation of the NCC as a phenomenon, as well as the maintenance and transformation of it, has the potential to be positive or negative and it is these conflicting purposes of community within an AS that will be explored through the interpretation of participation in later chapters.

Notwithstanding the considerable influence of community on the object and outcome of an AS, division of labour is perhaps the most interesting concept when one considers the various forms and trajectories of participation within the NCC. As alluded to earlier, participation exists in many forms with multiple trajectories (Wenger, 1998; Figure 2.1) and Engeström's division of labour proposes a similar stratification of member's roles and responsibilities. Burnard and Younker (2008) describe a "vertical" and a "horizontal" division of members, with power and status equated alongside the vertical nature of labour. A visual representation of this vertical and horizontal division of labour within an AS is represented in Figure 2.3 below:

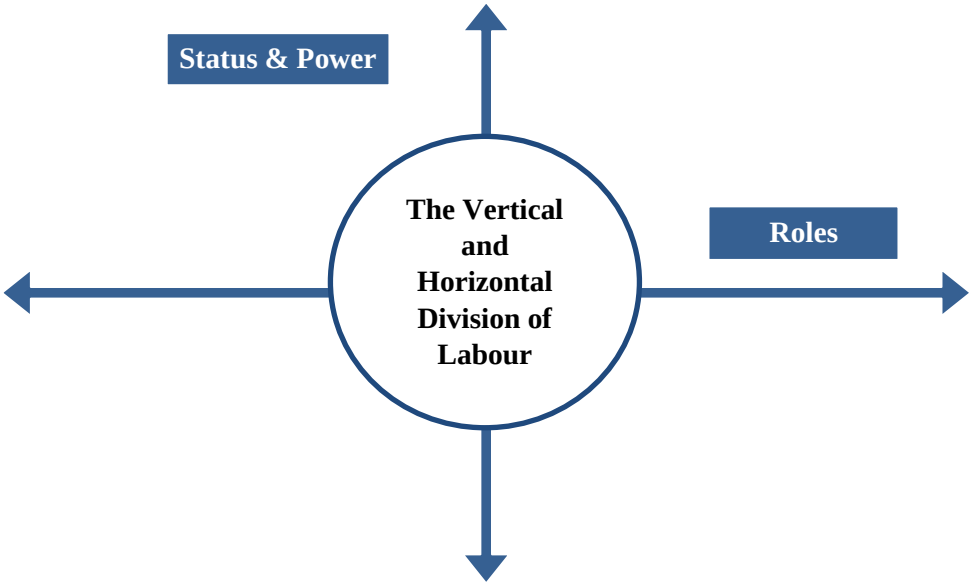


Figure 2.3: *The division of labour within CHAT* (adapted from Burnard & Younker, 2008)

Here I have labelled the horizontal axis roles which represent the various roles that members of an AS possess or take on, all of whom will influence the object and intended outcome. Then, on the vertical axis, I consider the different hierarchical levels which members of the AS may exist on. While all participants in an activity are part of the community, individual labour members' responsibilities, power, and influence, may not be equal.

In the consideration of the nature of teacher participation in the NCC, the horizontal axis may be understood as the various forms of participation (as outlined above by Wenger, 1998) which could include teachers who participate at the margins or periphery of the activity, alongside those who are insiders or outsiders. These same forms of participation could also be viewed hierarchically, with the vertical axis above representing a teachers' status, responsibility, and power within the system. Therefore, rather than viewing labour as a community of equal members, the hierarchical division of labour presented above is arguably a more complex, contradictory, richer construct to explore the various forms of teacher participation in this research.

In summary, the tensions that emerge from the interaction of community members (both inside and outside the activity) and the various levels of members within the division of labour offer much scope to critique the nature of teacher participation and interpret the significance of contradictions between a system's community and division of labour and the implications for the wider primary school music landscape.

2.5 Conclusion

This review of the literature has built on the theoretical underpinnings of the study and the researcher's worldview of learning, music education and participation. This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the context in which teacher participation within the NCC is situated, in addition to the historical, societal, and policy space in which this study is being conducted. It has also considered some of the challenges of teacher participation in music education, namely the limitations of teacher learning and the possible identities of music teachers at primary level. Also, the broader issues facing music education such as the dominance of WAM and the reproduction of inherent cultural values and practices have been outlined. Finally, an examination of CoP and CHAT frameworks as models through which to examine the nature of teacher participation in the NCC has been presented. The various levels and trajectories of participation as outlined in Wenger's CoP theory and influence of Engeström's CHAT framework constituents, and the distributive and transformative possibilities of tensions within the system were discussed.

From this review, a complex context emerges in which the NCC operates. The philosophical, theoretical, and empirical perspectives consulted here finds that music in primary schools often lacks a clearly articulated aim and rationale, sometimes advocated more for its extra-musical aims or as a vehicle for fostering middle-class or politically popular values. This leads to a school system which historically, and many argue currently, focuses on a narrow, transmissive view of music curricula, where music lessons are primarily didactic and where singing remains the dominant activity. While contemporary models of music education recommend a creative, learner-led arts education, a lack of confidence and competence among generalist primary teachers, combined with poor teacher training, CPD opportunities and funding, leads to a music education system in many Western primary schools that is aspirational in policy but unrealised in practice. Furthermore, the literature finds that curricula and teachers remain loyal to formal, Western pedagogies and WAM repertoire within the classroom setting, rather than embracing creative, informal musical practices that encourage child agency and inclusivity rather than simply enabling access.

This complex space is where the NCC operates within schools and is significant in problematising the nature and significance of participation as it emerges from the data. The examination of CoP theory demonstrates missed opportunities for learning and practice as a community of learners, while the use of CHAT provides for the consideration of the cultural and historical context of the organisation as a mediator of interactions as well as the tensions that arise from contradictions within the system. The multi-dimensional nature of teacher participation in the NCC as a form of learning, identity, power and capital, and potentially transformation, is the basis for the conceptual framework through which the data will be analysed. This will form the

beginning of the next chapter which will outline the research methodology and design of this study.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the design of the research process is presented beginning with the conceptual framework which underpins the interpretation of this study. Next the research focus and questions are restated, followed by a discussion of the qualitative, interpretive paradigm of the research as well as the rationale for phenomenology as the methodological home for the study. Following this, the research design is outlined, detailing the data collection phases, the rationale for focusing on teachers as the primary data sources, and a brief synopsis of individual participants' contexts. The design and rationale of using interviews as the primary data collection tool is also considered. The approach to data analysis in identifying themes from the data is outlined. Finally, the limitations of the research are addressed, including the positioning of the researcher as an insider within the field, related ethical considerations of the study and how trustworthiness and credibility are approached in this research.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

In qualitative research, the conceptual framework emerges from the data and theory allowing the researcher to organise their thinking and to remain open to all possibilities and conclusions (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). In building the conceptual framework for this study, I examine the interactions of teacher participants in the NCC as an activity system (AS) across the different constituents of Engeström's (2001, 1999) Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework (i.e. mediating artefacts, rules, community and division of labour). Here, I plan to build on the work of Henley (2015) on the importance of the division of labour within the CHAT framework in a musical context. This allowed her to view the learning process from multiple angles within the AS under investigation and, more importantly for this study, to interrogate the relationship between division of labour, community, rules and mediating artefacts within CHAT (Henley, 2015). I propose using a similar approach, considering where the concepts explored under the various domains of participation are evident and interact within the operation of the organisation as an AS, and therefore how they influence the nature and significance of participation. In this way, I will bring the various concepts discussed earlier together within the CHAT framework, which I argue all influence the interactions and tensions that emerge from participation in the NCC and ultimately impact the outcome of the AS.

3.2.1 Conceptualising Participation

The conceptual framework is informed by the theoretical underpinnings and findings from the literature, and is presented as four dimensions of participation: Participation as Learning, Participation as Identity, Participation as Power and Capital, and Participation as Transformation.

With the concept of **Participation as Learning**, the importance of community has been thoroughly explored, both theoretically in the socio-cultural dimension of learning (Lave, 2009; Van Lare & Brazer, 2013) and in the tensions that may emerge between transmissive, reproductive views of learning versus collaborative, transformative approaches (Kennedy, 2005; Liu, 2020; Wenger, 1998). Moving beyond community, the subject's own previous experiences and habitus is thought to affect the type of learning that occurs, meaning that learning often takes place within one's comfort zone by default (Bresler, 1998). Coupled with the challenges facing teacher learning in music education and the poor policy status of music learning in Ireland, there are many tensions to consider when exploring participation as learning in this study. These influences from the point of view of teachers and wider policy makers, and from the repertoire and resources of the NCC, are the mediating artefacts that shape the nature of learning through participation. Hence, the nature of Participation as Learning as an outcome within the CHAT model is problematic, given that the desire for transformational learning in music education is complicated by the socio-cultural influences of the community, by the rules of the organisation and the prescribed curriculum, and by the cultural and historical mediating artefacts and social and cultural capital preserved in the habitus of participation.

Participation as Identity is shaped by previous experiences and participation, in addition to personal and broader societal factors (Folkestad, 2012; Wenger, 1998). The concept of belonging through alignment with other like-minded members of a community, or on the other hand, feeling disconnected from the community through differences in capital or habitus, determines the positive or negative nature of participation as a form of identity. Community is a central part of many organisational theories, in this case CoP and CHAT, and the feedback loop between identity and community is well argued (Wenger, 1998). Considering musical identities, the extent to which an activity and its community reinforces a divide between those who identify as musical and those who do not is problematic for the nature of participation (Nettl, 1995). Therefore, the mediating artefacts which affect identity include the personal and professional experiences and opportunities afforded to the subjects, alongside the extent to which others in the community support or limit the development of teachers' multiple identities as teacher, musician and professional. These mediating and community factors experienced through participation can influence the expression and nature of one's identity as a possible outcome of a programme such as the NCC.

Participation as Power and Capital are considered together as they are perhaps the most problematic domains of participation when one considers the limiting, disempowering possibilities of power and capital outlined by some authors earlier. They are also central when one considers an organisational framework such as CHAT, given that the model recognises the division of labour, in addition to the interaction of rules and hierarchies within the division, as integral to an AS (Engeström, 2001). In this way, Bourdieu's concept of field comes to represent the confines of the activity, what Wright refers to as the "rules of the game" (2015a, p. 83). Within this field, "powerful players…conserve or transform the structure of relations of forces that is constitutive of the field" (Bourdieu, 1993, as cited in Grenfell, 2021, p. 39). In other words, the rules and mediating artefacts of the activity influence the successes of teacher participation within the organisation. This form of power, as referred to by Foucault (1991) and Ball (2018) earlier, is not always explicit, but forms part of the activity, influencing the extent of power and control as a possible outcome from participation. Also, the exchange of cultural and social capital as described earlier creates tensions with others in the community who may possess different forms of capital. The preservation or transformation of capital is determined by the interactions of subjects themselves, through their own personal mediating artefacts, and also the capital exchanged as part of the activity (i.e. routines, repertoire, resources, etc.). More broadly, the dominance of particularly types of capital (Green, 2002; McCarthy, 1999b; Spruce, 2015; Wright, 2015a) and desire to preserve power within education (Ball, 2018; Green, 2002, 2006; Poblete et al., 2019) can lead to a process of enculturation whereby the outcome of the activity is reproductive but never transformative. Therefore, participation as a form of capital exchange and preservation can be endorsed or challenged by the habitus and values of members, particularly those with power and status, which again shapes the nature of participation and significantly affects the outcome of teacher participation.

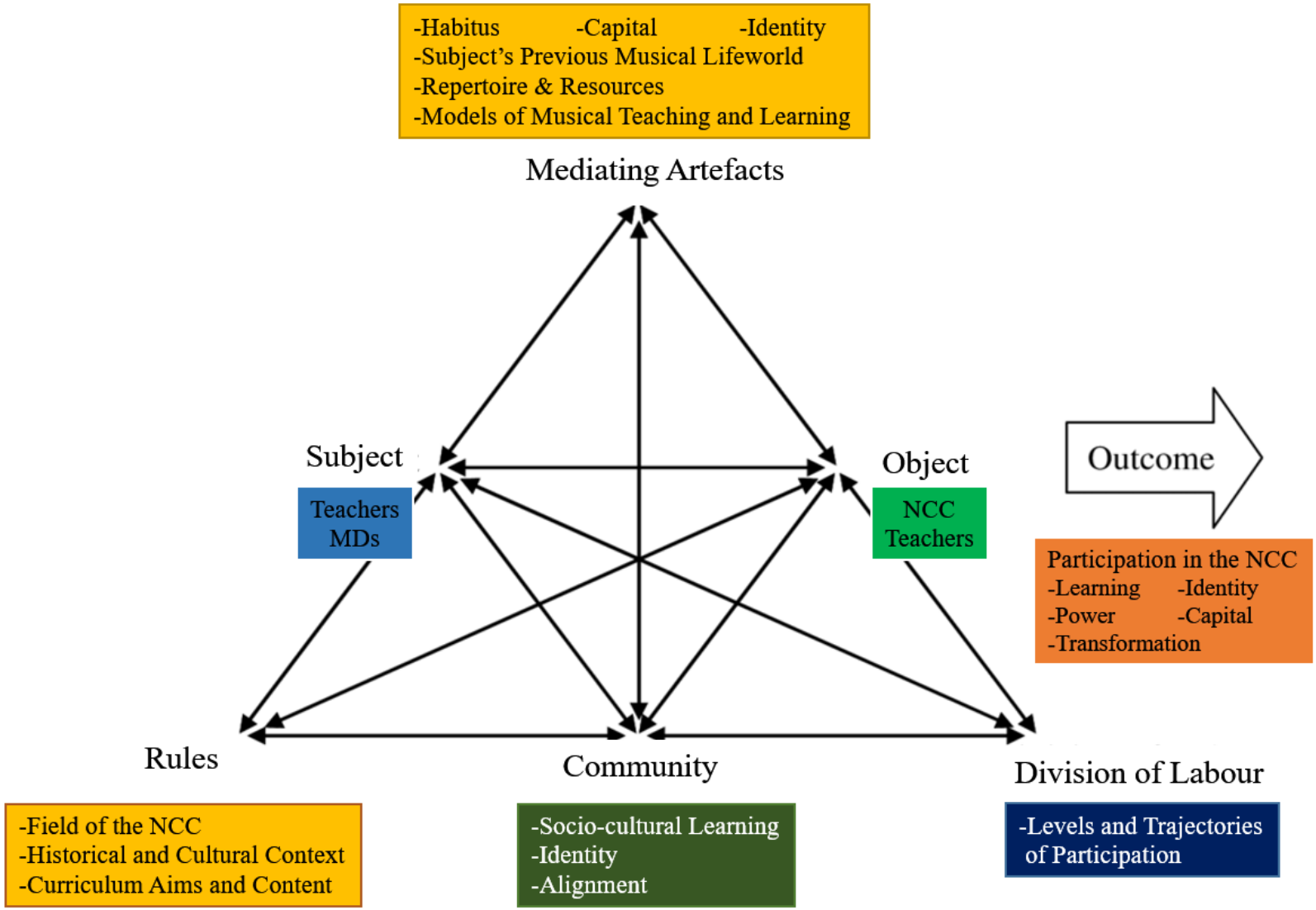
Finally, **Participation as Transformation** conceptualises participation as a potential transformational force which challenges the habitus and identity of teachers and the rules and field of participation. The conceptual framework presents transformation as a possible outcome from teacher participation and through the lens of CHAT, contradictions that emerge with the AS (i.e., the NCC) will be critiqued for potential innovation of practice and transformational learning (Engeström, 2001). Contemporary discourse around learner agency and creativity within music education (Burnard, 2008, 2012; Green, 2008; Sharp, 2004) and inclusive, diverse musical genres and practices through CRME (Bond, 2017; Kelly-McHale, 2013) are the mediating artefacts which, if introduced and promoted by the interactions of community members and a democratic division of labour, could enable a transformative outcome for teacher participation. This form of participation could enable teachers to enhance their musical skills and knowledge, to develop a positive professional, personal and musical identity, and broaden the types of capital exchanged through the NCC. In this way, participation as transformation challenges subjects within the AS to

reflect and critique the disturbances that emerge from the other dimensions of participation earlier, for the greater good of the activity, its members and the outcomes. Table 3.1 illustrates the links between these four forms of participation, the concepts from within the literature that influence teacher participation in music education and the approximate location of these concepts within the CHAT framework:

	Concepts from the Literature	CHAT Constituent
Participation as Learning	• Habitus and Lifeworld (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986; Heidegger, 1996; Bonnet, 2001) • Socio-cultural Theories of Learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) • Cultural and Social Capital (Bourdieu, 1986) • Musical Training and Music Education (Bowman, 2018) • Transmissive and Transformative CPD Models (Kennedy, 2005; 2014) • Curriculum Aims and Content (GoI, 1999a; 1999b)	• Community • Mediating Artefacts • Rules
Participation as Identity	• Belonging and Alignment (Wenger, 1998) • Habitus and Lifeworld (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986; Heidegger; Bonnet, 2001) • Multiple Co-existing Identities (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003; Seddon & Biasuitti, 2008)	• Community • Mediating Artefacts
Participation as Power and Capital	• Field (Bourdieu, 1990) • Dominance of WAM (Green, 2006; Perkins 2013b; Spruce, 2015) • Historical and Societal Constraints (Kerins, 2019; B. Walsh, 2016) • Levels and Trajectories of Participation (Wenger, 1998) • Process of Enculturation (McCarthy, 1999; Stakelum, 2008a)	• Community • Division of Labour • Mediating Artefacts • Rules
Participation as Transformation	• Transformational Learning (Kennedy, 2005; Engeström, 2001) • Reimaging Capital, Habitus and Field • Identity Formation (Bernard, 2004; Georgii-Hemming, 2011; Grant & Vonzell, 2008) • Developing Confidence (Fahy & Kenny, 2021; Kenny 2007) • Contemporary Perspectives on Music Education (Bond, 2017; Burnard, 2008; Burnard & Fautley, 2014; Kelly-McHale, 2013; Spruce, 2015; Sharp, 2014)	• Community • Division of Labour • Mediating Artefacts • Rules

Table 3.1: *Links between participation, theoretical and empirical concepts, and CHAT*

Finally, these concepts from the literature provide a blueprint that aligns with the researcher's own worldview and emerges from the various literature on teacher learning, music education and the construct of participation (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). It is this lens which leads the discussion and interpretation of teacher participation in the NCC. The CHAT framework is represented below in Figure 3.1 incorporating the various theoretical and empirical concepts that will guide the critique of teacher participation and inform the findings of the research. The framework provides a lens through which to explore the multi-dimensional nature of participation and the possible positive, negative, and neutral outcomes of participation as a form of learning, identity, capital and power and transformation. The conceptual framework therefore aims to guide the interpretation of this research in exploring the nature of teacher participation and the significance of participation for teachers, the NCC and the wider music education landscape.


-Habitus -Capital -Identity
-Subject's Previous Musical Lifeworld
-Repertoire & Resources
-Models of Musical Teaching and Learning
Mediating Artefacts
Subject
Teachers
MDs
Object
NCC
Teachers
Outcome
Participation in the NCC
-Learning -Identity
-Power -Capital
-Transformation
Rules
Community
Division of Labour
-Field of the NCC
-Historical and Cultural Context
-Curriculum Aims and Content
-Socio-cultural Learning
-Identity
-Alignment
-Levels and Trajectories
of Participation

3.3 Designing the Research

This section will detail how the research was designed, emerging from reflection on the literature and on the theoretical underpinnings discussed in the opening chapter. Leshem and Trafford (2007) explain that research at doctoral level is often cyclical in nature with findings and conclusions from one study informing the design of the next. Noteworthy, they advocate for continued dialogue between the research design and field work, implying that the qualitative researcher must respond to the data by tweaking the design if necessary (Leshem & Trafford, 2007). These interactions are an important feature of this study, given the implication of the various data collection phases on the research design and findings. In this case the construct of participation as a multi-dimensional phenomenon outlined earlier necessitates a qualitative research paradigm to respond to the research question.

In Chapter 1, the researcher began with a research problem that warranted investigation, which in this case emerged from a lack of research on teacher participation as a construct, a lack of enquiry into the NCC as an organisation, and, most importantly, from a curiosity of practice given the researcher's position within the NCC (Gray, 2018; Little, 2009). The research rationale and question will now be revisited.

3.3.1 Establishing the Research Focus

As previously stated, the research problem and subsequent focus emerged from my own participation in the NCC as a primary school teacher for many years. Reflecting on my own informal observations and experiences, teacher participation was viewed as a broadly positive experience, with teachers efficiently learning the repertoire, teaching the programme within their schools, and appearing to derive a sense of accomplishment and pride from participation at the end of the programme. This is supported by the primary sources contained in Appendix A which positively frame the NCC as a phenomenon.

Given the choir's almost four decades of existence, viewed alongside the evolving Irish music education landscape, the researcher's curiosity as an insider prompted the investigation and exploration of teacher participation in the NCC. Moreover, there has been no significant empirical research relating to the organisation since its inception which suggests that this research is timely given the significance of the NCC within the Irish primary school landscape.

Finally, reflecting on various empirical literature relating to music education generally, Irish music education policy and curricula, and literature relating to participation in music, the study of teacher rather than child participation in music programmes was absent in much of the literature. Therefore, given the centrality of teachers to the functioning of the choir, they were deemed the appropriate subjects to consider in exploring the research problem in the first

instance. This study hopes to contribute towards the knowledge base relating to teacher participation as a phenomenon within education and the nature and significance of such participation in school-based music programmes. With the research problem and rationale now considered, a restatement of the research question will now follow.

3.3.2 Research Question

As outlined in the introductory chapter, the aim of this research is to investigate, understand and interpret the nature of teacher participation in the NCC as it emerges from the data in this study, informed by the conceptual framework and literature considered thus far. From this central research aim, the research question emerges: ***What is the nature and significance of teacher participation in the NCC?***

In addressing this question, the study will conceptualise and critique teacher participation as a multi-dimensional construct, considering teacher participation as a form of learning, identity, power, capital, and transformation and where the significance of participation emerges as a positive, negative, or neutral outcome. By investigating how teachers participate in the NCC, the research also aims to understand the significance of participation in teacher's own personal, professional, and musical lives, the implications for future policy and curriculum developments in primary music education, as well as the possible re-imagination of the choir in the future. The discussion of the research design process continues with an outline of the research paradigm underpinning this study, informed by the research rationale and questions.

3.3.3 Research Paradigm

All research is framed within a particular tradition, reflecting on a common understanding of what constitutes knowledge within the research field and how one might go about investigating it (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). With its origins in social science research, there are many different paradigms that one can consider within educational enquiry (Cohen et al., 2018). Pring (2015) simplifies this into two epistemological tribes, distinguishing between the objective view of reality as being measurable and observable, and the subjective, constructivist view of reality as personally experienced and negotiated by both the researcher and participants.

This continuum is considered by Rossman and Rallis (2012) when they ask whether learning is a constructive or acquisitive process. As outlined earlier, this research is underpinned by a subjective, socio-cultural worldview, with experiences and learning occurring in rich contexts informed by previous experiences and others within a community (Edwards, 2005; Van Lare & Brazer, 2013). Its aim of understanding participation through the experiences of teachers is appropriate given that "interpretative research typically tries to understand the social world as it is from the perspective of individual experience" (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 43). Therefore, a constructivist, interpretivist paradigm is most appropriate whereby the research and the researcher

co-construct understanding, respecting the individual realities as experienced by each participant (Hatch, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The importance of an individual's experience, reified through the social, cultural, and historical context in which they reside, was key in the examination of teacher participation within the NCC as not all teachers may share the same experience when participating in the choir. For example, the researcher's own participation in the programme may be typical or atypical, and therefore it was necessary to consider the multiple possible realities that may emerge from the data (Gray, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), in addition to maintaining a pragmatic, reflexive approach to the research design (Hatch, 2002; Leshem & Trafford, 2007). In short, while the researcher's worldview and experience were central to the research rationale, at all times the author remained open to the implications of the conceptual framework and the findings from the data.

In summary, this qualitative research is subjective in nature, focusing on understanding individuals' experiences of a phenomenon (i.e., teacher participation) within the wider context of the work. The study embraces a constructivist, interpretive paradigm whereby various examples of teacher participation emerge, framed within their socio-cultural context and explored through the examination of the NCC as an AS. Given the focus of the research is on understanding the nature of teacher participation as an outcome and phenomenon of the NCC, the most suitable methodological home is therefore phenomenology, which will now be described and rationalised.

3.3.4 Phenomenological Tradition

Phenomenological research is concerned with understanding people's experiences with or of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). It involves developing a description of the universal essence of what research subjects experience and how they experience it (Creswell, 2013). Traditional views of phenomenology, initially proposed by Edmund Husserl, the "father of the philosophy of phenomenology", simply focus on describing one's interaction with a phenomenon (Beck, 2021, p. 11). Husserl's method was strictly focused on participants' experiences and necessitated the bracketing or suspending of the researcher's beliefs to avoid bias so that "pure phenomenological description could emerge" (Kakkori, 2009, p. 21). In this way, the researcher must act as a stranger to avoid contamination (Denscombe, 2017). Therefore, the goal in the early phenomenological tradition was to elicit the essence of a phenomenon, devoid of researcher context or comment, presenting a pure, transcendental view of the experience of participants (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 2009). Considering the highly contextual nature of this research, the place of the researcher within the research process, and the multiple influences on teacher participation as a construct, such an objective view of phenomenology did not align with the

theoretical worldview of this study and therefore, a more subjective approach to phenomenology was required.

Building on this traditional view of phenomenology was Husserl's student, Martin Heidegger. One of the key differences in his conceptualisation of phenomenology was the importance of researcher interpretation within a study (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). In comparison with the bracketing of bias, Heidegger felt that setting aside one's own values and beliefs was impossible, and actually the researcher ensured that "hidden or concealed" experiences of and influences on the phenomenon would be considered: "the primary work of phenomenology is to lay open a phenomenon and let it be seen" (1992, as cited in Beck, 2021, p. 14; Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Therefore, the researcher could not be a truly objective by-stander, but rather was an integral part of the research context and process in this phenomenological approach.

Furthermore, the importance of researcher reflection and interpretation is considered critical in understanding the "essential meaning of something" (Van Manen, 1990, as cited in Kakkori, 2009, p. 25). This form of phenomenology became known as hermeneutic phenomenology, advocating for the investigator's place within the research through what Kakkori refers to as "the art of interpretation" (2009, p. 22). Given the context of the choir and the relationship of the researcher to the study, it is argued that this phenomenological approach adds to the credibility and trustworthiness of the research (which will be discussed later in this chapter), as well as its meaning and significance. As Randles defends: "The close relationship between researcher and the researched…allows for a richness of data, results and corresponding implications that might not have been obtainable any other way" (2012, p. 18). In short, given the complexity of the current Irish primary school music context, the scale of the NCC and the various forms of participation possible by teachers, the interpretive lens informed by the literature and the researcher's background is arguably needed to construct a comprehensive picture of the nature and significance of teacher participation. A description of teacher participation, while forming a significant part of this study, is enhanced by critiquing and reflecting upon participation through the phenomenological lens outlined here, drawing conclusions and implications from the data that emerges from the outcomes, contradictions, and challenges of participation.

A final justification for the use of phenomenology relates to its use in practitioner-based research and the value it places on practical implications and real-world outcomes as Van Manen explains:

> [I] am more interested in the engaged phenomenology conducted by professionals in education…the people who are able to enrich our perceptiveness and who contribute to our reflective understandings of the possible meaning and significance of everyday experiences. (1997, p. 350)

Phenomenology as a research approach is generally used in areas of professional practice, such as the health sciences (Neubauer et al., 2019), but it is increasingly becoming popular within arts education (Bresler, 1995; Burnard, 2008; Pellegrino, 2014; Van Der Schyff, 2016). Its usefulness in music education has been evidenced in studies relating to teacher identity and teacher lifeworld and habitus (Randles, 2012), further supporting its use in this study. Additionally, Van der Schyff argued that in practical subjects such as the arts, the inquiry should always follow a "phenomenological attitude"…which "may initiate…phenomenological and critically-transitive insights when they transform the mundane, introduce new perspectives and thus challenge taken-for-granted ways of perceiving, knowing and being" (2016, p. 45). In short, phenomenology allows extant practices and rules to be critiqued and possibly transformed, positing phenomenology as a change maker across various disciplines including medicine, higher education and psychiatry (Van Manen, 2014).

The choice of phenomenology was important in the context of this study, as not only is the place of the researcher as an integral part of the study acknowledged, the researcher as a previous participant in the NCC and a primary school teacher, has first-hand experience of the programme and a personal curiosity to understand teacher participation. As Van Manen said, the author is "engaged" in the phenomenon of teacher participation, possessing the experience and reflexive understandings to uncover the "hidden and concealed" experiences mentioned earlier (Beck, 2021; Van Manen, 1997). In concluding this section, Van Manen's definition of the role of the researcher frames the transformative possibility of phenomenology which will emerge in implications of this study for teachers, the NCC and wider music education discourse:

> The researcher is an author who writes from the midst of life experience where meanings resonate and reverberate with reflective being. The researcher as author is challenged to construct a phenomenological text that possesses concreteness, evocativeness, intensity, tone, and epiphany. (1997, p. 368)

In this section, the design of the research has been outlined. This included a restatement of the research problem and question. Following this the situation of this qualitative research within the constructivist, interpretivist paradigm and the phenomenological tradition was rationalised. The choice of hermeneutic phenomenology as the research approach is justified due to the centrality of the researcher's voice, its focus on rich contextual data, and its contribution to practitioner-based research through interpretive and reflexive inquiry. The next section of this study will consider the implementation of this research design by discussing the three main data collection stages, the use of interviews as the primary research tools and the data analysis process.

3.4 Implementing the Research Design

In this section, the design of research including an overview of the various data gathering phases is presented alongside the rationale for the various research phases. This includes the analysis of contextual documents relating to the choir, and the various interview stages with the

MDs and teachers of the NCC. The design, use and evolution of interviews as the primary data collection tool are described. Finally, the data analysis procedure and main themes that emerge from the data are discussed concluding the description of the research design.

From the outset, and in line with the research paradigm, the situation of the researcher as an insider contributes to all areas of the research design (Coady, 2021a; Mercer, 2007; Randles, 2012). As an experienced participant, I use the knowledge gathered from observing the organisation and its members to explore the phenomenon of teacher participation in-depth with a small number of participants. In completing this research, I advocate for the importance and credibility of insider and qualitative research (Coady, 2021a, 2021b). The sample consists of a wide range of teacher experiences within the NCC, designed to demonstrate comparative inference across a wide range of participant profiles from within the organisation (Silverman, 2014), all the while acknowledging that this study is not a national or quantitative evaluation. The reflexivity and criticality outlined below throughout the research process aims to add trustworthiness and credibility to the data collected, through the informed interpretation of the data which will draw conclusions relating to the nature and significance of teacher participation as evidenced in this study.

3.4.1 Data Collection Phases

Below I present the data collection phases of the project which took part in three distinct phases, all contributing towards understanding the nature and significance of teacher participation. Before the data collection, there was a preliminary document analysis of historical and contemporary sources relating to the NCC. This was followed by three stages of the fieldwork:

- Phase 1: Contextual and Preliminary Phase (Senior NCC Interviews)
- Phase 2: Exploratory Phase (Pre- and Post-Participation Visits to Four Schools)
- Phase 3: Phenomenological Phase (Six Teacher Interviews)

Figure 3.2 details the timeline of data collection at all stages. The rationale and procedures of these three phases will now be considered.

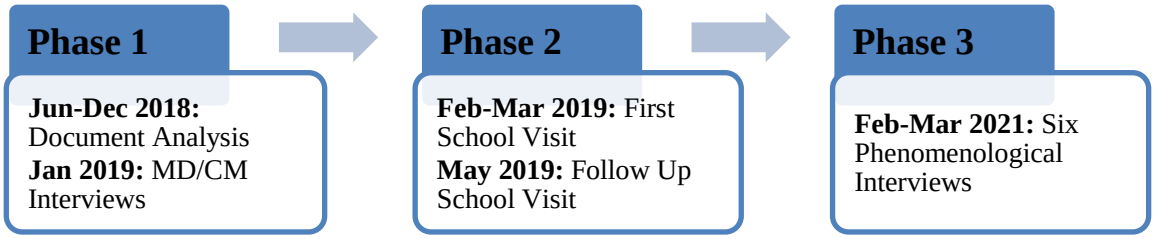


Figure 3.2: *Data Collection Timeline*

3.4.1.1 Phase 1: Contextual and Preliminary Phase

Dibley et al. explain that "humans understand meaning through the context of experience" (2020, p. 117). As has been argued, the research context is a critical element underpinning every stage of the research process. Given the historical and cultural context in which the NCC was established in the mid-1980s, and the large varieties of teachers and primary schools who participate in the choir, a comprehensive description of the choir was needed to contextualise the study for those unfamiliar with the NCC, to understand the operation of the organisation, and inform the interpretation of the nature of participation and the significance of the interactions and contradictions that emerge from participation. Furthermore, any critique of the NCC emerging from the study must be viewed within the context of the organisation and wider policy space, with a full understanding of what participation involves.

Firstly, as part of the literature search, the author contacted the MDs and members of the NCC National Committee requesting any documents they had relating to the foundation and history of the choir. They kindly shared historical data and artefacts, much of it dating from the original 1985 formation of the choir and related concerts. Data includes concert programmes, newspaper articles, the 30 Year Souvenir Book (NCC, 2015), correspondence received by the choir's founder from those within the musical and educational landscape at the time, and other accounts of the choir over its lifespan. Additionally, statistical data relating to participating schools was drawn from various sources (NCC, 2015, 2017, 2019) and then correlated and cross checked with national statistics available from the DE and the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Website (CSO, 2021; DE, 2020, 2021b). Data gathered relating to participating schools included gender, ethos, school size and location, with the aim of understanding the composition and representation of the NCC as a national phenomenon. Additionally, repertoire lists from 1985-2019 (NCC, 2015, 2017, 2019) are also collated and analysed to ascertain the genres and balance of repertoire offered by the programme and how the nature of participation is influenced by the composition of the repertoire. A detailed description and analysis of this statistical data is presented in Appendix C, followed by a list of the school data in Appendix D and the repertoire lists in Appendix E.

In addition to contextual data collection, the three MDs and an NCC CM were interviewed in January 2019. The purpose of these interviews was to gather up-to-date contextual data on the choir's current participants, information relating to the selection of the repertoire and the perceived aims and purposes of the choir, and finally to discuss participants and schools that could be invited to the next phase of the study. From these preliminary interviews, the researcher was familiarised with the workings of the choir and nature of teacher participation from senior NCC member's perspectives. This phase presents an account of the choir's foundation, operation

and rationale, alongside the roles of the main people involved and identifies any changes that have occurred since its inception.

3.4.1.2 Phase 2: Exploratory Interviews

Following the initial contextual phase, an exploratory phase of fieldwork was carried out involving four participating schools around the Greater Dublin Area in 2019. The aim of this phase was to explore the experiences of schools who were participating in the choir. Within each school, a selection of teachers and the principal were interviewed. This phase involved two data collection points, one visit prior to their regional concert performance in February/March 2019, and then one visit after their regional concert in May 2019. The schools and participants included are detailed in Table 3.2 below, as they prepared for the 2019 NCC concert cycle:

Name	School Profile	First Participated	Participants
School A	All-Male	2009	-Class Teacher/Choir Conductor -Class Teacher
School B	All-Female	2013	-Class Teacher/Choir Conductor -SEN Teacher/Choir Conductor -Principal
School C	Mixed Gender Catholic DEIS Band 1	2019	-Principal/Choir Conductor -Class Teacher
School D	Mixed Gender Multi-denominational	2019	-Parent/Choir Conductor -Class Teacher -Principal

Table 3.2: *Phase 2 Participants*

The various roles of individuals within the NCC will be discussed and problematised in detail in the next chapter, drawing on Wenger's (1998) work on the various forms of participation discussed earlier. The schools selected were from the Greater Dublin area, following consultation with the MDs. I invited schools which represented a broad mix of participating schools that year. This included visiting an all-male, all-female and mixed gender schools; two inner city schools, as well one in the south and one in the north of the city; and visiting one DEIS school and one school with a multidenominational ethos. Also, a range of participant experience levels is represented, ranging from schools who first took part in 2019, in addition to established schools within the NCC community. This aimed to ascertain the potential benefits of long-term participation as well as the challenges of first-time participation. The interviews were transcribed, checked and any identifying or sensitive information such as names, locations, etc. were omitted in compliance with ethical guidelines and to protect participants' privacy.

3.4.1.3 Moving Beyond Phase 2

Following the fieldwork in four schools around the Greater Dublin area, the research plan was to visit four more schools outside of Dublin to ensure a fair geographical representation of the choir's participants. However, the initial analysis suggested that there was a need to refine the research sample which would solely focus on teacher participation specifically rather than considering a school-wide view of participation. While acknowledging the usefulness of the Phase 2 in capturing numerous voices and viewpoints from within the choir, particularly those of principals and non-participating teachers, these participants' responses often lacked the experience required to fully answer the interview questions. For example, the principal of one school admitted that while they enjoyed the idea of the children singing together, the previous principal had enrolled the school in the NCC for that year and therefore she had very limited knowledge or experience of what participation involved. In another school, one class teacher explained that "I suppose ultimately [the NCC] was taken on by [Class Teacher] and then we fell in line with…what was required of it" (Class Teacher, School A). Such responses prompted a re-examination of Englander's criteria for selecting research participants: "Do you have the experience that I am looking for?" (2012, p. 19).

Therefore, the exploratory Phase 2 interviews detail the general attitudes and opinions regarding participation among teachers in four NCC schools and informed the design of Phase 3 which aimed to investigate more deeply the motivations and reflections of teacher participants. The relationship between the two phases is complementary, but also distinct as I consulted five different participants in Phase 3, based on their geographic spread, previous experience with the choir, and their level of participation within the choir (Wenger, 1998). In short, Phase 2 orients the researcher within the field, eliciting school's thoughts and opinions relating to the NCC, while Phase 3 concentrates on exploring the nature and significance of teacher participation with a particular sample of teachers leading participation in their school.

The other key reflection on this exploratory data collection phase was the consideration of the role and positionality of the researcher. As has been argued, this relationship is central to the research process and rationale. The researcher had considered all the ethical considerations of this type of research (discussed later in this chapter), however it could be argued that as the researcher was known to most participants, some may have viewed the research as an evaluation of them and their participation in the choir, rather than an interpretive study of their experience (Mercer, 2007). The challenges of insider research will be discussed at the end of this chapter; however, it was clear that upon reflection of the initial data, many of the responses were broadly positive regarding the choir and which may have been due to informant bias or interview reciprocity (Mercer, 2007). Pitts (2005) admits that insiders within music education inevitability affect the conduct of an interview, the questions they include or omit, and even the interpretation of these

responses. Therefore, the researcher reflected carefully on the need to mitigate the limitations of insider research when re-entering the field, as discussed below. The final phase of the data collection would consult a revised sample of six teachers focused on collecting in-depth experiential data relating to their participation in the NCC, moving beyond confirmatory responses.

3.4.1.4 Phase 3: The Phenomenological Interviews

In early 2021, I returned to the field and consulted a new sample of six teachers who all had significant roles in their school's participation in the programme (i.e., those who lead the teaching and participation of the choir in their schools). One teacher, who has been assigned the pseudonym Charlotte, had also taken part in the exploratory Phase 2 stage while the other five were new to the study.

I returned to the MDs to help locate teachers who had varying experiences within the NCC and could reveal an in-depth experiential knowledge of what it was like to participate in the choir. I sought to consider those who had ceased participation in the choir, first time members, retired members, and those outspoken members who might challenge those taken-for-granted assumptions about participation. Cohen et al. (2018) note that sampling in qualitative research does not usually focus on generalisability or specific sample sizes, but seeks to generate "thick descriptions", each with their own intrinsic value. In his reflection on Van Manen's advice regarding sampling, Beck says that "researchers cannot say they uncovered all the meaning of the phenomenon being studied" and therefore he feels an attempt to reach data saturation through this methodology is futile (Beck, 2021, p. 75). The sampling strategy employed here is purposeful in that I aimed to consult a gender and geographic mix of participants who would "provide the best perspectives on the phenomenon of interest" (Gray, 2018, p. 215). While the risk of this method is the omission of other more insightful participants, the phenomenological lens of the study, supported by own observations within the NCC and reflections on the research process and data up to that point, meant that the six invited participants had much to offer in exploring and understanding of teacher participation in the organisation. Within the paradigm of this research, the nature of their unique experiences of participation in the NCC, reflected alongside their socio-cultural context and background, is entirely appropriate in addressing the research question (Coady, 2021a).

I conducted an in-depth interview with each participant over the months of January and February 2021. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, these interviews were conducted via the Zoom platform. The interviews varied from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. Like the first phase, interviews were transcribed using the Otter.ai service (www.otter.ai) to produce a rough transcription of the interviews and then checked thoroughly for their accuracy, before returning the interview

transcriptions to the participants for verification. An outline of the participants is given below in Table 3.3:

Pseudonym	Age	Location	Position within School and NCC	Time with NCC
"Carol"	55-64	East	Administrative Principal (retired 2019)	6 years
"Charlotte"	35-44	East	Class Teacher Regional Rehearsal Organiser	10 years
"Hannah"	25-34	East	Class Teacher Assistant Musical Director	4 years
"Mary"	45-54	West/ South-West	Class Teacher Former National Committee Member Former Regional Rehearsal Organiser	30 years (ceased participation in 2015)
"Paul"	35-44	South	Teaching Principal Regional Rehearsal Organiser	6 years
"Susan"	45-54	Midlands	Deputy Principal/SET Teacher Rehearsal Organiser	30 years

Table 3.3: *Phase 3 Participants*

3.4.1.5 Participant Backgrounds

Given the centrality of context in this study, particularly as it emerges as an important part of the various conceptualisations of participation under investigation, it is important to briefly outline the background of the participants. These similarities and differences will be drawn on throughout the analysis and discussion of the study's findings, revealing much about the socio-cultural nature of teacher participation.

As alluded to above, the six participants represent a wide range of experience levels, with Susan and Mary being involved in the NCC since its foundation in 1985, whereas Hannah had only participated in two cycles prior to the interview. I invited participants through email (Appendix F) after considering the wide range of experiences I sought to capture, including AMDs, CMs, school leaders, past participants, etc. The participants are made up of a representative spread of geographical areas and school types and sizes, although it was their experience in the NCC as full participants that was most important in their invitation to take part in the study. Charlotte had taken part in the initial phase of the research, although there was approximately 20 months between interviews. Mary did not participate with her school in 2017 and 2019, however she remained on the National Committee during 2017 and worked on the organisation of the choir from that vantage point.

Regarding the six teachers' musical experiences and background, Carol, Charlotte, and Hannah are all active musicians in their own lives. Carol is involved with her local church choir and sings in an adult mixed-voice choir, Charlotte is a pianist and currently teaches piano, and Hannah is part of a musical theatre society as an actor and singer. In contrast, the other participants do not actively make music outside of school, but they all spoke about influential teachers from their primary and secondary schooling as well as the impact of their parents on their musical lifeworld.

Their involvement in the NCC stems from a combination of sources including family, colleagues, and word of mouth. Mary, Susan, and Carol had all worked with the founder Seán Creamer directly, and he was an important influence in their initial and continued participation. Paul taught alongside an experienced member of the NCC for many years and when his colleague moved school last year, Paul assumed the leading role within the school in addition to regional organiser for his area. Hannah was a member of the choir herself when she was at primary school and when she qualified as a teacher, she wanted to offer her class the same experience she had. Finally, Carol's mother was also a primary school teacher who had taken part in the NCC and therefore like Hannah, she wanted to facilitate a similar experience with the children that she taught. In summary, participants' family contexts, previous musical experiences and exposure to the choir all frame their participation in the NCC, which will contribute to the nature and significance of their participation as interpreted from the data.

3.4.2 Interviews

Considering the subjective, context-rich nature of data within the qualitative research paradigm, and this study's focus on teachers' experiences of a phenomenon, the use of interviews as the primary data tool is both expected and central to the eliciting of meaningful data (Cohen et al., 2018). Interviews have long been recognised as the best method of data collection when inquiring about personal experiences, attitudes, and the lived experiences of others (Cohen et al., 2018; Gray, 2018). Silverman (2014) reminds us that the theoretical lens and role of the researcher is important in the interpretation of experiences or facts as described in an interview. In response to this challenge, the researcher can adopt either a naturalist or constructivist mindset, either leaving the narrative open for interpretation or co-constructing meaning from the interview (Silverman, 2014). It is the latter that this study employs, particularly owing to the importance of the researcher within the research process in the field of hermeneutic phenomenology and view that all participants construct their own narrative and reality, meaning that pure objective data is impossible to collect from human participants (Van Manen, 1997). However, the researcher was conscious of the need to also maintain an "openness to new data and phenomenon, rather than being too pre-structured" (Gray, 2018, p. 511). The reflexivity offered by interviewing allows the

researcher to balance their place within the data collection process, probing where necessary but also pivoting to alternative lines of enquiry that may emerge (Denscombe, 2017).

Researcher reflexivity was a key consideration in returning to the field through the interpretive, phenomenological lens of the Phase 3 interviews. The balance between recognising the researchers' own experience of the NCC, while encouraging the participants to express openly and honestly their views and opinions, was essential in bringing depth to the data that was absent in the exploratory interview phase.

The initial stages of data collection involved semi-structured one-to-one interviews with the MD (Phase 1) and teachers and principals (Phase 2). Generally, a semi-structured interview contains a clear set of issues to be explored, however the researcher has some freedom over the order and layout of the interview (Denscombe, 2017). Within this setting, the researcher is often "in charge" and they have predefined questions in mind which can help ensure the reliability of the process from participant to participant (Hatch, 2002, p. 94). However, the lack of reflexivity offered by semi-structured interviews, combined with the limitations identified earlier, can affect the nature of the data gathered from participants. Denscombe explains that this "interviewer effect" is due to many reasons, including a desire that the researcher appear impartial during the exchange, the impact of a pre-existing relationship between the researcher and the participants, or the researcher's personal involvement in the study (2017, p. 209). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews can, while appearing to be very flexible and adaptable, sometimes become "survey interviews" with the purpose being to elicit information rather than explore a topic deeply (Englander, 2012). It is argued that many of these issues affected the depth of the data gathering in the exploratory stage of this research, which led to the refinement of the interview style in-line with the phenomenological, constructive approach of the research.

3.4.1.1 Refining the Interview Style

The third phase of the data collection, the phenomenological interviews, employed an open-ended or unstructured interview style, which provided participants with greater freedom to reflect on and describe in detail the nature of their participation in the NCC through anecdotes and prompted reflections (Denscombe, 2017; Silverman, 2014). The goal of interviews in this phenomenological space is to "get individuals to describe their experience in as uncontaminated a way as possible" (Gray, 2018, p. 485). These interviews, aligned with the worldview outlined earlier, required participants to reflect on their own individual circumstances and construct their own understanding of their experience of a common phenomenon (i.e., teacher participation) (Merriam, 2009). Also, within this unstructured interview style, the freedom offered to participants can help reveal "insight cultivators" among the sample, those who help us to elicit "reflective understandings and those 'Oh now, I see!' moments" relating to a phenomenon (Van Manen, 2014, p. 324).

The conduct of the researcher is therefore different in the latter phase, with the interviewee leading the conversation. The role of the interviewer is to probe, prompt, and seek clarity or confirmation only as required, giving space for reflection to the interviewee (Cohen et al., 2018). The rapport between the researcher and participant was an important consideration, in response to the limitations of the exploratory phase. Before beginning the interviews, the researcher reassured participants about the voluntary and non-evaluative nature of the study, and encouraged reflection, description, and detail. In these unstructured interviews, while there are still topics for discussion and open-ended questions, the number and ordering of them is not as important as in semi-structured or structured interviews (Silverman, 2014). The research question formed the basis of the interview schedule (Appendix G) for Phase 3, with participants asked about the nature and significance of their participation in the NCC, reflecting temporally on their experiences pre-phenomenon and post-phenomenon.

3.4.2.1 Interviewing Online

A final consideration in returning to the field was the necessary migration to conducting online interviews via Zoom. The interviews took place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic which restricted face-to-face meetings. When trying to build rapport over a digital conferencing platform such as Zoom, Archibald et al.'s (2019) review of the data was mixed, with some participants reportedly more responsive over digital platforms, especially when technical difficulties enabled both participants to work together and bond over the initial teething issues of establishing connection. However, they also commented that these technical issues sometimes interrupted the flow of the interview, presenting difficulties in reading non-verbal cues (Archibald et al., 2019). They suggest the use of features such as video and screen sharing to establish a rapport rather than more traditional audio only communication, tools which this research employed, and they noted that Zoom's features such as secure cloud recording and reliability have established it as a key research tool, particularly during the pandemic. The researcher found no adverse effects in conducting the interviews online. In fact, the use of Zoom allowed for the recruitment of a greater geographical spread of participants than might have been possible, and enabled participants to describe their experiences in the comfort of their own home, removing some of the environmental drawbacks experienced in the school environment in Phase 2. These factors, coupled with the free time available to many due to COVID-19 restrictions, enabled a rich sharing of experience which contributes substantially to addressing the research question in this study.

Having explored the various phases of data collection and taking into consideration the limitations and confirmatory responses of the initial phases, the study draws primarily on the subsequent, more reflective interview data gathered as part of the six phenomenological interviews conducted over Zoom. This is supported by the MDs interviews and some extracts

from Phase 2 participants. The next step of the research process after transcription and verification of the data was to analyse the interviews and begin extracting themes that would contribute to the understanding and critique of teacher participation in the NCC at the centre of this study.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis process began just after the interviews, with the researcher keeping notes during the interviews and transcription process. This initial analysis aims to bring the researcher "close to the data" (Denscombe, 2017, p. 307). In doing this, the author read through the narratives multiple times, in addition to repeatedly listening to the recordings to elicit any extra non-verbal cues or pauses that could add further depth to the transcripts. Creswell (2013) tells us that beneath the initial presentation of the data, there exists multiple layers of meaning to be uncovered. Throughout the analysis, the researcher remained open and curious to the themes and findings that could influence the various domains of participation under consideration, in addition to the meaning that teachers attributed to the nature and significance of their personal participation in the choir, as Van Manen describes:

> The outcomes of phenomenological research are full-fledged reflective texts that induce the reader into a wondering engagement with certain questions that may be explored through the identification, critical examination, and eloquent elaboration of themes. (2017, p. 777)

Therefore, it is the critical examination and interpretation of the texts in addition to the writing of the discussion that leads to analysis (Beck, 2021; Van Manen, 2014). Cooper et al. found that there is no step-by-step process for data analysis and that phenomenological research is primarily inductive in nature, with reflection and returning to the data commonplace (Joseph, 2014).

While not a strict analytical guide, Van Manen (1997, 2014) provides guidance on the processes that are involved in phenomenological analyses:

1. Investigating experience as we live it, both personally and then by gathering the experiential descriptions from others who wave experienced the phenomenon.
2. Reflect on the themes that characterise the phenomenon as they emerge from the data, both as a whole experiential piece and as selective, essential themes,
3. Describing and interpreting the findings through the art of writing and rewriting.

(adapted from Beck, 2021, pp. 191-2)

These key points along the journey of phenomenological research are cyclical, and involve backwards and forwards movement, with lived experience and the reflection of it being the start and end point of this type of study (Van Manen, 1997). Dibley et al. (2020) describes a hermeneutic circle where pre-understandings, literature and theories are used as a lens to view the research text as a whole and in parts. By dwelling with the data, returning to the literature and

reflecting cyclically, the researcher is led to an "interpretation of meaning" and new understanding (Dibley et al., 2020, p. 128). A diagram outlining the process is reproduced in Figure 3.3 below:

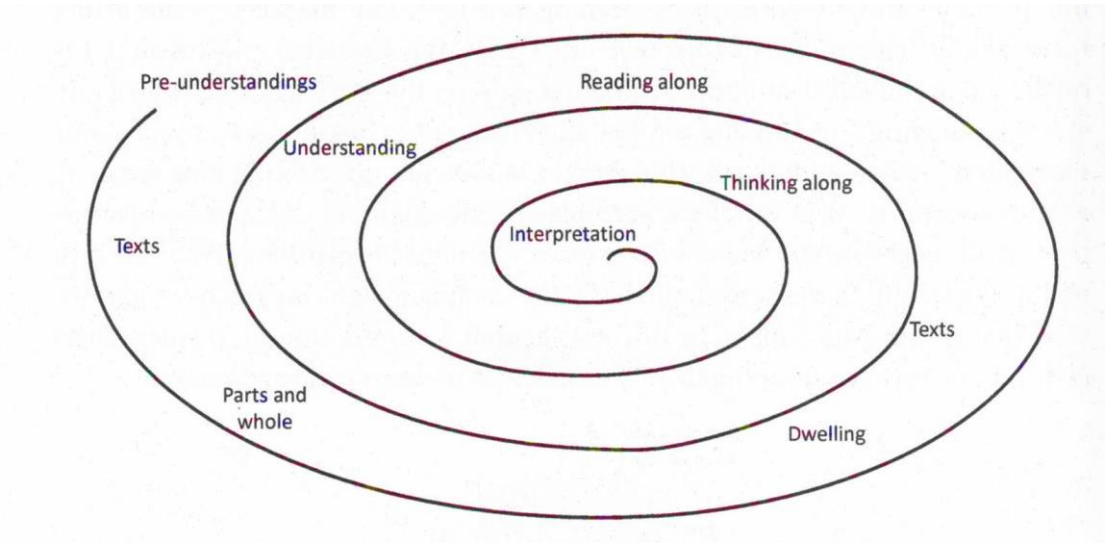


Figure 3.3: *The Hermeneutic Circle* (Dibley et al., 2020, p. 128)

This approach to the data analysis process was very helpful in ensuring the researcher remained reflexive and open to new interpretations and allowed for the development of the conceptual framework. By cyclically reflecting on the literature and the data, the construct of participation was problematised and conceptualised (as presented in Figure 3.1). Therefore, data analysis is a phenomenological study such as this is not linear, but ebbs and flows as the data dictates. Furthermore, as outlined earlier and discussed in detail below, my positionality as researcher and NCC participant is key to the completion of this research and I sought to exhaust the data for all possible meanings and inferences through the reflexive and reflection process of data analysis, using my own experience as a teacher and participant in the choice to verify, challenge and probe the findings and implications of the data (Coady, 2021a, 2021b; Silverman, 2014).

Van Manen writes that the final interpretation emerges from the meaningful and significant "knots in the webs of our experiences" (2016, p. 90), which ultimately should allow readers to "walk a mile in the shoes of the participants" (Beck, 2021, p. 1). In building a picture of teacher participation, informed by the conceptual framework and empirical literature, the researcher looked for these knots in the stories of participants, commonalities relating to the nature of their participation in the NCC and the tensions and contradictions that emerged individually and collectively. The cyclical nature of phenomenology described above allows this study to build layer by layer, as it has thus far: beginning with the research context and problem; considering the historical, social and cultural context of music in Irish primary schools, alongside that of the NCC itself; building a conceptual framework that frames a multi-dimensional nature of

participation as it emerged from the literature with the theories related to organisational structures to deconstruct participation; providing the methodological framework considered here to design three different but complementary phases of data collection (contextual, exploratory and phenomenological); all of which informs the interpretation of the data at the heart of the hermeneutic cycle identified above. Most crucially, the researcher is reflexive in the data analysis process and continually returns to any one of these points during the study, to seek clarity, contradiction or cause for the nature and significance of teacher participation within the data. Ultimately, the research question focuses the analysis and coding of the data, however a constant refining of the coding process was also necessary which will now be outlined.

3.4.3.1 Thematic Coding

Grounded in the research focus on the nature of teacher participation in the NCC, Van Manen (2016) describes the interpretation of the phenomenon's essential themes as a key part of the analysis process. The coding process considered the main themes and concepts that define teacher participation in the NCC as it emerged from the interviews. These were refined many times, beginning generally drawing on the literature surrounding music education and teacher learning, then examining the data temporally, and finally considering the various dimensions of participation as they emerged from the data. Braun and Clarke's (2006) process for thematic analysis is extensively used within qualitative studies due to the flexibility it affords researchers while also ensuring some uniformity in the process. The steps are outlined below:

1. Familiarising yourself with the data.
2. Generating initial codes.
3. Searching for themes.
4. Reviewing themes.
5. Defining and naming themes.
6. Producing the report.

(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

While the first step echoes what phenomenological theorists have mentioned above, the time spent with the data in the hermeneutic circle described earlier encompass steps two to five. An excerpt from a coded interview is contained in Appendix H. In my initial days and weeks with the data, I coded and highlighted key sentences or common themes that formed part of the narrative. Following this, I began my writing focusing on temporal themes, grouping data that related to experiences before participation in the NCC, those that described participants' experiences as they participated in the phenomenon, and then their reflections post-phenomenon. This was useful for making comparisons across the data and links began to emerge between the narratives and concepts from the literature relating to identity, previous musical experiences, teacher learning, etc.

The next phase of the coding process involved reviewing these themes, grouping the data relating to the socio-cultural level that participation impacted. The micro level data relating to the nature and significance of participation to the teachers themselves, the meso level data considering the school and local influences, and the macro level broad societal and cultural factors that shape teacher participation. This method of grouping data was used by Campbell (2011) in her understanding of influences on musical experiences and identities, drawing on the well-known ecological systems theory used by Bronfenbrenner. This was useful in moving beyond teachers' description of the data toward interpreting the significance of their accounts and enabling participation as a construct to be viewed within these three socio-cultural contexts.

Finally, the researcher realised that there was a need to go beyond the descriptive narrative, and to consider conceptually and theoretically the significance of teacher participation in the NCC as a reflection of the multi-dimensional nature of teacher participation outlined in the conceptual framework. In this way the study arrives at "fusion of horizon" where participants and the study coalesce to generate some common understandings of the nature of teacher participation in the NCC and its significance for teachers, the NCC and the wider music education landscape (Dibley et al., 2020). It is these multiple modes of participation as the outcomes of teacher engagement with the NCC activity that unpin the analysis of this data in the next chapter. This section concludes with the exploration of the limitations of this study.

3.5 Limitations of the Research

Thus far, this chapter has considered the research design process, situated within the qualitative constructivist and interpretive paradigm, and described and justified the phenomenological nature of the study. The three data collection phases, consisting of interviews and document analysis, have been outlined and demonstrate the researcher's commitment to reflexivity whereby the data collection and analysis process were continually refined in a cyclical approach.

In the final section of this chapter, I consider the limitations of this study and how they have been attended to. This includes discussing the place of the researcher as an insider within the NCC and a fellow teacher, considering the advantages and challenges of a practitioner-based researcher, in addition to the mitigation measures taken. Also, the confidentiality and ethical considerations in designing and implementing the research are outlined. Finally, the importance of trustworthiness in qualitative research and how the credibility of the research has been maintained throughout its implementation is described.

3.5.1 Insider Research

As alluded to earlier in this chapter, a key consideration in the design of this research is the position of the researcher as an insider within the NCC and music education space, and the implications of this for the study (Coady, 2021a). Mercer (2007) discusses how the foundational theory relating to insider/outsider research is situated in anthropological literature. The early issues that were considered included women researching women, heterosexual people researching homosexual, Black ethnicities being understood by Caucasians, etc. (Merriam et al., 2001). This gave rise to the categorisation of insiders, those who are the dominant group within the culture, and outsiders, those from minority groups.

In phenomenology, insiders are common given their initial interest in the phenomenon of study and researcher subjectivity is often assumed (Dibley et al., 2020). In her work on participation in music, Pitts acknowledges her place as an insider as inevitable:

> Investigating events without disrupting them is a familiar challenge from many fields of social and ethnographic research, and it is inevitable here that my own musical experiences and sympathies will have shaped the questions I put to participants and my interpretation of their responses. (2005, p. 137)

Denscombe affirms this viewpoint saying that "the researcher's identity, values and beliefs cannot be entirely eliminated from the process of analysing qualitative data" (2017, p. 329). In this study therefore, I acknowledge my place as an insider, and the similarities between my own identity and habitus and that of the participants. As outlined in Chapter 1, my experience in the NCC provides me with privileged access which arguably makes this research possible. The importance of context in education, research and music education has been argued throughout this thesis and the insider nature of the author is key to the exploration and interpretation of this research, adding to the meaning, significance, and implications of the research findings (Randles, 2012).

Echoing the rationale described earlier, the potential benefits of insider research include the interviewer's awareness of more in-depth and meaningful questions, the researcher's understanding the organisational and social world of the participants, and their privileged access to participants and data that would normally be unavailable to an external investigator (Costley et al., 2010; Merriam et al., 2001). Insider researchers demonstrate an "empathic understanding", deciphering contextual cues and subject-specific lines of enquiry (Mercer, 2007, p. 5). While they can distance themselves from their own subjective experience and bias, in this case my phenomenological positioning includes my "engaged subjective presence in the research process" which enables the depth of reflection and analysis outlined in this chapter (Nigar, 2020, p. 11; Throop & Murphy, 2002).

However, this study is mindful of the challenges of insider research which include avoiding obvious or sensitive topics and missed opportunities to question assumptions or shared

knowledge (Mercer, 2007). Power relationships and hidden agendas may also exist between the researcher and interviewees that affect the rapport and questions of the interview (Costley et al., 2010; Merriam et al., 2001). Also, interviews conducted by insiders may appear one-sided and controlled by the researcher, with the interpretation of the researcher usually the only voice (Costley et al., 2010). Conversely, Merriam et al. (2001) explain that hierarchies, positionality, experience level, gender and age can all render the researcher less of an insider to the participant, for example if the researcher is younger than the participant, this can further shift power dynamics and affect the nature of the data collected. Therefore, informant bias can become a problem with participants reporting what they think the researcher wants to hear rather than their true experiences and reflections (Mercer, 2007). Subsequently, in the interpretation of the data, the researcher can become entangled in artificial or opaque "webs of significance" that emerge from one's own views and those from agreeable participants (Geertz, 1971, as cited in Bresler, 1995). Insider research within the musical communities is especially problematic, given the tensions involved in investigating local events and organisations and the existing relationship that is often there (Pitts, 2005). Therefore, insider research has the potential to disempower participants, neglect obvious or sensitive topics, and at the most extreme level, become an echo chamber for the researcher's own views.

In addressing these considerations, insider researchers are part of a continuous "learning process" whereby they reflect on their own work, respond critically as the research progresses and remain open to multiple perspectives (Costley et al., 2010). As outlined earlier, research reflexivity is a key dimension to this work and something that has underpinned the entire research process. Merriam et al. (2001) reviewed four case studies involving insider researchers and examined how they negotiated power and positionality within the research process. Their study recommended trying to minimise participants' anxieties around the perceived disparities in power relationships and the positionality of the researcher through the accurate representation of participants' perspectives, without overly compensating (Merriam et al., 2001). By acknowledging the relationships between both parties and being transparent in the interview process, as I have done particularly in the phenomenological data gathering phase, much can be done to mitigate the limitations of insider research.

In this study, almost all participants were aware of the researcher's position within the NCC. They were reassured of the confidentiality of the interview and reminded of my desire to hear their honest experiences when asked probing and counterfactual questions, which aimed to challenge assumptions and the possibility of informant bias (Mercer, 2007). In conclusion, it is argued that the subjective nature of insider research need not be viewed as a limitation as it allows the researcher to use their knowledge, experience, and context to construct an informed interpretation, while also encouraging readers to consider the insider's point of view and reflect on alternative or parallel interpretations (Costley et al., 2010). The aim therefore being to mitigate

the limiting effects of insider research, through continual reflection on the data collection phases and being transparent with participants, while capitalising on the positive benefits of being, as Vygotsky termed it, the knowledgeable other alongside participants within the NCC.

3.5.2 Ethical Considerations

The second limitation of this research project relates to the ethical considerations of the study. These include attending to the ethical procedures for research with adult participants, the risks, and benefits of participation for interviewees, and the maintenance of participants confidentiality. The researcher completed a research integrity course and attended Graduate Training Element modules facilitated by Dublin City University relating to qualitative research and data analysis. Also, through the doctoral process, I have reflected upon the ethical dimensions of my work within the education system and the NCC, given my positionality as an insider. Denscombe (2017) outlines the four core principles of research ethics: protecting participants' interests, ensuring voluntary, consensual participation, operating the research with openness, honesty and integrity, and complying with law. These will now be considered in the context of this study.

Protecting participants' interests ensures that the participants are no worse off following participation in the study. The researcher made every effort to ensure a positive and trusting relationship during the interviews. They were made aware that the research was not funded by the NCC or linked with their participation in the choir. Additionally, it was explained that the purpose of research was not evaluative and that there was no known physical, social or psychological risk to the participants. Hatch cautions that in qualitative research "we ask a lot, take a lot and, if we're not careful, give little" (2002, p. 66). Therefore, it is hoped that participation by teachers will be a positive experience, allowing them to reflect on their time in the choir, while also helping to extend the knowledge of teacher participation as a concept, contributing to the knowledge base regarding primary music education and be part of the possible future reimagination of the organisation. As an insider, I was keenly aware of many participants' commitment to the NCC and it was my aim to respect this, while also critiquing the nature of participation and probing for possible contradictions and opportunities. Finally, Bell (2005) recommends that participants are informed about the outcome of the research, with the final transcripts made available to participants and a follow up email debrief to thank them for their participation, leaving communication open for any follow up. As part of the ethical approval process, participants will also be given access to this study after widespread publication following completion of the research.

The confidentiality and privacy of participants' responses is also an important ethical consideration in all research (Cohen et al., 2018). Pseudonyms are extensively used in social science research and are a useful means of ensuring the privacy of participants (Given, 2008). In

this study, I have anonymised each participant and their data during the transcription and verification process. I have avoided the collection and presentation of other identifying data such as a participant's precise age or location, which could be linked with a pseudonym putting their privacy at risk (Cohen et al., 2018). Therefore, personal data was not included in the presentation of the participants considered earlier. Following this, the next principle of voluntary and consensual participation involved all participants receiving a Plain Language Statement and Consent Form approved by the DCU Research Ethics Committee (Application No: 2018/200), which detailed the study's aims, what was required of participants, the voluntary nature of the study and the freedom to withdraw. These are contained in Appendix F.

The final two principles of research integrity and legal compliance are considered as one. The ethical implications of insider research have been outlined, with issues such as power, positionality and participant recruitment all requiring openness and honesty with the participants (Costley et al., 2010). The researcher aimed to be open and transparent about the limits of confidentiality as, given the small sample size, complete anonymity is difficult to guarantee (Bell, 2005; Gray, 2018). As part of this study's Plain Language Statements, participants and schools were informed of the possibility of respondents being identified due to their school's context or description (although the contextual detail presented is minimal). The limit on confidentiality was strongly emphasised with the MDs, as their role means that anonymity will be difficult to maintain.

3.5.3 Trustworthiness and Credibility

The final limitation of this research relates to how the concepts of trustworthiness and credibility have been attended to. Trustworthiness refers to the "degree of confidence that the reader may have in the way the study was conducted and its findings" (Dibley et al., 2020, p. 150). In traditional research paradigms, the concept of triangulation is used to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collection and reporting process, however Silverman (2014) notes that this often simply means increasing the volume of data instead of validating the claims in any meaningful way. Given (2008) and Hatch (2002) explain how trustworthiness in the qualitative paradigm encapsulates how researchers can ensure the transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability of their research. I will briefly address each one's importance and how it is reflected in this study's design.

Given (2008) explains how the transferability of the research refers to the extent that readers can understand the context of the study and discern how the findings could exist in other contexts through clear research design. While a study of this sample size can never imply generalisability, it is possible to replicate the research design to other participants of the NCC or other organisations working in the same space. As discussed earlier, phenomenological research

does not become burdened by sample size, as it aims to present an interpretation of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1997). It is envisaged that the detailed description of the research process would enable this study to be repeated or extended in other contexts to challenge or reinforce its findings and conclusions.

Credibility is often aligned with the concept of validity, which asks "do the findings of the study make sense?" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 274). The concept has many names including authenticity and understanding, and it is protected through the study's use of thick description, the authentic voice of the participants, and the central place of the researcher as a co-constructor of the narrative, supported by the multiple phases and forms of data (Cohen et al., 2018). The credibility of the research will be enhanced through the extensive use of interview excerpts throughout the analysis, as well as the sampling process which ensures participants, especially in the final data collection stage, have experience of the phenomenon under consideration.

Finally, dependability and confirmability reside alongside the concept of reliability in addressing how the replicability and integrity of the study is ensured through the clear explanation and careful design of the research process (Silverman, 2014). Dibley et al. (2020) explain that the data forms the conclusions and implications that emerge from the research, rather than relying on the researcher's own interpretations. They also write that, while it is never possible to obtain the exact same results from a phenomenological study, due to the explicitly subjective nature of the research approach, dependability enables others to clearly understand how the study was carried out with decision-making and research limitations outlined and justified (Dibley et al., 2020). This balance has been attended to throughout this chapter, particularly in the researcher's reflexivity and acknowledgement of the inherently subjective, insider nature of the study.

Considering the limitations of the research's trustworthiness and credibility, phenomenological studies have been criticised as lacking rigour, being overly descriptive and being limited in their representativeness and generalisability (Denscombe, 2017). As has been outlined in the research process thus far, it is hoped that the careful design, redesign, and informed critique of the data through the empirical and theoretical lens of the literature will go some way to ensuring the trustworthiness and credibility of this research. The choice of methodology and research design aims to guarantee its own validity through the vividness and richness of the data obtained, alongside the accuracy and transparency of the collection, transcription, coding, and analysis process (Greene & Hogan, 2005). Steinar Kvale addressed the concerns of other researchers and the issues raised here, achieving trust and credibility in the qualitative paradigm:

> Ideally, the quality of the craftsmanship results in products with knowledge claims so powerful and convincing in their own right that they, so to say, carry the validation with them, like a strong piece of art…valid research would in this sense be research that makes questions of validity superfluous. (1996, as cited in Greene & Hogan, 2005, p. 225)

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the key decisions and underpinning methodological literature have been outlined. Firstly, the conceptual framework draws together the empirical and theoretical concepts explored in the initial chapters of this work, building a framework based on Engeström's CHAT which will inform the interpretation and critique of the multi-dimensional nature and significance of teacher participation as it emerges from the data. The research questions, research paradigm and research approach have been considered in the conceptualisation of this qualitative, interpretive, phenomenological research. Following this, the research design was outlined, detailing the three distinct data collection phases, their design and implementation and the rationale for choices made regarding participants and research tools. The design, benefits, and challenges of using interviews as the primary data collection tool have been reflected upon, and the hermeneutic, cyclical data analysis process underpinned by the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study has been discussed. Finally, the limitations of the research were addressed, including justifying the place of the researcher as an insider within the field, attending to the ethical considerations of participation, and outlining how the concepts of trustworthiness and credibility have been attended to in this study.

Chapter 4 will analyse and critique the data from all phases of the study, exploring the nature and significance of teacher participation in the NCC. This will be informed by the conceptual framework which draws on the contextual policy data alongside the theoretical and empirical literature and will be conducted within the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition outlined above. As mentioned above, Appendix C and D contain useful contextual and statistical data that will be consulted during the analysis of the data, however it is the teacher's interviews that are central to the nature and meaning of participation under investigation in this study. Therefore, the next chapter will explore the nature and significance of the multiple outcomes of teacher participation. The findings, implications and recommendations of this research for teachers, for the NCC as an organisation and for the wider primary school music environment will then form the conclusion chapter.

Chapter 4 The Nature and Significance of Teacher Participation

4.1 Introduction

This chapter forms the centre point of the research, exploring and critiquing the nature and significance of teacher participation as it emerges in this study. In interpreting the interview data, alongside contextual data and the empirical and theoretical underpinnings of the work, the chapter first explores teaching and learning through participation, in particular the significance of the various supports provided by the NCC, the limitations of the NCC when viewed alongside the current primary music curriculum and how teacher learning and CPD is viewed and experienced by participants. It also explores the aims of participation for teachers and children, and the effect of repeated participation on the musical experiences within primary schools.

Following this, the influence of participation in the NCC on teachers' identities and the negotiation, reinforcement and challenging of participants' multiple identities are considered. Teachers discussed the impact of participation on their view of themselves as a musician and a teacher, in addition to the link between the NCC and their professional and personal lives. Also, the influence of community members on individual's identities will be considered. Then, the multiple forms and trajectories of participation are identified and described, building a picture of the nature of teachers' roles and identity within the choir.

The next section will explore the power implications of these multiple levels of participation, aligning the various forms of participation within a hierarchical pyramid of participation, with power and decision-making located among a small number of senior members. The NCC as an organisation will then be viewed as an AS, discussing the various constituent parts of the system, the interactions between them and, crucially, the tensions and contradictions that emerge from various influences on the object and outcomes of the AS. The significance of power as a construct within teacher participation in the NCC is also commented on.

The multiple forms of capital that emerge from participation will then be examined, both the cultural and social capital gained from teacher participation, as well as a consideration of the repertoire as a dominant form of cultural capital that is valued and preserved through participation. The rationale and significance of the repertoire will be discussed using evidence from teachers and the MDs. The section ends by considering the possible significance of participation being a process of enculturation.

The final section draws together findings from the other manifestations of participation discussed, eliciting from the data the possible transformative possibilities of participation. Firstly,

some of the key challenges of participation and how they are overcome are outlined. This is followed by a consideration of the potentially transformative outcomes of participation in teachers' personal, professional and musical lives and how these can be considered in any future reimagining of the choir.

4.2 Teacher Participation as Teaching and Learning

In this section, the first dimension of teacher participation, participation as a form of teaching and learning, will be explored as it emerges from the data. This outcome of participation presented in the conceptual framework has been broadened to include both teaching and learning, given the centrality of the NCC within the provision of the primary music curriculum for participating classes. Also, due to the link between teachers' and pupils' learning identified earlier (McAuliffe, 2014), it is argued that teacher participation results in changes of practice, which in turn affects the type of music education they facilitate. Firstly, participation as a form of learning for teachers is discussed, critiquing the nature, limitations, and significance of this learning. This is then followed by a consideration of participation in the NCC as a form of music education, exploring the musical and extra-musical aims of participation with reference to the primary music curriculum objectives as set out for 5th and 6th class, in addition to the significance of the choir as a possible curriculum replacement.

4.2.1 Teacher Learning through Participation

The NCC has no explicit aims for teacher participants, as it is the children that sing in the choir. However, given that teachers elect to participate in the choir and the crucial link between participation, practice, and learning (Lave, 2009), teacher participation as a form of learning is an important and expected outcome from the NCC programme. There are two main ways that teachers learn by participating in the NCC: engagement with structured NCC activities (such as the NCC summer course and resources) and opportunities for ad-hoc, informal learning through participation (for example, problem solving at rehearsals, reflecting on repeated participation, and networking and collaborating with other teachers). This section will consider the nature of teachers' learning, exploring the link between teacher participation as learning, and the development of confidence. Following this, the section ends by considering the limitations of participants' learning, particularly the focus on product over process and access over inclusion, which is noteworthy as the study comments on the nature and significance of participation as a form of learning.

4.2.1.1 The NCC Summer Course and Resources

As outlined earlier, the primary point of entry for teachers in the NCC is through the week-long DE sanctioned summer course. Below, I present an overview of the summer course drawing on my own experience participating in the course as a teacher and accompanist:

> The course begins on the first Monday of the summer holidays. Teachers arrive and open their new copy of the NCC repertoire, comparing songs and opinions on the pieces. Some they know and like, some they tentatively skip past. Teachers sit in their preferred section, sopranos or altos, before warming up to begin the singing. The MDs lead the sight-reading of the easier unison songs, although not all teachers can sight-read. I support them on the piano, playing the melodies. The parts are swapped many times in two- and three-part songs, to give sopranos a chance to sing the alto line, and vice versa. The MDs may single out difficult sections, particularly those in harmony, and rehearse them many times.
>
> There is a lunch break where teachers get to chat about the songs or about school life. Many experienced participants look forward to meeting fellow members from all over Ireland, and reconnecting with each other. Some also use this time to check in with the MDs individually, and clarify difficulties with the repertoire. Usually each day finishes with a performance of the pieces covered that day and by midweek all the songs have been attempted at least once.
>
> There is often a visit from an external facilitator. It could be a conductor of another choir or a composer of one of the NCC songs. They teach the participants some warm up activities and provide some tips to enhance their choir rehearsals. They may also work on one/more of the NCC repertoire. This helps to break up the week and provides teachers with another role model to learn from. One year, they invited teachers to step forward and lead the rest of the choir for one song. This opportunity was only limited to a few participants, due to time constraints, who were brave enough to put themselves in front of their peers.
>
> The MDs teach and conduct an equal number of songs each and only rehearse their particular songs. They point out useful teaching tips, such as repeated phrases, similar but not identical sequences, and tricky rhythmical patterns. They also share some anecdotes from their own work in their schools. The final day culminates with a performance of the entire repertoire by the teachers, led by the MDs. Then, there is a short presentation regarding what participation in the NCC entails, including the key dates for registration and rehearsals, and a question and answer session where the teachers can ask the MDs questions related to participation. Of course, during the learning of the repertoire, teachers often raise their hands to ask questions relating to the songs. I often support them by playing the melodic line on the piano, with the choir then singing back the troublesome melody.
>
> Teachers leave the course each day tired from a day of singing, but by Friday it is hoped that they will be able to sing the entire repertoire and participate competently in the NCC as a choir member, sharing that competence with their classrooms in September.

MD3 explains the dual aim of the summer course, attending to the practical, musical, and pedagogical aims of participation but also suggesting some extrinsic social and psychological benefits for teacher:

> Well first of all, I think it gives teachers an opportunity to meet each other. Because teaching, as many of us would be aware, can be quite an isolated experience… You know, you're kind of in the classroom by yourself sometimes. So, I think it's a very important experience to have the collegiality, coming together, sharing of experiences, having just that opportunity for teachers. There is a positivity that it generates as well… Obviously, you know the role of it is to equip the teachers with the skills to teach the program, really equip the teachers with the skills and the tips, the little techniques that work for specific pieces… to send them off with confidence. And that would be really our main goal. But it does have all these other objectives as well…this collegiality, the harnessing of different energies as well, and enthusiasm.

The extra-musical significance of the summer course will be considered as part of other dimensions of participation, however the interviews with participants and MDs suggest that participation is a legitimate method of learning that can result in a change of practice (as argued by Lave (2009) earlier). From the author's experience of summer course, and recalling the models of CPD as outlined by Kennedy (2005), it is suggested that elements of the summer course are aligned with a training model. Considering this approach, teachers are trained to participate in the NCC and any learning through participation is focused on this primary goal. As Kennedy (2005) explains, the training model usually employs an expert (the MDs) and the learner (teachers).

Teachers observe the MDs during the summer course, or at rehearsals and concerts, and by observing these role models and participating themselves, they begin to develop as more competent and confident members in the NCC (MD1). MD1 explains how "it's like anything you know if you've sung it, it's easier to teach it definitely". MD2 adds that in her view, "teachers are not going to stand up in front of a choir or teach unless they feel competent. And that's what we're trying to teach". Therefore, the MDs present participation at the summer course as a form of "learning by doing" (Wenger, 1998). Through the performance of the songs and observing the MDs at the summer course, it is suggested that teachers can learn how to teach the repertoire and be better participants. Participation and learning in music have been linked in the literature (Kenny, 2017; Pitts, 2007) and in this case, the evidence above from the MDs suggests that they expect participation to lead to learning.

It is worth considering the limitations of viewing learning as automatically stemming from participation. The literature argues that learning should be more than acquiring knowledge and skills or the reproduction of known traditions, but should allow space for new, transformative practice instead of the reproduction of known traditions (Edwards, 2005; Lave, 2009). In contrast with this view, MD2 commented on the efficiency of the summer course in "making [participation/teaching] as easy as we can [for the teachers]". Participants agreed with this view

and endorsed the process of observing and replicating practices, reinforcing the idea of MDs as masters and teachers as apprentices (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and praising the task-focused nature of the course. With this comparison it is important to note that many teachers may never become true masters within the organisation, as the power and control that is held by MDs over many aspects of the NCC is never passed on to apprentices (as will be explored under the theme of power below).

It is acknowledged by the MDs and participants that the summer course does not or is not intended to be a broad musical CPD course. Teachers valued the didactic nature of the summer course as it allowed them to learn the repertoire in an intensive way and identify any problems they may encounter when teaching it to the children. In short, teachers were happy to participate in transmission-based learning activities, once there is a clear goal or outcome at the end.

Moving beyond the summer course, participants explained how they learned from the resources, either using the CD to teach the repertoire (NCC CM) or using the repertoire to support other non-NCC activities such as school choirs (Charlotte). The MDs recounted teachers who taught the repertoire using only the CD, rather than using the musical score. They outlined how some teachers had no musical literacy skills and that the teaching resources (such as lyrics and CDs) enabled teachers to overcome this lack of literacy and offer them a standard of music that is arguably higher than what they would normally teach in their class. Doyle (2009) in her discussion of a future national singing project, identified the NCC's dissemination method of providing resources to teachers as a useful model. The quality of the resources was acknowledged by many as a way for both musically novice teachers to overcome or conceal a lack of musical competence while also expanding the knowledge of musically literate teachers (Charlotte, Carol, MD1).

The role of the NCC resources in making this high standard of music accessible was valued by participants. Therefore, teachers suggested a link between the quality of resources and support offered by the NCC, and their perceived musical knowledge or skills. Teachers such as Carol and the NCC CM explained how participation had taught them more about choral singing, voice technique and musical genres. However, it is argued that teachers' musical learning and skills development requires more than good quality resources; it requires contextualised learning environments, dialogic, problem-focused reflection, and consistent feedback (Gray, 2004; Kennedy, 2005).

In summary, teachers reported that the summer course and resources made available by the NCC offered a semblance of confidence and competence to teachers, developed a dimension of their musical knowledge and skills, and enabled them to effectively teach the programme, regardless of their perceived musical weaknesses. The formal scaffolding provided by the resources emerged as only a minor element of the nature of teacher learning within the choir, with

participants identifying the informal, ad-hoc learning that occurred through participation as far more significant and richer, as will now be considered.

4.2.1.2 Participation as Learning

Thus far, the formal, structured learning activities offered by the NCC suggest a training or transmission model of learning, with the clear intention of enabling teachers to participate in the NCC. As was explored earlier, participants and MDs felt that participation was a legitimate method of learning used to impress their peers and audiences, and the data suggests that repeated participation by teachers does improve practice within this narrow field of participation. Both Charlotte and Hannah recalled anecdotes of lessons they've learned through repeated participation, better preparing them for the next cycle. One example from Hannah explains how she has able to use the same choral teaching techniques over repeated iterations of the NCC, adjusting to the new repertoire, which enabled her to participate more confidently and progress within the choir:

> I suppose I picked up a lot from you know, the musical directors on the course as well. And I've always been really interested in choral singing from being in it myself. I always really wanted to get to that level. So, the second time around, I really pushed myself and then I went for the assistant musical director. So, I guess it's just a testament that anyone could do anything as long as you put your mind to it, and you practise, and you want to do it.

Here, Hannah demonstrates the clear link between participation, practice, and learning (Blankenship & Ruona, 2007; Wenger, 1998). The skills and practices that were modelled at the outset of her participation, through her attendance at the summer course, are continually refined through repeated participation. From this, she has progressed her learning within the field of the NCC and has aspired to the goal of becoming an AMD, a role she now occupies. Similarly, Paul tells us that after the concerts, he and his colleague sat down to reflect on the logistics of staging the concerts, with the aim of avoiding the same mistakes in the next cycle. These could include the layout of the seating, the planning of supervision or the timeline for booking and organising different elements of the programme. These are only two examples of the many ad-hoc learning events and reflection points that participants valued and were part of participation. The learning therefore can span musical and extra-musical dimensions, engaging teachers in the organisational and logistical challenges of facilitating a group singing project of this scale, in addition to the musical ones.

It is argued that many learning events through participation emerge from observation of an expert master (usually the MDs) and this did lead to collaboration on a local level. For example, Carol explains how "you'll always pick up something like from watching other people" while Paul explains how he felt that the NCC is a "model of team teaching where you might be observing another teacher doing something and you might pick up a few hints from them".

Charlotte recounts watching a MD using their hand to denote the higher and lower pitches and this "reminded [her], 'Oh yeah, I need to do that!'". Charlotte adds that participation reminds her of skills that she may have forgotten, encouraging that link to her musical lifeworld in the past (discussed further under the theme of identity below). Therefore, participants valued the lessons learned through repeated participation, the mistakes they had to respond to and the practical nature of the learning. This type of CPD for teachers through "teacher talk" has been advocated by Tarc (2012) due to the context-rich nature of learning that takes place among colleagues. In this way, the "shared histories of learning" and collaborative experiences that emerge from participation strengthen the link between participation, learning and the community (Wenger, 1998, p. 86). The importance of context-rich learning inside schools and classrooms, in particular learning that draws on personal experiences and participants' dispositions has been identified in the literature, and the data here illustrates how teachers value observation, collaboration, and the on the job, reactionary learning that stems from participation.

These examples reinforce the earlier preconceived notion that the nature of teacher learning in the NCC aligns with an apprenticeship, transmissive model of professional development focused on developing skills and knowledge required for participation, through learning by observation and modelling (Kennedy, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991). A description by Paul of teacher learning at a regional rehearsal illustrates the efficient but limited nature of learning focused on "reproducing task performances" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 65):

> The first [rehearsal] is normally a bit of a panic, because, like, there's always something that's been taught wrong, you know, or some schools have gone on to song eight and more schools are still on song three. So, I think it's a real eye opener…Two years ago [an MD] was conducting our concerts, and she took the rehearsals, because it gave the teachers a chance to scurry off into the corner and say, "Right, hang on now, what's going on with this? What's going on with that?" Invariably there will be parts that are being taught incorrectly or you know parts that need to be brushed up on and things like that. So, the support, from the actual logistics of the teaching, it is very useful to be honest.

Paul explains that the MD models the correct way to teach the songs, as teachers "scurry off into the corner" (Paul) to ensure that their school is following the MD's interpretation. This was acknowledged by teachers who appreciated the certainty of the CD and showed little desire to deviate from the MD's reading of the repertoire, at least in these interviews. The rationale for this was not clear from the participants, except whereby teachers explained their trust in the choir and given the difficulty of the repertoire, there was a desire to "get it right" and "correct parts that are being taught incorrectly" (MD2; Paul). The researcher does note that participants placed huge importance on the CD recordings and there is a possible simplistic understanding of the CD as a teaching resource, which neglects any other informal learning engaged in through observation and teachers' own music teaching and learning experiences that they draw on in participation. Hoban

(2002) argues that this narrow focus on achieving a particular standard or outcome, can lead to a lack of long-term vision for teacher education.

The possibility of teacher learning beyond the resources and confines of the NCC system is not considered, either by the organisation or by teachers. As Paul notes above, the support offered through participation is really for "the logistics of teaching the NCC", rather than contributing toward a more holistic or ambitious musical learning outcome. Conversely, the significance of cluster rehearsals like this in facilitating networking and collaboration between the teachers, whereby the sharing ideas, solving problems together, and therefore cultivating opportunities to learn is noteworthy and commendable (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In this scenario, learning occurs through the interactions of master to apprentice, and informally from apprentice to apprentice.

Therefore, there are elements of Kennedy's cascading model or mentoring model of learning evidenced in teacher accounts of participation (see Table 1.2). One of the MDs did comment on her desire to be freer to act in a "mentor" role, getting to visit schools and be more available to support teachers, however they currently rely on passing on practices on to members due to the scale of the programme (MD3). The data suggests that currently MDs, AMDs and other experienced members work by "cascading or disseminating… their own (successful) learning with colleagues" (Kennedy, 2005, p. 240). While limited in the amount of agency afforded to teachers, it is a useful strategy given the scarce resources of the organisation and the current small structures of the NCC hierarchy. It is argued that while the structure, scale, and success of the programme has proved sufficient for participants thus far, there is a lack of any further development of teachers' learning beyond replication and imitation. Regardless of the depth and breadth of learning experienced by participants, one thing that they all reported was the building of confidence through participation which will now be discussed.

4.2.1.3 Building Confidence

As outlined earlier, teachers' perceived lack of confidence in teaching music has been a key barrier to effective music education at primary level (Biasutti et al., 2015; Hennessy, 2017; INTO, 2009; Mills, 1989; Seddon & Biasutti, 2008). From the findings it emerged that teachers and MDs believe participation in the NCC can help foster confidence due to the structured nature of participation within the narrow domain of learning explored above. MD1 explains how the organisational structures and efficient, predictable format of the NCC enables teachers' confidence to grow as they become expert participants.

As was discussed earlier, the summer course is very valuable in the promotion of confidence in participation. In addition, MD1 explains other ways in which teachers use the NCC to enhance the music education they facilitate:

> If you're there in your class and you're not particularly musically literate and you want to… you'd like to do something, and you just don't have the confidence, and confidence is a huge thing in everything. I think [the NCC is] like having scaffolding, so you might have said you wanted to do it, but couldn't do something like this on your own if you're not particularly… even if you are particularly musically literate. First of all, the [resource] pack it comes with when you sign up is an amazing support to you. I think working with others, we all know the benefits of team teaching, and you have that in relation to this. Maybe the team is a few miles down the road or whatever, but when you come together and you've had the meetings or whatever it is, that brings a huge amount of sharing of skills I suppose.

This example demonstrates how the NCC develops confidence through the use of support material which aims to make a difficult programme like this attainable. As discussed earlier, teacher confidence can be affected by a lack of experience teaching music or a sense that music as a subject is outside of their skill level (Hennessy, 2000; Holden & Button, 2006; Kraay, 2013; Partington, 2018). The support material was referred to by many as being key to promoting confidence in participation, particularly for musically novice participants. Charlotte recalls her first year where she praised the "extremely well organised [and] well-resourced teaching materials". She also explains how the professional preparedness of the resources leads to teachers that are clear in the outcome expected of them, which she felt was important when teaching the programme: "[children] will suss you out in about two [minutes] if you don't know what you're talking about, they're very quick to go: 'No. I'm not buying into this because you don't know what you're about'". Therefore, teachers felt it was important to be confident in teaching the repertoire and participating, for themselves and for the children. Charlotte's appreciation of the highly-structure nature of participation, which she feels provides a sense of certainty and control over participation, does raise questions about power implications of learning that will be explored later in this section.

Recalling what Charlotte and Carol spoke about earlier, participation can assuage a perceived lack of musical competence, and therefore foster confidence in teaching music within the supports and structure of the NCC. This implies a problematic balancing act for teachers and schools, whether teachers with limited confidence and musical knowledge embrace a musical activity intensely (e.g., song singing through the NCC) or aim to facilitate a variety of musical learning experiences, valuing the process of learning rather than the outcome. In this study, teachers valued the preparedness and perceived confidence that came from repeated participation, as Charlotte and others alluded to above, and they valued the programme's clearly defined and predictable outcome.

Beyond the supports, MD1 outlined how teacher confidence could be fostered through collaboration with nearby schools and at NCC rehearsals. The relationships developed between teachers and other NCC members were viewed as being central to developing confidence and sustaining participation, particularly in the early stages with the choir. Susan and Mary both spent

time observing their former colleagues who had experience participating in the NCC before they took over as full participants. Susan explains: “Because I was able to kind of see what it was all about, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year with that other teacher, it gave me the confidence to come home and do it [in my new school]”. In Susan’s case, she experienced an apprenticeship-like model of learning in her own school, within the wider apprenticeship of the NCC. As discussed earlier, this approach to teaching and learning is a very useful method of developing competence and confidence in a narrow range of knowledge and skills (Kennedy, 2014).

In addition to feeling largely positive about the confidence building opportunities of the NCC, participants acknowledged a broader lack of teacher confidence among their colleagues regarding the teaching of music education. Charlotte describes the current situation and status of music in her school and how learning through participation in the NCC can challenge perceived negative mindsets:

> A lot of people when it comes to music, and it shocked me when I went into teaching, [feel] 'Oh, no, I can't… I can't do that. No, I wouldn't be able to do that.' And it's partly a confidence thing. I understand because music [notation] is like another language in a way. And if you don't have that background, you may feel a little bit...[pause] but a lot of teachers use that as an excuse, 'Oh, no, I wouldn't be able to do that. So, I won't do it.'

Charlotte's comments support the divide that exists among teachers who view music as a specialist subject and therefore outside of their remit as the classroom teacher (Partington, 2018; Holden & Button, 2006). She felt that the structured, predictable nature of the NCC would guide her colleagues into music making, which it did for one colleague working in her school:

> **Class Teacher, School B:** I suppose I was a bit nervous in terms of what was expected of me and what I'd be able to contribute, as I say based on my own maybe shortcomings as regards music...
>
> **Researcher:** Well as you say, as it's gone on you feel that maybe...
>
> **Class Teacher, School B:** Yeah, well you… certainly because, you see what other people do and how other people operate, say especially as I said the likes of [Charlotte] and the likes of our MDs who've come in, and you get a sense...Now, I'm not saying I'd be able to do what they do but I'm just saying you get to see how they operate...and it gives you that bit more confidence... You do... like, I'm a visual learner... learn by seeing people do things. And the next time it comes around I certainly wouldn't be putting myself into kind of a role like [Charlotte] might have now but, I would feel more confident about facilitating it with the boys, if that makes sense.

In this example from Charlotte’s colleague, one can see a full picture of learning through participation and the resulting confidence development. The class teacher identifies as being nervous in the beginning, unsure of their role within the NCC and self-identifying as lacking confidence in music. Through observation and the structured nature of the programme, they now feel more able to contribute to a repeated cycle of the programme, having observed the MDs, their

colleagues and the programme in its entirety. Similarly, Susan and Mary's work with their colleagues on the programme also developed confidence and collaboration.

The data suggests that repeated participation alongside like-minded others can allow generalist teachers to grow in confidence, endorsed here by Charlotte, Mary and Susan's accounts, alongside the work of Shiel (2008) and McCarthy (1999b). However, it is important to recognise the limitations of this confidence. All participants reported confidence in teaching the NCC programme and in their learning from participation. The transferability of this learning to other areas of music education is outside the remit of this study but is an important consideration when critiquing the nature and significance of teacher learning through participation. While the evidence in this study demonstrates that repeated participation in the NCC improves teacher confidence and knowledge, the improvements are arguably limited to musical activities linked to the NCC programme or the choral singing space.

Furthermore, the intensity and highly structured nature of participation means that teachers learn through observation, implement their learning in their classrooms, and receive further support (and possibly feedback) from the MDs, their colleagues, other NCC members and the children they teach. This cycle of learning is rarely experienced in general music education at ITE or in-service level, with the focus more on self-reflection, agency, and creativity (Bond, 2017; Burnard, 2008; Kelly Mc-Hale, 2013). The need to build confidence quickly to ensure participation is successful acts as both a motivator for learning and as an inhibitor to alternative musical trajectories. As alluded to above, the possibility of transferable and transformative learning may exist but does not emerge as the primary goal of teacher participation. This could represent a missed opportunity for the choir given its prominence within the Irish primary school music landscape. This section will conclude by considering some of the other limitations of teacher participation in the NCC as a form of teaching and learning.

4.2.1.4 Limitations of Participation as Teaching and Learning

The evidence above suggests that repeated participation in the NCC can foster a semblance of confidence in participating teachers, while also demonstrating how teachers want to feel competent and confident when teaching and learning music, or risk, as Charlotte terms it, being "suss[ed] out" by their classes. It has been argued that the nature of this learning is narrow, given the clear focus of the summer course and other activities on participation in the NCC. In this section, some other limitations of participation as a form of teaching and learning will be considered, including the focus on a musical product rather than process and the nature of the learning being accessible rather than inclusive, due to the predefined standards, focus and outcome of the programme. Finally, the poor provision of CPD in music further limits the depth of teacher learning that can occur through participation.

The clear aim of the summer course, as outlined above, is to develop confident teacher participation in the NCC. All further learning opportunities, both formal and informal, all contribute to this aim. Therefore, it is argued that the nature of teacher participation as learning is focused on the preparation of a product (i.e., a teacher's successful participation in a final concert), with minimal consideration of the process that unfolds during participation. As mentioned above, Paul praised the "task based" approach of the NCC, which gave a "clear focus for the year". This implies that music education is complete following the NCC cycle. When asked about the potentially problematic nature of viewing music education in primary school as being product focused, Paul replied: "if anybody sat in on those concerts, they would have no questions about it, they would have no doubts about the validity of the whole NCC". It seems therefore that the final concerts are very valued by members and are cited as a justification for the narrow range of musical activities explored through participation and the lack of teacher and child autonomy in the teaching and learning process.

Hannah explains that during an NCC year, the motivation of teachers and students does falter, with many questioning the process they had signed up to. But she admits that this is a necessary "hurdle to get across" before reaping the rewards of the concert. This focus on product over process reinforces the argument that the NCC is a training model of teacher learning, aimed to produce a valued outcome (Kelly-McHale, 2013; Kennedy, 2005; Spruce, 2015). For both teachers and children, the musical learning through participation is akin to the "musical training" model proposed by Bowman (2008) earlier, which focuses on producing "action habits". While quite common in music conservatories (Kingsbury, 1988; Nettl, 1995), valuing only musical products is a significant limitation of learning through participation, particularly evident in participants' endorsement of the NCC concerts as the measure of success for music education that year. Therefore, the difficulty of participation and the high standard of repertoire empowers teachers to continue with the product over process mindset of music education. The outcome-focused approach to music teaching and learning achieved through participation leads us to consider another limitation, i.e., the accessibility rather than the inclusivity of participation.

Each teacher spoke very positively about the "opportunity" that was afforded to teachers and students who were part of the NCC, viewing the provision of such opportunities and access to music making as a key aim of primary music education. The need to provide greater access to music education has been long advocated (GoI, 1999a; Pitts & Robinson, 2016; Sheil, 2008), however throughout the research, there were times where teachers seemed to refer to the choir as "inclusive" (Charlotte, Hannah, Paul) however their description of the inclusive nature of participation suggests accessible is possibly a more accurate term. Charlotte praises the opportunity afforded to all children (in a participating school) to participate in a choir like the NCC, while Paul mentions that the choir places children on an "equal footing…and everybody gets an equal invite to take part".

Participants explained that the NCC was inclusive as it had children participating with a variety of Special Educational Needs (Carol; MD2) and because it wasn't auditioned (Paul; MD1; MD3). However, as far as this research can report, participation was not altered for children who had additional needs or desires. Spruce warns of the temptation to view the opportunity to participate in music education as meaning inclusion: "One of the defining characteristics of a socially just approach to music education is taken to be the opportunity for students not only to 'participate' in music education, but also to be 'included in it'" (2015, p. 288). In the case of this study, participants viewed presenteeism as being inclusive of all learners, however it is argued that there are missed opportunities here for more meaningful differentiation of musical experiences, attending to children's interests, needs and backgrounds (Bond, 2017; Kelly-McHale, 2013).

It is worth noting that participants did comment on the challenge of children who, despite being part of the programme, "fall through the cracks…[as] it's just not their thing" (Paul). In explaining her role, MD1 explored the challenges of including all children in a programme like the NCC:

> You're gonna have a certain amount of kids in that class that do not like singing. Haven't had the experience of it, and just aren't into it in the same way as you have in other subjects that they may not like. And you're forcing them to do this…that's why our role [as MDs] is very important; that it's a fun day and it's an enjoyable day, and that they will get something out of it. That there'll be one song, if it's only because they love doing the actions. And that happens that you will find that there might only be one song, where the others are getting a lot more out of it. But I think it's important that they get that song.

What emerges here is an appreciation of the challenges for children who do not enjoy this type of choral singing experience and the responsibility of the MDs and others in trying to engage them, while maintaining the uniformity of the programme. Another interesting dimension is the language here: "forcing them to do this". Without inferring too much from this language, it may suggest that some musical activities emote negative emotions for some participants, in contrast with positive connotations regarding the "opportunity" and "inclusion" offered by music making referred to earlier. Mary and Paul did express concerns regarding the lack of child voice in areas such as the repertoire selection and focus on song singing (which will be discussed throughout this chapter), however participants offered few alternative options or opinions. The implied lack of student agency throughout participation is problematic and potentially limits the inclusive nature of the choir. Arguably, there are missed opportunities for learner agency which will be explored in the recommendations of this work, while still maintaining the choral singing structures.

In the NCC, and this study, teacher and child learning are often considered together, as both parties are participants and therefore learners in the choir. The limitations of participation identified here, which include an absence of agency, meaningful inclusion, or differentiation affect both the children in the choir, and the teachers who teach and learn through it. There is little flexibility in how schools participate, suggesting that teachers (and children) are expected to participate

homogeneously and that gaps in their learning can be filled through observation, imitation and repeated participation as outlined earlier. Once again, participants were positive of the accessible nature of the programme for teachers, but the problematic correlation of accessibility and inclusivity is significant given the need expressed in the literature to place the learner at the centre of music education (Bond, 2017; Kelly-McHale, 2013; Spruce, 2015). The research recommends a deeper examination of how participation can be inclusive and learner-centred for both teachers, and subsequently children.

In summary, for teachers participating in this study, learning through participation in the NCC is considered an efficient, enjoyable process, enabling them to address perceived issues of confidence through the accessible, product-focus nature of the programme. The NCC summer course, resources and informal support from members refines participants' practices and enables them to become better participants in the NCC. However, the transferability of musical skills learned through participation is questionable and the nature of teacher learning is primarily transmissive, occurring through observation and trial-and-error. The choir, alongside other programmes, is arguably masking the poor provision of teacher learning opportunities by policy makers, at ITE and in-service level, which provides a space for the type of learning described here. It is significant therefore that in the absence of meaningful actions from the DE and other stakeholders, teachers are content in the knowledge and skills they have learned from their participation in the NCC. The link between teacher participation in the NCC and the model and approach to musical teaching adopted by teachers will now be explored through the consideration of the NCC as a model of music education and form of primary school curriculum replacement.

4.2.2 Music Education through Participation

Given the scale and time-consuming nature of participation, it is important to consider the possibility of the NCC as the main form of music education for participating children and as a teaching methodology used by teachers. Earlier in this dissertation, the multi-dimensional aims of music education, including the musical and extra-musical benefits and rationale for the inclusion of music in primary schools were examined. Coupled with this was a consideration of the different pedagogical mindsets employed by teachers when teaching music, ranging from a musical training model to a more child-led and holistic music education.

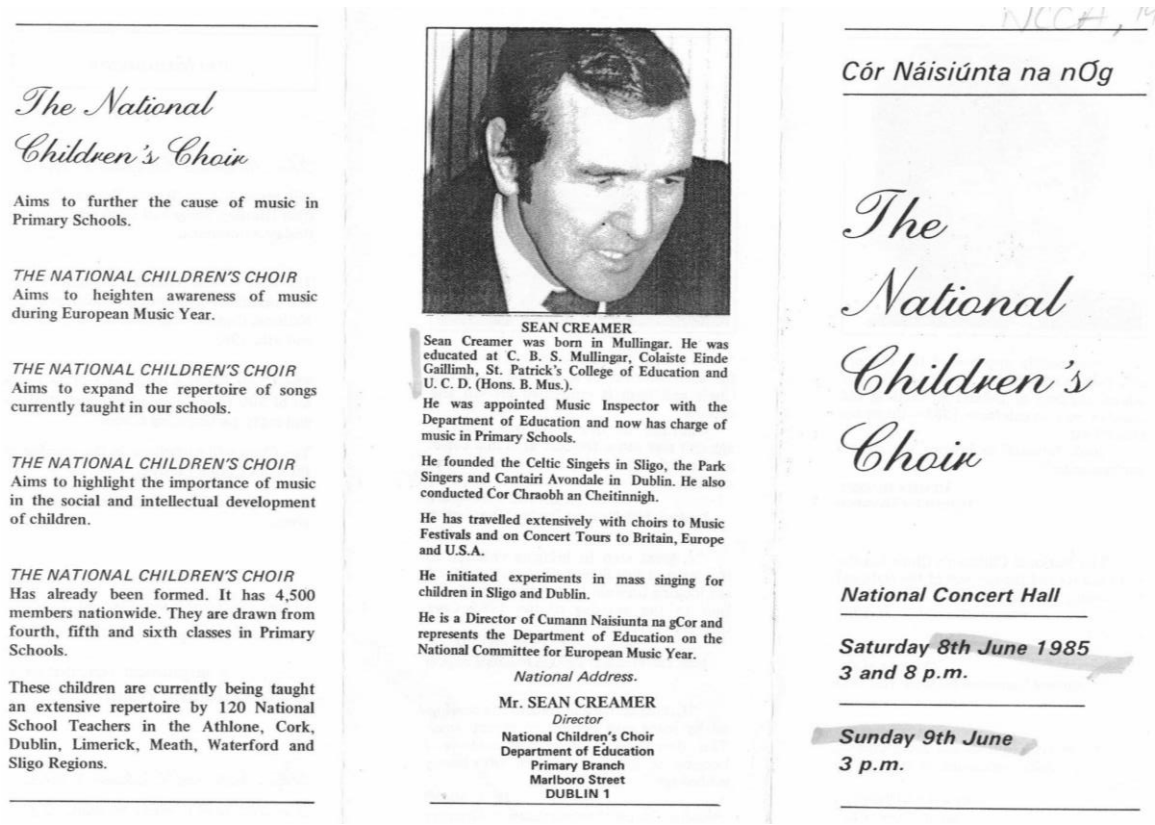
Therefore, this section aims to examine how participation in musical activities can be viewed as synonymous with music education questioning if teacher participation in the NCC is used by teachers to, in their eyes, cover the curriculum. It discusses the participant's views on how participation in the NCC aligns with the musical and extra-musical aims set out in the Irish music curriculum for 5th and 6th class. In doing this, the discussion explores the significance of the NCC operating as a curriculum replacement, the resulting aims and outcomes of this participative

form of music education, and considers where participation in the NCC aligns with or deviates from the objectives as set out in the current music curriculum.

Before beginning, I wish to clarify the terminology used in this section. The aims of the primary school curriculum (GoI, 1999a, p. 12) are broad statements of intent, focused on what the curriculum hopes children will experience. This is in contrast with the content objectives, as outlined for each class group, which list the types of activities children will engage in that contribute to the broader aims. Thomas & Hodges explain that an aim refers to a "main goal or overarching purpose" whereas the objectives outline how the aims will be achieved, through a series of statements or issues (2010, p. 39). Therefore, when considering the data relating to the NCC, the term aim will be used to reference the curricular content objectives, considering which curricular objectives participants feel the choir supports. The curriculum aims are more holistic and therefore viewed alongside the broader vision and rationale of the NCC, as outlined in the document sources and from the preliminary data phase. The curriculum aims and objectives were aligned with interviewee responses to explore where participation in the NCC supports the engagement of learners with specific content objectives within the music curriculum, or where fulfilling an objective is incompatible with participation in the NCC. This comparison and analysis is presented in Appendix H and will underpin the analysis and discussion of the data in this section.

4.2.2.1 Teaching Music using the NCC: Musical Aims

The aims of the NCC are articulated by primary sources and NCC publications, through interviews with the three MDs and NCC CM, and the six teachers at the centre of this study. The choir's aims include musical and extra-musical aims, which draws parallels to the aims outlined in the Primary Music Curriculum, as discussed in Chapter 2. The programme from the initial NCH concert in 1985 contains a statement of the choir's aims, reproduced below in Figure 4.1:



The National Children's Choir

Aims to further the cause of music in Primary Schools.

THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHOIR
Aims to heighten awareness of music during European Music Year.

THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHOIR
Aims to expand the repertoire of songs currently taught in our schools.

THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHOIR
Aims to highlight the importance of music in the social and intellectual development of children.

THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHOIR
Has already been formed. It has 4,500 members nationwide. They are drawn from fourth, fifth and sixth classes in Primary Schools.

These children are currently being taught an extensive repertoire by 120 National School Teachers in the Athlone, Cork, Dublin, Limerick, Meath, Waterford and Sligo Regions.

SEAN CREAMER

Sean Creamer was born in Mullingar. He was educated at C. B. S. Mullingar, Colaiste Einde Gaillimh, St. Patrick's College of Education and U. C. D. (Hons. B. Mus.).

He was appointed Music Inspector with the Department of Education and now has charge of music in Primary Schools.

He founded the Celtic Singers in Sligo, the Park Singers and Cantairi Avondale in Dublin. He also conducted Cor Chraobh an Cheitinnigh.

He has travelled extensively with choirs to Music Festivals and on Concert Tours to Britain, Europe and U.S.A.

He initiated experiments in mass singing for children in Sligo and Dublin.

He is a Director of Cumann Naisiunta na gCor and represents the Department of Education on the National Committee for European Music Year.

National Address.

Mr. SEAN CREAMER
Director
National Children's Choir
Department of Education
Primary Branch
Marlboro Street
DUBLIN 1

Cór Náisiúnta na nÓg

The National Children's Choir

National Concert Hall

Saturday 8th June 1985
3 and 8 p.m.

Sunday 9th June
3 p.m.

Figure 4.1: *1985 NCC Programme*

From these aims, we can again see a dual focus of perceived musical and extrinsic benefits from participation. On the one hand the NCC aims to "further the cause of music in Primary Schools" and to "expand the repertoire of songs currently taught in our schools", while also aiming "to highlight the importance of music in the social and intellectual development of children" (NCC, 1985). As discussed earlier, given the fraught policy outlook at the time (Benson, 1979; Herron, 1985), the focus on improving "the cause" or status of music, alongside the expansion of repertoire is unsurprising. Therefore, the initial aims of the choir focused on enhancing the musical landscape within primary schools in the mid-1980s, aligned with Creamer's role as a music inspector supporting music in primary schools.

The more recent iteration of the aims on the NCC Website (NCC, 2020) emphasises the musical aims of the choir, aiming to "foster a love of choral singing" and "enhancing the music education of those involved". The refined focus of the musical aims of the choir were endorsed by the MDs in their interviews. All the MDs mentioned exposure to a wide range of musical genres through the inclusion of "good choral songs" (MD2) as a key aim of the NCC alongside the opportunity to sing in a large group, bigger than their school or class. MD1 believes that participation teaches children choral etiquette and helps to "improve their singing and singing ability". Teachers here agreed with the MDs, identifying a clear link between the song singing strand of the curriculum and participation in the NCC. Susan describes the NCC as a choir focused on providing "good quality choral singing", while Charlotte values the "experience of

singing with a mass amount of people". In examining the objectives listed under the Song Singing strand (Appendix F), it can be argued that all are attended to through children's participation in the NCC, with participants such as Carol arguing that participation goes beyond the scope of the curriculum in this regard. In this way, teacher participation in the NCC as a form of teaching the Song Singing strand in their classroom is an effective methodology, comprehensively covering many of the content objectives including performing "a more demanding repertoire of songs" and performing "as part of a group, arrangements of songs that include simple countermelodies or harmony parts" (GoI, 1999b, pp. 71–72).

Continuing with the Performing strand of the curriculum, MD3 believed the choir gives children the opportunity to learn "the rudiments of music in a really active, enjoyable way" (MD3). On the other hand, MD1 distances the choir from the curricular literacy somewhat, saying that "it's not that the [NCC] is setting out to teach musical literacy, but it's very hard not to while you're doing it". Teachers in this study agreed that there were opportunities to teach music literacy and musical concepts "incidentally" but that this was predicated on individual teachers' knowledge and experience, rather than a general aim of the choir. Susan explains how, in her school, the children are provided with musical scores which enable the teaching of musical literacy:

> So, we can actually point out these things [in the score], like it's not as if they're going to be musically literate leaving National School, but at the same time, there are things that you can point out to them and time signatures and strong beats and, dotted rhythms and whatever it is, that you can have it there in front of them and it means lots more to them.

Hannah similarly uses the song she is teaching to teach musical concepts such as dynamics, tempo, rhythm, etc., which she feels is important to broaden the curriculum coverage, given the time-consuming nature of participation. However, these teachers admitted that this incidental, informal teaching of musical concepts may not occur in every school. Participants explained that the extent to which literacy could be taught was dependent on the level of literacy the teacher had, and that it was up to individuals whether they addressed this area of the curriculum through participation. Therefore, in my examination of the Literacy strand unit (Appendix H), I found that most content objectives would be marked in amber or red, indicating that they were neither comprehensively covered nor uniformly covered through participation in the NCC. The depth of this strand's exploration depended on the time teachers had, the song they were learning, teachers' experience level and their level of musical literacy. Therefore, teacher participation alone wasn't enough to ensure the area of musical literacy was taught, suggesting an imbalanced experience of participation as a form of teaching and learning depending on individual teachers and schools.

Considering the central place of the repertoire in defining the aims of the NCC, teachers commented on the benefits of exposing children to a wide range of repertoire, outside of what they would normally consider school music. Echoing the need to include "good choral songs"

(MD2), teachers cited the presence of pieces from the WAM tradition (for example Vivaldi's "Gloria" and Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus") as very important in presenting a balanced music curriculum in the senior classes. Susan explains how the repertoire and performance contribute to the exploration of the Listening and Responding to Music strand through the children's performance with an orchestra, listening and performing music in different languages and styles, and the inclusion of body, vocal percussion, and actions in a limited number of pieces. Teachers also valued the difficulty of the repertoire and the possibility of broadening the children's knowledge of these culturally valued styles of music (Charlotte). Examining the curriculum objectives, again there are opportunities for teachers to use the repertoire as a catalyst for exploring sounds and responding to music in a variety of ways to music, however this did not emerge as a deliberate aim of the NCC programme and teachers in this study gave little explanation of how it would be done, only to report that on some level "you're doing the Listening and Responding strand" when you participate (Carol). Therefore, the extent to which participation in the NCC allows children and teachers to "respond to", as opposed to simply perform, a variety of musical styles appears limited.

Finally, the data suggests that the Composing strand of the curriculum seems furthest from the intended aims of the NCC, and therefore is labelled in red in the analysis (Appendix H). Carol acknowledged that it is a "big criticism of the NCC that it takes the time from composition work" but concluded that if composing was to be integrated as part of the NCC then the size of the repertoire would have to decrease, and she personally felt that it was primarily a singing activity. MD1 also recognised the absence of the Composing strand but felt that it was only for one year and that, considering the quality of the choir, it was something that "teachers could stand over". Paul wondered about children who did not enjoy performing and that missed out on the composing element of music during an NCC cycle, particularly those children who enjoyed small group work. But again, he wasn't overly concerned with this, especially given the one-year nature of participation. Therefore, the time-limited nature of the programme was viewed as a justifying factor in the temporary pivot to NCC-based music education.

In summary, considering the choir's aims and the data from participants, the learning outcomes of the choir for children currently resides almost exclusively within the Song Singing strand unit of the curriculum, providing the opportunity for teachers to comprehensively cover, if not surpass, the requirement of the curriculum to engage children in this area. However, there is less evidence to support the NCC's use as a curriculum methodology to respond to music, invent through composing, or develop musical literacy. These objectives are not impossible to address through participation but depend on a variety of factors. Some teachers suggested the development of a broader teaching resource which could expand on the musical concepts within selected songs, while others felt that their own musical skills and experiences strongly influenced the type of teaching and learning that occurs through and alongside participation. The data

supports the links between teachers' lifeworks and the type of music education they facilitate (Edwards, 2005; Lave, 2009; Stakelum, 2008a). However, the all-encompassing, time demanding nature of participation may mean that realistically it is not possible to expand the curriculum coverage of the current NCC programme, and a more far-reaching redesign would be required to align it completely with the current curriculum content.

4.2.2.2 Extra-Musical Aims of Participation

As has been discussed, music has often been included in education systems for extra-musical aims and benefits including personal and social (Pitts, 2005), cultural and political (Folkestad, 2012; Walsh, 2016), societal (McCarthy, 2015) and psychological (Lonsdale & Stewart, 2016; Ritchie & Williamon, 2011). The rationale of music within education as being more than developing musical knowledge and skills has also been referenced (Mills, 2005; Swanwick, 1988; Welch et al., 2014). As was the case for teachers, the MDs also outlined the extra-musical benefits of participation for children. MD3 explained how the NCC enabled children to "learn and grow as people…in the broadest sense. So as musicians, as thinkers, as philosophers, as poets. In the broadest sense…as team playing individuals, in the broadest sense". MD2 explains the possible aims for children in the choir:

> [The NCC] just gives [the children] this confidence and gives them this huge sense of pride that they can actually...To see their faces, when they're standing up there... That they have got through all these songs, and they have sung them all, and it's just amazing to see. It's a fantastic thing to witness. And I think it gives them this love and this passion and…when you're talking about mindfulness and mental health and all the rest…It's so good for them. The children out there who might not be gifted in any other ways, who aren't great at anything else. They suddenly find that they can sing in a choir... They don't have to be a solo singer, but they can sing and it's just amazing to see the transformation in [them].

MD2's account of the wellbeing benefits of participation for child participants resonates with the original "social and intellectual development" aims of the choir and aligns with the broader music curriculum aim of nurturing "the child's self-esteem and self-confidence through participation in musical performance" (GoI, 1999a, p. 12). MD3 feels the aim of the NCC is to give children the opportunity to "learn and to grow as people" through choral music, while MD1 and Charlotte explain how it provides a group singing experience and a sense of collaboration, on a different level to what is possible in their classroom or school choir. Therefore, the facilitation of this altruistic experience of group singing in the NCC is valued by participants who feel it benefits children's mental health (MD2; MD3; Paul), confidence (Hannah; Carol), and team-work skills (Hannah; Paul). While it is difficult to measure these benefits, particularly given the assumed varying levels of interest and engagement among the groups of children who participate, the perceived use of the choir as a vehicle to foster extra-musical aims through participation is referenced by the participants here and attends to many of the broader objectives within policy

relating to fostering children's wellbeing and creative potential through musical experiences (GoI 2017, 2021; NCCA, 2020).

Notwithstanding the limitations of the accessibility of the NCC, Carol and others felt positively about the inclusion of all children in the choir. Carol explains how over the past 30 years school populations have evolved, yet the NCC continues to be accessible to all:

> It's for all kids. It's not just for the best singers or whatever. And I think, you know, increasingly, as schools have diversified and taken on more children with special needs, autism units, and all that, there would be a very different kind of demographic of pupils in the National Children's Choir, then there would have been when the thing started out in the beginning. But that's just because of the structure of schools, and the kind of inclusivity of schools nowadays, as opposed to 30 years ago, but they've just run with that. They don't care if you've got kids with Down Syndrome, or autistic kids, or whatever, they're all part [of it]. And they're all welcome. And that's a difficult thing to keep going. And I think that is obviously one of [the choir's] tenets.

Carol felt that the choir responds to the changing demographics by being accessible to all children. Similarly, Charlotte explains that "even giving the option of participation in it [to a child] is just fantastic", enabling children of all different areas, backgrounds, and experiences to participate together. MD2 also emotionally relayed an anecdote of a child with a hearing impairment who was part of the NCC, where the child's experience of silence in a song gave her and the entire choir an insight into the life of someone with a hearing impairment. In the literature, Turino endorses "the inclusion of people with a wide range of abilities within the same performance [as] important for inspiring participation" (2008, p.31). In this way, the aims of participation may simply be understood as participation and the mixing of various demographics through group music making is a welcome by-product of participation (Welch et al., 2014). However, as noted above, the inclusivity of the NCC as a form of music education, with meaningful differentiation for each child, did not emerge in the interviews and this is problematic when one considers participation in the NCC as a form of curriculum replacement.

4.2.2.3 Participation as Curriculum Replacement

Thus far, the musical and extra-musical aims of the NCC, as experienced through participation, are viewed as positive by participants. As has been suggested previously, the scale and demands of the programme often means that there is little time for other musical activities during the school year, or at least until after the NCC concerts take place. This suggests that participation in the NCC, as a form of teaching and learning, replaces music lessons based on the curriculum. Many participants concurred with this statement, acknowledging that the scale and time that participation demands means there is little time for any other music making outside of the NCC. This section considers teachers' opinions on the NCC as a curriculum replacement and explores the significance of this.

As was argued through the examination of the curricular objectives above, the activities of the NCC primarily support the fulfilment of curriculum objectives within the Song Singing strand. As Carol, Paul and Charlotte explain, one of the main anecdotal criticisms of the NCC is that it neglects musical areas such as composing, literacy and instrumental performance. It is Paul's view that there are children who are "missing out…[and that] some children that would really enjoy the composing strand" of the curriculum. In defence of this, he explains that a similar narrow, intense focus often occurs in many initiatives whereby elements of subjects "just get the backburner" and that this is part of the balancing act of teaching the curriculum. Charlotte explained how she had agreed with her principal that the NCC was the curriculum for 5th class (in her context) and that she, like Paul, was content in the trade-offs given the time-limited nature of the programme. Mary references a similar example regarding sport in her school, mentioning her principal who takes her class to basketball tournaments which "covers" her PE. While the literature argues that teacher autonomy is key to effective and dynamic music education (Kerins, 2019; Walsh 2012), teachers in this study viewed their autonomy as being able to decide which type of musical experience to pursue, despite understanding that participation focused on a narrow range of the primary music curriculum.

In the first phase of the study, a Principal from School A gave her view on the trade-offs involved in viewing the NCC alongside the music curriculum strands, particularly composing.

> **Researcher:** I suppose...would you say that [the NCC] fits in well with the music curriculum or is it kind of a separate thing?
> **Principal, School A**: Eh…I suppose the amount of time it takes... means that it is the only music you're getting done. So, your composing is probably the strand that gets dropped off a little bit there...
> **Researcher:** And how do you feel about that?
> **Principal, School A:** I wouldn't be confident that composing happens as a regular occurrence anyway.

This principal, while not teaching music in a classroom, accepted that in reality it is difficult to teach all the strands of the music curriculum as well as teach the NCC programme. She continued to describe how she felt the NCC addresses the Performing and Listening and Responding strands of the curriculum: "I think that [the NCC] covers that quite nicely and that [the children] are responding to those pieces of music in a way that's musical" (Principal, School A). As the leader of her school, she expresses both a confidence in the NCC as an integral part of the school's music education programme as well as acknowledging the absence of certain musical activities from the curriculum (in this case composing).

MD1 reported an opposing viewpoint regarding the teaching of composing, feeling that creative work in classrooms was plentiful and that "we probably have weighted [the curriculum] in favour of less formal teaching of singing, an expectation of quality singing that heretofore would have been stronger". However, reflecting on the curriculum developments that have

accompanied the establishment of the NCC, the former and current Irish music curriculum (GoI, 1971; 1999a) aimed to broaden the range of activities offered in primary music classrooms, perhaps to encourage generalist teachers with limited confidence to engage in various musical activities and to embody the child-centred, broad nature of the wider curriculum redesign. Therefore, a problem emerges, as alluded to earlier, between balancing a desire to narrow and specialise the curricular focus through intense participation in a programme such as this, and allowing time for the pursuit of a broader range of musical activities as advocated by the curriculum.

As reported earlier, participants deduced that many areas of the curriculum such as Listening and Responding, Exploring Sounds such as body percussion, and Literacy are attended to through participation in the NCC. Carol notes the opportunities for listening and responding to the variety of musical genres in the repertoire, while Susan reports exploring musical concepts such as tempo and dynamics, through performing the repertoire. As alluded to in the previous section, and without observation of the rehearsals, it is not possible to ascertain the extent to which curricular aims and objectives are attended to through participation. However, the data does suggest that the full coverage of any curricular strand beyond Song Singing is not commonplace, and more problematically, that some teachers understood participation as covering a wide range of curriculum content. In summary, participants felt that the NCC's narrow focus was "justified" given the high standard of the outcome and that the replacement of the curriculum by programmes such as the NCC was rationalised by their primarily unfavourable views of the current curriculum, as will now be outlined.

The literature review argued earlier that music education and curriculum provision in Ireland has been under the scrutiny of policy makers and academics for the past century (Benson, 1979; Grennan, 2017; Herron, 1985; INTO, 2009; McAuliffe, 2004; McCarthy, 1999a; T. Walsh, 2016). Despite teachers in this study having a strong musical background, they were critical of the "wishy-washy" nature of the current primary music curriculum (Charlotte), which in their view is too broad and doesn't push the boundaries of what is achievable by children (Carol). Carol claimed that, in her experience, some teachers could continually teach the same song from third class to sixth class, something which she felt the NCC addresses through its difficult and changing repertoire. Patrick explains how the NCC defines the focus for this staff, as they know that participation is the primary musical activity for 5th and 6th class that year. Coupled with the view that the primary music curriculum was sufficiently attended to by participation in the NCC, many participants criticised the ambitious breadth of the musical activities and content in the current curriculum, as well its general implementation. The findings imply that little progress has been made from the historical critique of the music curriculum during the 20th century where curriculum and practice did not align (Grennan, 2014; Walsh, 2016).

Finally, regarding the wider implications and significance of participation in the NCC as a curriculum replacement, Susan recalls being initially worried about the "one-dimensional" nature of the NCC within the wider curriculum when visited by the Inspectorate, but she reported that the inspectors were "bamboozled" by a performance of the NCC that she showcased, and subsequently had no problems with the provision of music education during the Whole School Evaluation. This suggests a wider acceptance of the choir's focus on song singing from school management and those within the DE network. One could argue that given the choir's origins within the DE, there is a recognition of the benefits and accompanying trade-offs involved in participation. Furthermore, the reported poor curriculum implementation and status of music in schools is a significantly damaging finding in this research and is worrying for any future developments in primary music education. Charlotte, in her role as music coordinator worries about the provision of music education within her school, leading to its being "side-lined" by some of her colleagues:

> I think that, to be honest, even in my school, I would worry about how much music is being done in classrooms, and not worrying but…I would know that in some classrooms, it's not really done all that much. So, I think it's really important to actually have something that does take up the year.

Charlotte is therefore happy that the NCC mandates the participating classes (and their teachers) to engage in music making due to the need to perform in the final concert, further endorsing the musical training, product-focused mindset discussed earlier. Carol similarly viewed participation as a way of ensuring that children were "doing…more music than they had ever done". She explains:

> There's an awful lot of inspectors out there…you could be doing anything with the kids and they wouldn't really know… and if you said that we are drawing links with performance and rhythm and listening, whatever it happens to be, they'll probably go 'Oh yeah that's grand'… You have to compromise and [the NCC] is worth the compromise because it's so much better than the curriculum. I think that the curriculum is going to be limited…I don't think that kids…unless they've learned music outside of school, nobody is going to come out musically literate at the end of primary school, because the curriculum doesn't allow for that…I think that [the NCC] pushes the boundaries much farther and it pushed the standard much higher.

Echoing the comments made by the principal of School A earlier, Carol's views are significant in demonstrating how principals can view the curriculum and how this could impact the types of musical experiences facilitated in schools. Carol is a confident musician outside of school, and this excerpt shows that she is satisfied with the type of learning and participation experienced in the NCC.

Participants therefore acknowledge that the NCC as a curricular replacement is better than their perceived poor implementation of the curriculum, or in Carol's case better than the curriculum itself. However, this study argues that opportunities exist within the curriculum and through programmes such as the NCC to aligning participation more holistically with the broad

aims and objectives of the primary music curriculum. Importantly, how the presence of the NCC, and similar programmes, within the primary school day are filling a gap in teachers' musical teaching and learning and whether a revised, more holistic music programme would be supported by teachers and requires careful reflection and consideration.

To conclude, the musical and extra-musical aims and objectives of the choir are endorsed by many participants, and the narrow focus of the NCC on the Song Singing strand is accepted by teachers but justified by the high standard of the final musical performance and the clear focus of the initiative. Furthermore, teachers feel that the current curriculum is too broad, leading to poor implementation in their school contexts compounded by the poor confidence and status of music among some teachers. This rationalises their participation in the choir further by ensuring participating children are engaging in some form of music making that teachers feel addresses most of the objectives in the curriculum, and therefore teachers accept the choir as an adequate curriculum replacement for that year of participation. In short, the nature of teacher participation as a form of teaching and learning suggests the provision of accessible, outcome-based music education primarily covering the Song Singing strand of the music curriculum, delivered by teachers who learn to be confident and capable participants in the NCC, supported by resources, training experiences and informal learning opportunities through repeated participation, is a desired and valued outcome from participation.

Synthesising the interview data thus far, the negative view of primary music curriculum expressed by some participants, weakened by its poor implementation and CPD opportunities, rationalises teachers' participation in programmes which are resourced, highly structured models of learning. It is argued that this form of music teaching is limited in its consideration of creative music making experiences and its development of learner agency across all curricular strands, as acknowledged by the participants and outlined by the contemporary music education literature earlier. Furthermore, given the perceived complexity of music education among some teachers, participants opportunely subscribe to this efficient, structured programme that allows them teach music competently and confidently within the confines of the programme, rather than outsource music education as often happens within partnership models of music education (Kenny, 2014; Partington, 2018).

What emerges is a conceptualisation of teaching and learning through participation that sacrifices child led, inclusive musical experiences (that admittedly are difficult to facilitate in a model such as the NCC) in favour of a training model of musical learning for teachers. The resulting high musical standard of the end product and difficulty of participation in the NCC is lauded by participants and others, all within the context of poor curriculum implementation, negative curriculum perceptions, ambiguous musical aims, and the low status of music within primary schools. In the final chapter, the possibility of embracing contemporary perspectives on

music education which encourage agentic, creative and culturally responsive participation using informal learning approaches (as outlined by Bond, 2017; Burnard, 2008; Green, 2008; Kelly Mc-Hale, 2013 and Spruce, 2015 earlier) for teachers and learners will be recommended, notwithstanding the limitations of the choral classroom model of the NCC as it currently exists.

4.3 Teacher Participation as Identity

The section will explore the nature of teacher participation as a form of identity, considering how participation impacts the formation and negotiation of identity. From the data in this study, the various influences on teachers' multiple identities will be considered, ranging from their previous musical lifeworld to their self-perceived identity as musicians and teachers. The discussion will begin by exploring the musical habitus of the participants, considering the link between teachers' backgrounds and their participation in the NCC. Following this, the multiple co-existing identities that emerged from the interviews will be discussed, examining teacher-musician identity in conjunction with the influence that participation has on participants own personal and professional identities. Then, the link between identity and the development of a sense of community and belonging through participation will be explored, considering the significance of this as part of teachers' lives outside the NCC. Finally, the practical manifestation of teacher's various identities as participants in the NCC will be explored through the description and discussion of the various forms and trajectories of teacher participation, culminating in the consideration of the multiple levels of participation by teachers in the choir.

4.3.1 Teachers' Musical Habitus

The link between early musical experiences and identity formation is well established in the literature (Georgii-Hemming, 2011; McCarthy, 1999a; Wenger, 1998; Woodford, 2002). Building on the strong links between learning and participation discussed in the last section, Wenger (1998) writes that learning through participation and identity formation are also closely related. It is argued that one's identity influences their engagement in practice and learning, while learning through participation can also further shape one's identity (Wenger, 1998). As discussed, learning is a contextual process, with past experiences influencing current and future practices. This consideration of participants' backgrounds or lifeworld is common in the phenomenological tradition, founded on the belief that "individual's realities are invariably influenced by the world in which they live" (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 94). To consider the links between teacher participation in the NCC and participant's development and expression of their identity, I first asked them about their earlier musical experiences to construct a picture of their habitus of participation. In doing so, I sought out their "predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination" for music that would influence participation and their sense of identity (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 214 as cited in Throop & Murphy, 2002, p. 187).

As outlined earlier in the methodology chapter, the six main participants all had previous musical experience that was largely positive in nature and therefore linked their backgrounds with participation in the NCC. Paul, Charlotte, and Hannah explained that their introduction to music came from instrumental music lessons in a music school or conservatoire. Despite all three coming from differing musical backgrounds (Irish traditional, classical piano and musical theatre respectively), their previous experiences gave them confidence in approaching music as a primary school teacher and consequently as a participant in the NCC. Hannah explained how having completed her grade exams and having music "tuition" gave her an advantage when participating in the NCC. Similarly, Susan, Mary and Carol previously sang as part of their secondary school choirs and viewed music positively from their post-primary education, which they felt was advantageous when taking part in the choir. Charlotte felt that her early involvement in music, inspired by her mother, was a central part of her career as a primary school teacher. Her mum was a previous teacher participant of the NCC, and Charlotte acknowledged following in the footsteps of her mum as a participant. Therefore, the data suggests that participants' previous musical experiences positively disposed them to enter participation in the choir. Furthermore, teachers' pre-existing musical skills and knowledge benefited them during participation, advantaging them as members of the NCC.

When reflecting on their musical lifeworlds, those who had experience of the NCC as children felt that it had shaped their musical background (among other influences from family, community, etc.) and therefore it could be argued that participation at any level, teacher or child, has an effect on one's identity and habitus. Charlotte explains how she remembers her mum working on the repertoire at home, and despite not participating herself as a child, felt that she wanted to take part as a primary school teacher. Many participants desired to pass this experience to those that they teach, as Hannah reflects: "I wanted to give the children I was teaching the same feeling and the same sense of achievement that I had… I suppose they wouldn't have had that opportunity hadn't I said that I would do it". Similarly, the NCC CM, who like Hannah was also a child participant, explains the impact participation has had on her musically and now as a teacher: "I know if I hadn't taken part in the National Children's Choir, I definitely wouldn't have been exposed to some of the music that I was and... like, it made an impact on me. I'm here [now]". Therefore, some teachers attribute their involvement in the NCC back with their participation as a child which, in their view, positively impacted their musical lifeworld.

Participants also acknowledged the influence of their musical habitus on their work as a teacher, aligned with the research by Pitts (2005a) and Lamont (2002). Stinson explained that "what we teach is who we are" (2002, p. 157) and the teachers in this study align with this view. Many participants wished to pass on the experiences they had as children, with a desire to pass on their positive musical lifeworld. Hannah and Charlotte acknowledge that they wanted to give their classes a similar musical experience that they had in school. However, like the theme of teaching

and learning explored above, the homogenous nature of teachers' experiences is difficult to reconcile with a broader, more contemporary conceptualisation of music education. For example, if teachers identify only with a choral singing, or view music education through a middle-class socio-cultural lens, there is little opportunity to reimagine their identity or lifeworld, with teachers remaining within a narrow "learning horizon" warned against by Hörberg et al. (2019) in the opening chapter.

It is significant also that no participants mention their popular music interests, with only Paul integrating his experience of Irish traditional music with participation. The participants' views of school music align with the work of Green (2002; 2006) whereby they ascribe greater meaning and significance to school music genres, perhaps reserving popular genres for their outside school interactions with music. Therefore, the familiarity enjoyed by teachers who are comfortable within their habitus of participation is positive as it fosters their musical confidence and maintains their musical identity, however it is also problematic whereby it may alienate alternate values, dispositions, and musical identities or activities.

In short, the lasting impact of previous musical experiences both inside and outside the NCC, and the desire to pass them on, was important to participants when they reflected on their place within the choir. The complexity of teachers' musical lifeworlds and the significance of them on their teaching and identity has been well argued (Throop & Murphy, 2004; Stakelum, 2008; Wright, 2015a). The data demonstrates a strong correlation between teacher's own musical backgrounds, their early musical influences and experiences, and their work as a teacher and participant in the NCC. These musical lifeworlds will now be interrogated through the consideration and formation of teacher's multiple identities through participation.

4.3.2 "Multiple 'I' Positions": Developing Identities through Participation

In this study, teachers' stories revealed various identities co-existing and undergoing constant renegotiation. These "multiple 'I' positions" emerge from practices that teachers find meaningful and engage in (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 311; Maattanen, 2003). In this way, teacher's identities in this research are shaped through participation in the NCC and therefore participation becomes part of their identity. Teachers in this study may embody various identities as musicians, members of the NCC, school leaders, professional conductors, etc., which all interact with each other (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). In this section, I consider participants' identity as teachers (teacher identity) and identity as a musician (musician identity). These are discussed separately, but also as a composite identity as experienced by participants and Akkerman & Meijer (2011). Then the impact of participation on the personal and professional dimensions of participants' identity are considered, before examining how identity is influenced by the community's values and practices.

4.3.2.1 Musician or Teacher?

In the early stages of the data analysis process, this research sought to determine where participants viewed themselves on a continuum from musician to teacher, as explored by Woodford (2002) and Hargreaves et al. (2003, 2007; cf. Lamont, 2002), considering a possible link between their previous musical experiences and their current identity as a teacher participant in the NCC. When asked, Carol and Mary responded emphatically "teacher", whereas Hannah (and to a lesser extent Paul) reported that they were musical outside of school, and that this influenced their day-to-day teaching. Hannah felt it was important for her as the teacher to demonstrate her musicality to her classes as a sort of role model, "bringing [her] experiences to life for their students" (Bernard, 2004, p. 295). She reported feeling confident in music and that "music is really [her] forte".

Charlotte had a more nuanced view of her identity, feeling that earlier in her career she was a musician but over time her identity has gradually shifted towards teacher, as she explains:

> **Charlotte:** I don't play the piano as much as I used to or don't do that. So [the NCC] forces me to actually spend a bit of time and actually… so from a personal point of view, it is great. Absolutely. And it definitely does develop and remind you of all of the musical things that, you don't always practise all the time.
>
> **Researcher:** I suppose if I was to ask you, are you a musician or a teacher, where do you position yourself on that kind of spectrum?
>
> **Charlotte:** Oh God teacher. I'd say…I would have in the past, I probably would have said, more musician. But as time has gone on, definitely my confidence as regards, all of that would have faltered a little bit more. But I understand, like, because I do have the background that I have I understand why teachers would shy away from it a little bit.

Charlotte's interview demonstrates how her musical background has helped facilitate participation, but also how over time her teacher identity has grown stronger. This affirms the inability to define conclusively whether one identifies distinctly as a musician or teacher, and rather implies that teachers embody multiple coexisting identities (Bernard, 2004; Georgii-Hemming, 2011). Charlotte's participation in the NCC helps to maintain her identity as a musician through the need to practise the piano for rehearsal. However, more critically, her comments could also be interpreted as the erosion of her musical identity through the all-encompassing nature of her role as a teacher and her narrow musical remit of replicating the programme with her students. It is argued that the promotion of one's musician identity through participation is limited by the nature of participation.

Carol qualifies her primary teacher identity saying she "wouldn't have enough musicianship to class herself as a musician" while Mary compared herself to other members of the NCC saying that "I love [the NCC] but I'm not like them…I'm a teacher". During the interviews, both Carol and Susan spoke highly of those who played instruments and compared themselves and their participation in the choir with those who performed in the NCC orchestra.

The data suggested that they believed their musicianship experience as singers was less revered than instrumentalists, and perhaps was less worthy of the musician identity (Plummeridge, 1991). Nettl considers this hierarchy among instruments within the music conservatoire culture, and the data here affirms this view of vocalists as “enjoying lower esteem” (1995, p. 63).

Therefore, teachers in the study, despite the challenge and difficulty of the programme, believed that they were primarily operating as teachers when participating in the NCC, feeling that the musician dimension of their identity was a contributing but not central part of participation. This may be due to many factors such as the view that their musical identity was in the past, was more evident outside of school, or that a musician ought to be an instrumentalist. It is surprising given the musical background of the participants and their commitment to the choir, that only Hannah was confident in her musical identity. It is argued therefore that teachers' musical identities are an important part of their initial motivation for participation, however through repeated participation, interviewees become more skilled teachers in the programme, identifying less and less as a musician through participation.

4.3.2.2 Professional and Personal Identities

Coupled with the internal dialogue between musician and teacher identities, participant data also suggests how teacher’s professional and personal lives contribute to the formation of their identity, reified through their participation. Professionally in their careers as teachers, their identity was intrinsically linked to participation in the NCC. Mary explains how: “I suppose in my own school, I was the NCC… in the town, I was the NCC. And coordinating it I suppose I came to be the face of it really around the place and within the schools”. Other participants, such as Paul and Susan, also explain how as they continued to participate, they became more deeply involved in the choir, integrating participation with their sense of professional identity. In the first phase of data collection, teachers often referred to their colleagues as “our expert” or “specialists”, a title which commanded status within the school. Participation in musical activities, including the NCC, supported the different roles of teachers within schools which will be explored later in this section.

Within the community, participating teachers were able to reach out and connect to others using the NCC as a conduit for networking and career progression, as Paul explains: “I found from a professional point of view, one of the most beneficial things about taking part in the NCC was just collaboration between ourselves and the other local schools you know, because we really don't get those opportunities.” As identified in the statistical data (Appendix C and D), small schools and rural schools represent a smaller proportion of schools who participate in the NCC. However, for those who do participate, like Paul, the experience arguably becomes a bigger part of their school identity and their professional identity within the community.

Building on the nature of teacher participation as part of one's professional identity, one principal from the initial data collection phase explained how participation has influenced their career in this example:

> When it came to the point when I started to think about moving into a leadership role [and becoming a principal], I had already had to do things like meet other schools. In a different capacity, I had linked in with other schools. I had conversations…professional conversations with people that enhanced my own professionalism…it is so good for you personally and in your professional career. (Principal, School B)

This principal explained that the NCC was something that she promoted in her application for principalship, as well as using the community to learn about future job opportunities. In the same vein, Paul felt that participation in the NCC had helped him to build a relationship with his new senior management colleague through participating collaboratively in the organisation of participation, which he felt positively influenced their work relationship going forward. Therefore, it is argued that teacher participation in the NCC maintains a significant presence within one's professional identity, through the status and role that comes with leading participation in some instances, as well as the possible professional benefits that stem from participation. The final, 'I' position considered in this section considers the nature and significance of participation in the personal lives and identity of the teachers.

Campbell et al. noted "the most effective teachers are perceived as having an apparent love of music" (2007, p. 232). While the opening section considered teachers' musical habitus, this section considers the personal passions and motivations of teachers and how these impact their identity as NCC participants. As discussed above, Charlotte's musical experiences made participation easier, however her interview excerpt explains how participation motivates her to practise the piano and integrates her personal enjoyment of music with her role and identity as a teacher and NCC member. Many studies (Hargreaves et al., 2007; Lave, 2009; Sweet, 2010) have found that teachers' own personal interests and affections motivate their teaching and influence the types of activities they engage with. The data reveals that Hannah, Charlotte and Paul all speak of their desire to bring their "personality" and "love" of music into the classroom. Hannah explains the link between her personal identity and participation in music in school and in the NCC: "I suppose going back to where music and me…I've always had love for it. And even to this day, now I'm [age], it's still a really big part of my life, and a part of who I am. And I bring it into everything that I'm doing". Thus, Hannah's experience influences her sense of who she is personally and therefore links her individual musical life with participation.

In summary, teacher participation as a form of identity begins with teachers' previous habitus and musical lifeworld, and continually develops through the synthesis of one's professional and personal motivations and identities, represented in their identity as a musician, identity as a teacher, and identity as an NCC member. As Susan mentioned above, she is "the face

of the NCC" and a person's face is perhaps the strongest representation of one's identity, demonstrating the centrality of participation in the NCC on the lives of teachers in this study.

Research by Lamont (2002) argues that school is a key place where musical identities are formed. The findings are significant as they affirm the multiple 'I' positions embodied by teachers as they participate in the NCC (teacher, musician, conductor, colleague, organiser, learner, etc.) and the importance of teachers and schools in shaping the identities as students and teachers. Teachers' identity therefore is fostered through the fulfilment of their musical and extra-musical desires and motivations, shaped by their previous musical lifeworlds and their personal and professional identities which are further strengthened by a sense of belonging within the NCC community which will now be considered.

4.3.2.3 Identity within the Community

As outlined earlier, Wenger's concept of belonging involves three sub-concepts: *engagement*, *imagination*, and *alignment* (Wenger, 1998, p. 184). Through repeated participation, teachers experience various modes of belonging through engagement with the choir, imagination of themselves in various roles as NCC members, and through alignment with other members who are working towards the common aims and outcome of the choir. Hannah positively recounts what it means to be a member within this community: "You're in it together…There's so much friendliness and a real just sense of happiness and wanting to be there because everyone wants to learn the songs". These positive experiences and shared goals cultivate a sense of belonging for participants, which contribute to their "stories of identity" and encourage future participation (Wenger, 1998, p.187). Therefore, identity and community are interlinked, with membership of the community influencing identity, and each participant's identity shaping the community.

Hannah and Susan speak about being part of a community of "like-minded" members. Hannah explains the kind of group the NCC is to her: "it gives a chance to the people who are dedicated and want their classes to really thrive, to do that in an environment where…people aren't taking [sic] a joke about it…Like it's taken serious[ly]". She compares it to other music programmes operating in schools, which she feels lacks the "real sense of teamwork and unity" of the NCC. It is possible that the shared vision and similar habitus of members, as emerged through the interviews, enables the continued existence of the choir by members who share a common identity within the community; a badge of identity as referred to earlier (Wright, 2015a).

Within the school community, the relationship between principals and teachers is important. In her school, Charlotte's principal is a non-participant with very little involvement in the NCC, however they support participation through facilitating the supervision of classes, the organisation of rehearsals, and any administration that is required. Charlotte notes that participation "takes a lot of coordination…[and] let's say and buy-in from management and our

principal who is very supportive it". Similarly, in School D from Phase 2, participation was organised by a previous principal and the current principal reported being happy to "hand that over" to the 5th class teachers, having very little involvement in the teaching of it. Finally, Carol, as a retired principal, is proud to have reintroduced the NCC in her school, enthusiastically enrolling another colleague to come on board and teach it with her. This relationship involved Carol peripherally supporting participation alongside her colleague who led the NCC in her school as the choir conductor. Therefore, the data demonstrates how the role of principals as either leaders or facilitators of participation is an important factor in determining the nature of music education in schools influenced by the identity and experiences of all involved (Bowe, 2016; Finnerty, 2017; Murray, 2022).

One example of the wide reach and longevity of the NCC community came from Mary's interview, where she recounts a story about her daughter, who was a child participant and is now a primary school teacher:

> [My daughter's] almost 30, so she's out [of teacher training] a few years. But when she went to college, a lot of the people that she met up with by default, they found out that they had all been involved in the National Children's Choir. Now I'm talking about girls that she met from [different counties]. And even in the photograph that [was taken] in the concert hall, they were able to pick themselves out because they happened to be there - they were amused themselves. And, you know, they would say that when they get together that they end up singing songs from Cór na nÓg [NCC].

This example suggests the community of the NCC can continue past participation, and arguably can evolve. For example, while Mary's daughter may not have appreciated or experienced a strong sense of community or affinity with fellow choristers when she participated, the potentially homogenous nature of primary school student teachers' school experiences provides an opportunity to re-engage with an evolved community of NCC members, sharing songs, stories and experiences. This was also supported by the NCC CM who valued the summer course as a chance to reconnect with NCC teachers who, like herself, had participated as children. It is argued that these teachers share a common habitus as NCC members and possess a common capital through the performance of the repertoire. Not only does this support the findings by Elpus (2018) affirming the link between both music participation and third level participation in music, but also Wright's views that "habitus is confirmed and replicated" when communities share common beliefs and experiences (2015a, p.84).

Therefore, the data suggests that teachers share an identity as NCC members, past and present, within the community, through the engagement, alignment, and imagination of the community. This sense of affinity to a community can emerge, and indeed re-emerge, at different stages of teachers' lives. This may cultivate a sense of belonging as insiders (Wenger, 1998) who have a social connection with other members who are "rooting for the same thing as you are" (Susan).

Therefore, participants not only have their own multiple 'I' positions, but they also align their identity with the community of fellow NCC members. The significance of this is both positive and problematic: on one hand the community element of participation as a form of identity ensures continuation of the organisation, and arguably contributes to the social and enjoyable dimension of membership. However, when this group of NCC "insiders" (Wenger, 1998) are considered within an already homogenous population of Irish primary school teachers (O Sullivan, 2019), it can result in a static community of participants where identity and learning are not challenged or critiqued, but simply replicated. There may also be outsiders (Wenger, 1998), whether through differing musical experiences or sense of identity, who are alienated by the homogenous nature of a community in which they feel they do not belong. The final consideration of identity through participation explores the forms and trajectories of participation which result in the various levels of teacher participation within the NCC.

4.3.3 Forms and Trajectories of Participation

As outlined in the review of the literature, Wenger's (1998) CoP theory provides a useful model for describing and critiquing the nature of participation through the identification of four forms of participation: Full Participation; Peripheral Participation; Marginal Participation and Non-Participation (p. 167). His theory also describes the various trajectories of participation, being either inbound or outbound depending on the desired form of participation (represented earlier in Figure 2.1). As alluded to in the methodology chapter, not all teachers within the NCC participate in the same way. There are teachers who teach and lead the choir (*full participants*), those who support or facilitate the programme (*peripheral* or *marginal participants*), and those who have very little involvement with the programme (*non-participants*). These roles will be further interrogated in this section and conceptualised as levels of participation based on the roles and responsibilities of participants. It is acknowledged that non-participant is a problematic term used by Wenger (1998), however I intend its use to be for those members of the school community who enable and facilitate participation, but for whom the outcome of participation as a form of learning or identity is very minimal. Therefore, the forms of participation considered in this section depend on the practical roles and responsibilities of teachers within the choir, which relates directly to their sense of identity and power.

Considering all the data in this study, as well as the researcher's own informal observations as a fellow participant, this section aims to explore the various levels of participation by teachers in the NCC, discussing how their role is important both to the overall operation of the choir and where their role exists and interacts with other members. Given the link between practice and identity, community and identity, and the personal and professional dimensions of identity, the focus of this section is to describe the practical manifestation of identity through

teacher participation in the choir. An exploration of the hierarchical and power implications of these multiple forms of participation will then follow.

4.3.3.1 Full Participants and Non-Participants

To begin, I first examine the differences between full participants and non-participants. Full participants are those who are responsible for teaching the programme to the children. They are what Wenger (1998) refers to as insiders, participating fully within the choir. Their role can include liaising with the NCC regional organisers and committees, organising rehearsals, attending the summer course and other activities directly related with teaching the repertoire to the children and facilitating participation in their school. Often, they initiate participation in the programme and affiliate their school or class, although this is not always the case. All the teachers from Phase 3 of the data collection, the six phenomenological interviews, are conceptualised as full participants, with important roles and responsibilities within their schools and the NCC, which are reflected in and a reflection of their multiple identities (musician, teacher, professional, personal).

Alongside this group, there is a larger group of non-participants. These teachers have varying levels of interaction with the full participants, but in the main non-participating teachers have very little direct involvement in the teaching of the repertoire. They support participation by observing the rehearsals, acting as "crowd control" (Hannah) maintaining classroom management and supervising the class of a participating teacher while they conduct the choir. For example, Charlotte explained how she was teaching a junior class during the last NCC cycle and, as this class level does not participate in the choir, her colleagues who are the teachers of the participating children swap classes with Charlotte for rehearsals. Charlotte then teaches the repertoire to the fifth classes in her school and her colleagues take turns supervising her class. Both teachers explain that while this is not ideal, it is necessary for participation and is made possible due to the support and collaboration of staff and management. Furthermore, as was alluded to earlier, Charlotte's colleague (who was interviewed during the first data collection phase) was happy to allow the expert Charlotte to lead participation in the NCC as he admits "I wouldn't be relying on my own competence in taking on a task like this…I mean this is a level beyond me" (Class Teacher, School A). Therefore, Charlotte is a full participant whereas her colleague is a non-participant who is removed from the teaching of the choir. Charlotte feels encouraged by the learning she has experienced through participation, and this influences the multiple positive identities that enable her to participate confidently and competently in the NCC.

The nature and significance of participation by other forms of participant (non-participating, peripheral and marginal) is important to consider, as they have an important role in ensuring a school's successful participation in the choir, as Susan explains: "It certainly is not just two people taking this on in the school, one person taking it on in a school, it needs to have the

backing of the whole staff". She tells us about her staff who "have no interest in music whatsoever…[but will] offer to welcome people into the concert or do whatever they can to help you out". Charlotte similarly speaks about having "buy-in" from staff and management, explaining how participation is easier and more enjoyable when all the staff are involved on some level. Paul explains how the involvement of staff in areas such as parking, organising seating and even hospitality for visiting schools is necessary to ensure the success of the initiative. Therefore, we can see the value of non-participants in the efficient and successful operation of the choir, with their important extramusical, facilitative roles.

Recalling the discussion of learning and identity heretofore, there may be personal and professional benefits and capital acquired through participation for all teachers, even those not directly involved in the teaching of the programme. For example, during the Phase 1 data collection, the principal of School D has been previously signed up to participate by the former principal, yet they were happy to facilitate it for the benefit of the school among parents and the wider community. However, the extent to which teachers' musical identities and learning are fostered is limited for teachers who are not directly involved in the teaching of the choir, perhaps due to the limitations of the choir's organisation structures or due to the desires of teachers to remain outsiders regarding participation in the NCC in their school.

4.3.3.2 Peripheral and Marginal Participants

Perhaps the most interesting forms of participation to consider are those peripheral and marginal participants. In this context, peripheral participants are teachers who may or may not be involved in the teaching of the repertoire or leading participation, but they are on a trajectory towards full participation. They are enabled by other members to learn the practices and procedures necessary for full participation if they so wish. For example, Carol explains how in her early years with the NCC she just taught one vocal part of the songs, while a colleague conducted the choir altogether. With time and practice, Carol had opportunities to act as the conductor and thus a full participant. Similarly, Susan describes a colleague who assisted her in teaching the repertoire while her usual teaching partner was absent from school. The extract below illustrates Susan's colleague moving along this trajectory from outside observer to participating insider:

> One year ago, one of my other friends, colleagues, on the staff decided to do the [summer] course. And she has no background in music. She's a good singer, little sing songs. But she wouldn't be able to read music. But she came along to the course. The first couple of days of the course, she kind of was "Oh my god!" She couldn't believe that people could actually sit down, sight read what's in front of them? And so, she was absolutely scared out of her wits. Okay, but when we actually when the course was finished, she admitted on the Friday she said she had never done a course that was as enjoyable and she came home then…. the reason she did the course really was because one of the teachers that usually does it for me was going out on maternity, the following year. So, she wanted to help me out. So, she was super happy. But she couldn't believe what a good resource the CDs are, for teachers who haven't actually done it before. So, I

> think to even put your toe in the water the way she did, and to experience it and take the fear out of it. She thought it was very highbrow and very…. She'd heard the finished product. And when she [saw] us with our vocal scores, and, the children would even get [them], she kinda thought; "Gosh, I mean, I could never do this". But actually, of course, she could do it.

Here we can see that through the NCC summer course and its aim to prepare teachers to teach the repertoire, Susan's colleague grew in confidence and was enabled to teach the programme alongside her, moving from a peripheral position to one closer to full participation. These examples affirm Levine's (2010) reading of Wenger's theory that communities can "pull" members up to the level of competence of other members. It also demonstrates the centrality of "learning by doing" and the fostering of confidence through participation, which ultimately reinforces one's identity as a competent NCC member (Wenger, 1998). In a final example, Paul similarly recounts how he inherited participation in the NCC from the former principal in his school, who introduced the choir and subsequently moved elsewhere:

> It was kind of left up to us and we were left to our own devices. Now [my former principal] obviously was organising another concert [nearby] and so wasn't too far away. She was there in an advisory role for us and in the logistics of organising the concert and all that. So, myself and one of the other teachers took the role of coordinator, basically.

These extracts show the importance of the supportive structures within the choir like the summer course and the use of the wider NCC community to provide an opportunity for learning and identity formation through the progression from outsiders or peripheral participants to insiders.

It is noted that there is no established process for the mentoring or training of new members in the NCC, besides informal networking through the summer course and other channels. Perhaps this represents another missed opportunity for a possible structured induction programme, to allow teachers progress to full participation and address teachers' shortcomings in confidence and competence that may be impeding full participation. Teachers did acknowledge the support of the MDs who could be contacted for support, however given the scale of the programme this is not always realistic, as MD3 admitted earlier. Therefore, the data suggests the possible need for a more formal induction or mentoring structure to manage the development of teacher participants within this peripheral space, formalising the learning and identity formation that happens incidentally.

The final category that requires consideration are those teachers who remain at the margins of participation. This is where "participation [is] restricted by non-participation" keeping either newcomers or long-standing members from full participation (Wenger, 1998, p. 167). From the initial data collection phase, some class teachers who were not teaching the repertoire did report that they mainly had a "support role" and were required to "fall in line" with the workings of the choir. Class teachers from School A and D both reported that their main involvement in the NCC was supervising other classes, meaning that they didn't attend rehearsals and were therefore

physically removed from participation in the choir. Similarly, in School B, one participant felt that there had to be a balance between "allowing younger teachers who want to participate…to take a little turn", while ensuring that competent, experienced members of the NCC lead the choir. It is unclear if this turn-taking was limited to the teachers who taught the class groups or available to any teacher in the school who wished to participate. Also, it is equally unclear if these teachers progressed onto full participation or remained at the margins of participation. Susan identifies this group of participants who remain at the fringes of the choir and postulates why this may be:

> You can see some teachers being very much into it, and very hands on and helping whatever. And then you can see no, sorry they just come and they're there for the day out when we go for the regional rehearsals, oh, yeah. Sometimes I've actually seen that. if you took it from their perspective, it mightn't be that they're just not participating as much. It could be coming from the fact that they think that we know how to do it. So, leave us to it, you know. So, I wouldn't fully blame them. But there might be an element there of 'sure leave it to them. It'll happen anyway and let them take charge'. And so, I know it sounds a little bit - But I suppose that goes on in everything. You say maybe you know that some people do give it 100% participation and others mightn't just give it as much.

She suggests that this varying level of participation is inevitable, and Wenger (1998) would agree that some members desire to be in a state of non-participation by choice, like the principal of School A. The swapping of subjects and classes among teachers was mentioned by many who felt that rather than teachers "feeling that they have to do it" (MD2), marginal participants or non-participating teachers could teach a subject they enjoyed. This aligns with the notion of music as a specialist subject outside the domain of some generalist teachers (Hallam et al., 2009; Holden & Button, 2006; Seddon & Biasutti, 2008), further supporting the difficulties that teachers experience viewing themselves as musicians (Bernard, 2004). In the context of this study, these marginal and non-participating teachers are still classed as participants of the NCC in their facilitation and endorsement of the programme with their class and the resulting capital and curricular replacement that flows from participation.

It is reasonable to assume that there is a hypothetical group of teachers in schools who are marginalised or excluded from full participation by other members. This, Wenger argues, can become endemic within a community, leading to "problematic" non-participation whereby the organisation is unable to conceive alternate trajectories for those who desire full membership. The significance being that the organisation or community can become stifled with its static membership and miss opportunities for reflection on their practice. The constant evolution of these multiple forms of participation is problematic as while all communities require experienced, confident participants to survive and pass on the organisation's knowledge and practice, they may also alienate possible new members with new ideas and varying identities. (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

While a group like this did not emerge from the data, organisations must be mindful of the need to conceive different trajectories and ideologies, or risk marginal participants becoming full non-participants removed from the organisation altogether (Wenger, 1998). It is possible that, as cautioned by the literature (Pitts, 2012; Stakelum, 2008a; Small, 1998), teachers who fall outside the socio-cultural field or habitus of the NCC, or whose sense of identity is not aligned with others in the community, may be excluded from meaningful participation. In concluding this section on participation as a form of identity, these four forms of participation are now explored alongside various participants from this study to illustrate the levels of participation in the NCC ranging from full participation to full non-participation.

4.3.3.3 The Levels of Teacher Participation

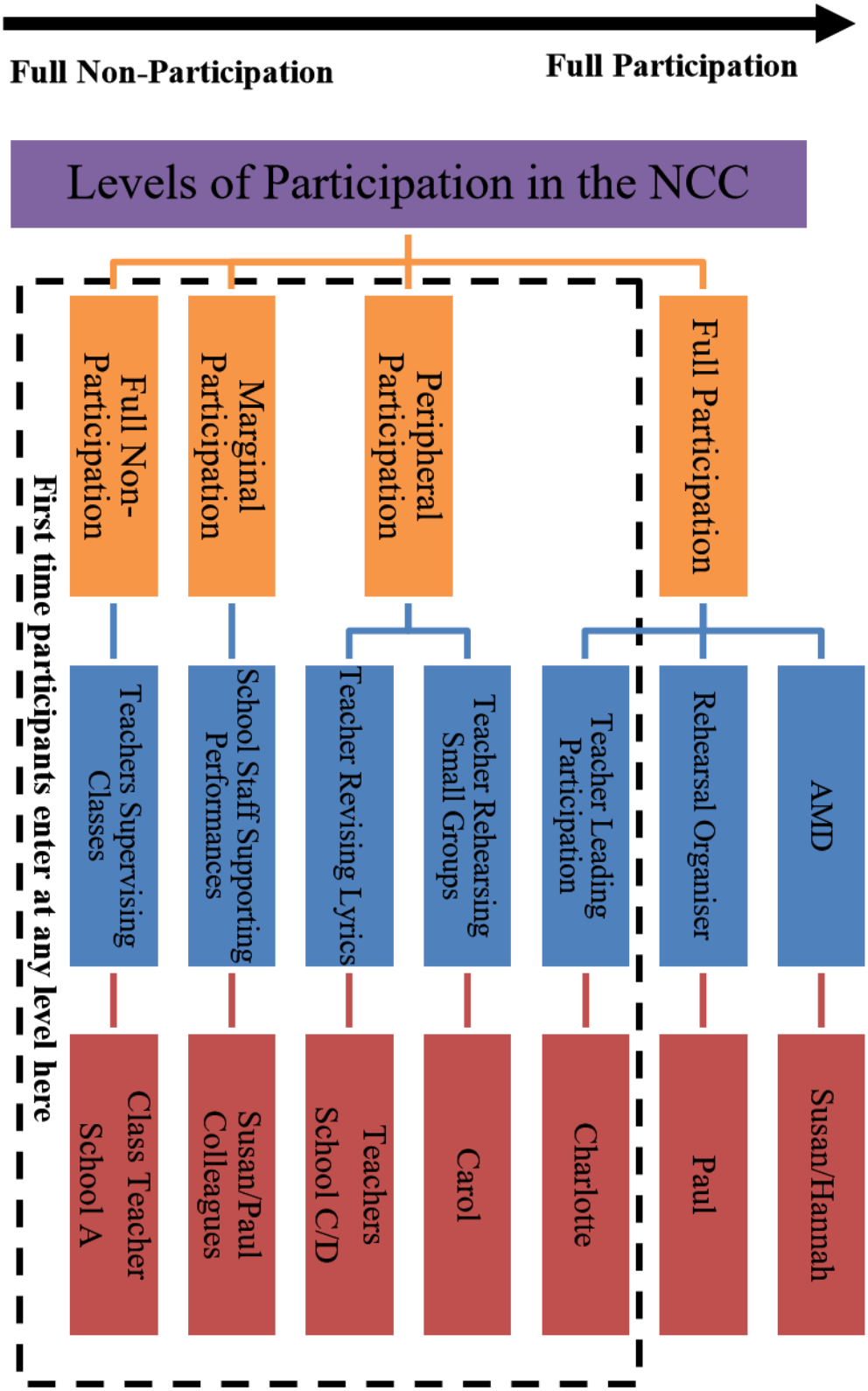


Figure 4.2: *The Levels of Participation in the NCC*

Echoing the beginning of this section, teachers participate at various levels in the NCC depending upon their roles and responsibilities in teaching and facilitating a school's involvement in the choir. In Figure 4.2, we can see the four forms of participation aligned with the various roles of participation at each level. Full participants who act as AMDs, regional rehearsal organisers or teachers teaching the repertoire within their schools are at the top of the diagram. Below, we see marginal participants like teachers in School B who get to "have their turn" (Principal, School B) and help to teach individual parts (Carol). Then we have marginal participants whose participation is non-musical in nature, however their sense of teacher and professional identity as NCC participants is evident. These include teachers who assist in the organisation of concerts or administration of the programme, as outlined by Paul and Susan earlier. Finally, there are the non-participating teachers who are outside of the practical operation of the NCC. They may supervise classes, aid colleagues in classroom management or be in a leadership role in the school whereby they have no direct involvement in the choir. These varying levels of participation will be considered in more detail in the next section which explores the power implications and resulting hierarchies.

In summary, this section considered the nature and significance of participation as a form of identity, whereby teachers' multiple identities are influenced, negotiated, and strengthened by participation. Teachers expressed the importance of their musical habitus on participation which evolved from their family backgrounds, school experiences and personal musical activities. Teachers within the choir explained the positive influence participation has had on their teacher and musical identity, as well as their personal and professional identities. Participants identified strongly as teachers rather than as musicians. Teachers also aligned with like-minded others in the NCC community who shared a collective sense of identity and belonging.

Following this, the multiple forms and trajectories of participation were considered, including the roles of all four forms of participation alongside the ad-hoc nature of progression for peripheral participants who wished to move towards full participation, as well as marginal participants who remain or desire to be excluded from participation. What emerges is an organisation that has multiple members with various roles and levels of involvement in the choir, however it is argued that the NCC has influenced their sense of identity regardless of the level of participation. Having considered the multi-levelled nature of participation, the next section will consider the movement and interactions between levels more closely, using the theoretical constructs of power and control and activity theory (AT) to critique the nature and significance of participation.

4.4 Teacher Participation as Power

In the main, teacher participation has been considered as a primarily homogenous construct of learning and identity, experienced equally by participants. However, interpretation of the data suggests a hierarchical dimension to participation whereby participants have different roles and responsibilities, and thus enjoy a corresponding status and level of power. As presented in Figure 4.2 above, there exists a metaphorical glass ceiling that requires a perceived experience level obtained through repeated participation to progress further. This is represented by the dotted line restricting new members from entering the organisation as a regional organiser or AMD, for example. Therefore, the levels of participation discussed in the previous section are not available to all participants and the movement between levels is ad-hoc.

This section will consider the roles, responsibilities, and hierarchies of participation, first by outlining the various roles of teachers and then by viewing the levels of participation as a hierarchical pyramid of participation on a school level and then on an organisational level. This hierarchy will then be discussed alongside the exploration of the NCC as an AS using Engeström's (1999, 2001) CHAT theory. The conceptualisation of the NCC using CHAT outlined in the conceptual framework will be discussed in detail, beginning with the interactions between subject, object and outcome, before considered the influences, tensions and contradictions that occur between the hierarchical division of labour, the community, the mediating artefacts, and the multi-dimensional nature of participation as the outcome. Finally, the significance of these interactions on the outcome of participation, particularly the narrow conceptualisation of teaching and learning and the limitations presented by identity and community within the NCC will be explored.

4.4.1 The Roles, Responsibilities and Hierarchies of Participation

Through the researcher's experience as a participant, and the data from the interviews, it is proposed that teachers who participate in the NCC have particular roles and levels of power depending on where they reside within the division of labour (Burnard & Younker, 2008). This is presented as a hierarchical pyramid of participation where "one [member] delegates duties from the upper to the lower levels of a hierarchical structure" (Saiti & Stefou, 2020). In the case of the NCC, the MDs communicate the content (repertoire), the tools (recordings and resources) and knowledge (practical tips and tricks) to the teachers on the lower levels. Considering the levels of participation as outlined earlier in Figure 4.2, full participants are supported within their schools by other members who assist them to teach the repertoire and facilitate participation in the choir. As discussed, the four levels of participation on a school level include: full participants who lead the teaching and participation of the choir, peripheral participants who support the programme working alongside full participants, marginal participants who facilitate participation but are not involved in the teaching of it, and non-participants who have little involvement in the choir

outside of operating within their schools. These levels of participation within a school are represented hierarchically as seen in Figure 4.3 below:

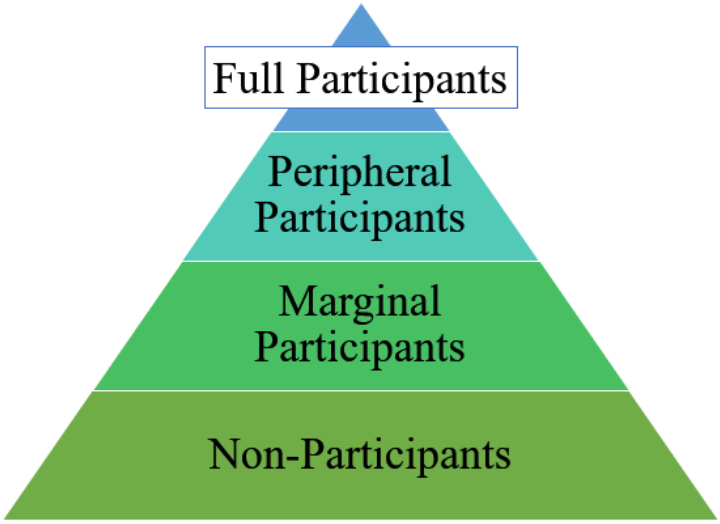


Figure 4.3: *The hierarchical pyramid of participating teachers at school level (Level 1)*

4.4.1.1 Participation on a School Level

As discussed earlier, the researcher understands that full participants lead the choir rehearsals, teach the repertoire, interact with the NCC committee, etc. They are often a small group of teachers within the wider school community (within this study one or two members per school). These full participants usually control participation in their school, delegating tasks to their colleagues. Interestingly, this was usually not the principal, unless they were also the choir conductor (such as Carol, School B, & School C principals in this study). Susan explains how she "expects that all… every teacher in my school will then have the goodwill and say: 'of course Susan you can have…course you can have this…'" In this way, Susan and other full participants have a status within their school and have a level of control over participants within their school, giving roles to lower levels of the hierarchical pyramid.

This is in contrast to traditional hierarchies within schools, whereby the principal as leader of the school may have a less prominent role within participation. However, as the literature argued earlier, their endorsement and support of participation through the facilitation of the NCC is an example of their influence and power on the school community (Bowe, 2016; Murray, 2022). As described under the theme of identity earlier, principals in the NCC have a variety of roles depending on their proximity to participation and the level of autonomy the afford to the full participant teachers. Full participants are supported by peripheral participants who assist in teaching small groups of the choir or work in their own classrooms on learning lyrics.

They are often on a trajectory to full participation, acting as a type of apprentice observing and modelling the work of the master full participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Finally, the largest group of teachers within a school is usually the marginal and non-participating teachers. The marginal participants are those who support the choir but are not on a trajectory towards full participation, for whatever reason, while non-participants are those teachers who wish to remain outsiders within the community and not actively participate. These groups have limited power and control over participation and are akin to passive participants in the NCC; aware of its operation but not activity engaged in the learning and community dimensions of participation. As Susan described earlier, the non-participating teachers may not be involved in the teaching or organising of the NCC, feeling that the full participants are experienced and in charge of participation. She stressed that she did not want to be disparaging to other teacher participants within the choir but acknowledged the different levels of involvement by colleagues. Her rationale that teachers are happy to "leave it to them" further supports findings from the literature discussed earlier relating to the difficulties of operating effective partnerships where teachers and arts organisations participate equally and do not simply outsource music teaching to, in this case, the full participants within their school (Fahy & Kenny, 2021; Kenny, 2010; Partington, 2018).

4.4.1.2 Participation on an Organisational Level

Having considered the hierarchical participation pyramid within schools, this discussion now considers all the levels of participation of the entire choir; Level 1 encompasses participation at a school level, Level 2 represents participation on a regional or local level, and Level 3 includes the senior members of the NCC and the national oversight remit of these members. These levels of participation can be seen below in Figure 4.4. Also, the corresponding responsibilities of each level are outlined in Table 4.1. There is currently no agreed description of NCC members' roles or responsibilities, and the data below is drawn from the author's participation in and observation of the NCC, as well as through the descriptions of participation from interviewees in this research. The roles below seem to have evolved organically, responding to the growth of the NCC over time and the need for more organisational structures.

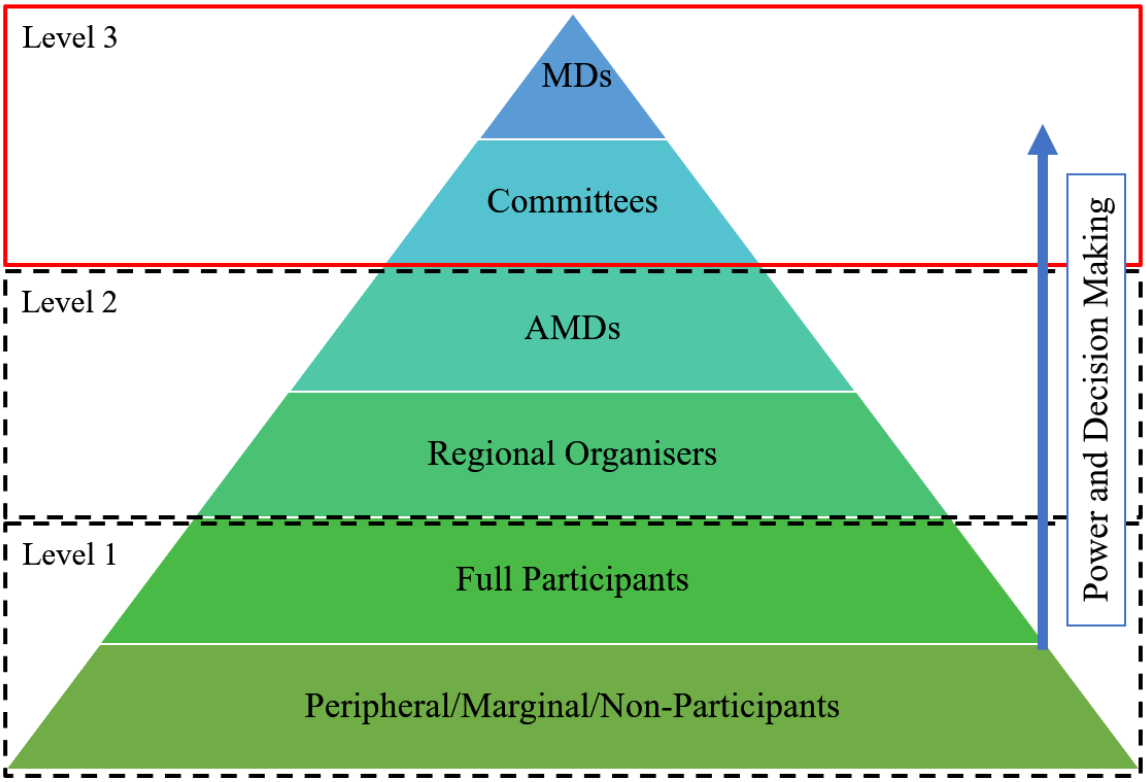


Figure 4.4: *The various levels of participation within the hierarchical pyramid of the NCC*

Level	Role	Indicative Responsibilities
3	Musical Directors (MD)	• Chooses and arranges the repertoire • Records the teaching records which defines the interpretation. • Selects and trains the AMDs. • Facilitates NCC Summer Course. • Conducts national performances and some regional performances. • Maintains and promotes the aims and vision of the NCC. • Informally visits schools and advises teachers.
	NCC Committees (Regional and National)	• Led by the National Organiser and Chairperson. • Supports the decisions of the Musical Directors. • Collates and communicates with schools and teachers. • Organises regional and national concerts. • Promotes the aims and vision of the NCC.
2	Assistant Musical Directors (AMD)	• Conducts regional rehearsals informed by the MD's interpretation • Informally visit schools and advise teachers.
	Rehearsal Organisers	• Organise cluster/regional rehearsals. • Support regional committees in the operation of the regional concerts. • Organise ticket sales and participant data. • Informally assist and recruit new members within their area. • Promote the aim and vision of the NCC within their area.

1	Full / Peripheral Participants	● Lead the teaching of the repertoire in their school. ● Communicate with the local/regional organisers. ● Observe the practices of a fully participating teacher/AMD/MD. ● Promotes the aim and vision of the NCC within their school. ● Informally mentor or support new members. ● Facilitate the aim and vision of the NCC within their school/classroom.
	Marginal/ Non-Participants	● Supervise classes during rehearsals (NCC and non-NCC classes) ● Facilitate the teaching of the programme by a fully participating teacher in their school/class level. ● Observe the practice of a fully participating teacher

Table 4.1: *The responsibilities of each participant level within the NCC*

Firstly, there are some general points worth considering about the structure of participation presented above. As was the case on a school level (Level 1), participants who hold the most power over the workings of the organisation are located at the top of the pyramid (Saiti & Stefou, 2020). Decisions flow downwards from the MDs and senior NCC committees, through the AMDs who work with schools and the regional and local organisers, finally flowing to schools and teachers on a local level. Secondly, as alluded to earlier, members usually enter the choir on the bottom two levels of the pyramid as either full participants or peripheral, marginal, or non-participants. The dotted lines suggest those glass ceilings that stifle progression up through levels for most members. Finally, there is no formal mechanism or procedure for regulating the movement of members, with progression occurring on an ad-hoc basis, usually sanctioned by the MDs interpretation of the needs of the choir.

Level 1 as it is described above is participation on a school level. Many of the choir's members remain at this level for the duration of their participation. In this research, Carol and all teachers in School C and D of the initial phase are on this level. Carol had taught the programme as a teacher and principal but never held the responsibilities of more senior levels. These teachers receive the repertoire from the MDs and through the learning and training discussed above, become more adept at teaching the programme efficiently and confidently. The benefits of repeated participation are clear at this level. For example, Charlotte explains how she now knows to begin early in September to have the repertoire taught in time while Paul recounts the lessons he has learned in organising rehearsals and staging the regional concert. Similarly, Hannah has picked up tips and tricks from the MDs to take with her into the next cycle, enabling her to act in the role of AMD using both her own musical experience and the experience of the NCC. Therefore, while there is learning and corresponding positive sense of one's identity at this level, there is also a lack of power and control.

Moving onto Level 2, four out of the six participants at the centre of this study are at this level (Mary has ceased participation in recent years). Long standing members such as Susan and

Mary explain how in their eyes the natural progression was to become a regional organiser, working to organise the rehearsals and local concerts and liaising with the national and regional committees on logistical matters. Progression is accompanied by an increase in responsibility and autonomy for regional organisers and committee members on a local level. However, the operation of rehearsals and concerts is still very much within the inherited framework, as established by the choir's founder and refined since. The modus operandi is set by the MDs and National NCC Committee, and the founding principles and procedures have changed little over the programme's lifespan (Carol). Therefore, these Level 2 participants enjoy autonomy related to the practical aspects of participation, entrusted with more power and responsibility by the upper level to organise regional rehearsals, guide new members and pass on the vision and values of the NCC through their work within the wider community. However, the responsibility for musical and artistic matters remains with the most senior level of the choir's hierarchy.

Progression beyond Level 2 is rare, represented by the red box in Figure 4.4. The MDs have been in place since 2007 and were selected by Creamer, having all been known to him and worked alongside him in various projects within and outside the NCC. The committees contain many retired members who have previously taught the programme, but also contain a small number of newer members (Hannah in this study is part of a regional committee). The regional committees are tasked primarily with arranging the cluster schools into groups for practices and organising these regional rehearsals and concerts. These members have considerable autonomy to decide the logistical arrangements of rehearsals and concerts, however always overseen by the MDs and the National Committee. While some members do progress to this highest level, as the committee members and the MDs themselves have done, the criteria for progression is ambiguous. One unifying trait is that all members at Level 3 possess a desire to preserve the vision set out by Creamer and align with the aims of the NCC as outlined earlier. They are also experienced participants of the NCC who have inherited the approach to teaching and learning and embodied the identity as confident and competent members as discussed above. It is therefore reasonable to assume that progression through the hierarchical levels is in some ways linked to members' identification and alignment with the NCC's ethos, vision, and practices, maintaining the current nature of participation as a form of learning, identity, and power.

In conclusion, these multiple levels of participation present an organisation where participation is not equal. As was argued in the literature review, the NCC does not align with the conceptualisation of a CoP (Wenger, 1998). While concepts such as practice, participation, and identity, alongside characteristics of shared repertoire and the mutual engagement of a community are evident in parts of the NCC, the different roles and hierarchies of participation and the corresponding power and control implications are challenging to reconcile with Wenger's description of a CoP. Instead, the conceptual framework outlined earlier presents Engeström's (1999, 2001) Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a structure to explore the

relationship between the NCC's constituent parts, and how the hierarchical pyramid of participation (or hierarchical division of labour as it will be referred to) impacts the negotiation of tensions and contradictions within the system. The next section will outline the NCC as an activity system (AS), considering the interactions and disturbances within the organisation, followed by the interpretation of power as a mediating construct within the NCC.

4.4.2 The NCC as an Activity System

As outlined earlier in Chapters 2 and 3, conceptualisation of the NCC as a CoP, using Engeström's 2001 revision of CHAT provides a useful framework to understand the interactions between various constituent parts within the organisation. Engeström tells us that AT is used to study collective, artefact mediated AS that encompass contradictions and tensions within the system. Crucially, these disturbances present the possibility of transformational change in how the AS operates, allowing participants to "question and deviate from its established norms" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). These contradictions can emerge through the influences of cultural and historical artefacts, such as the founding principles and vision of the NCC, or from the "division of labour in an activity [which] creates different positions for the participants, as the participants carry their own diverse histories" (Engeström, 2001, p. 136). The outcome of these disturbances can manifest as a form of power and control within the AS, maintained by a hierarchical organisation structured, or as a form of transformation, reimagining the teaching and learning approach and identity negotiation that stems from participation. Therefore, to critique and interpret the interactions, contradictions, and artefacts within the NCC, we begin by considering the fundamental interactions within an AS: subject – object – outcome.

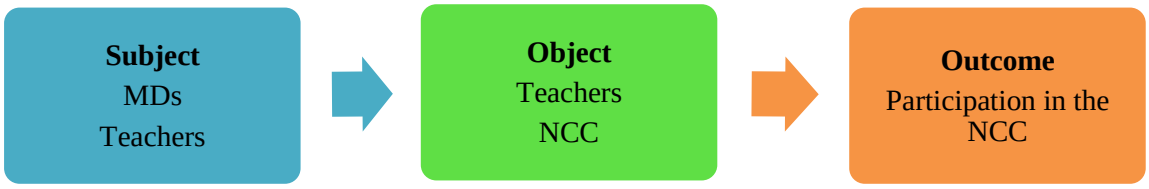


Figure 4.5: *Subject - Object - Outcome Interactions*

As shown in Figure 4.5 above, the subjects within the NCC AS are the MDs (alongside other senior NCC figures) who interact with the teachers. However, in a similar way the teachers can be framed as subjects interacting with the NCC as an organisation. This implies that the outcome from the AS is teacher participation when one considers the interactions between MDs, other NCC members and teachers. The aim of teachers' interactions is to teach the programme and to participate confidently and competently in the NCC. However, this research argues that the outcome of teacher participation in the NCC is multi-dimensional in nature, with participation manifesting as a form of teaching and learning, identity, power, capital, and transformation. Once

again, the subjects hold more power and control over the interactions within the system, particularly where one considers the responsibility held by the MDs as subjects. In this way the influences are primarily one directional, from MDs to teachers lower down on the pyramid of participation. These interactions must then be negotiated through the lens of the mediating artefacts which will now be considered.

4.4.2.1 The Mediating Artefacts and Tools

The term *mediating artefact* first emerged from early Vygotskian AT in which interactions and learning between objects and subjects were mediated by concrete and conceptual practices (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Engeström, 2001; Welch, 2011). Within the NCC, these artefacts encompass the theoretical concepts considered in Chapter 2, such as teacher's lifeworld, habitus, capital, identity, in addition to the rules governing one's position within the field and power within the community (Bourdieu, 1986; Jensen, 2014; Van Manen, 2016; Wenger, 1998). Coupled with these conceptual constructs, the activity's tangible resources such as the repertoire and resources also impact the nature of the subject-object interaction and the resulting outcome from participation.

As has been argued earlier, one of the reasons for teachers' sustained participation in the NCC is the importance of their past experiences and their musical habitus. Susan describes how she currently teaches how the nuns in her secondary school taught her, while Hannah's participation is based on her desire to recreate her experience of learning and participating in the NCC. Therefore, teachers' previous learning and identity, in addition to the approach to music education that they value or have experienced, will mediate the nature of participation. For example, if teachers have extensive experience singing in a choir and they are comfortable with a chosen approach to music education, this will be brought into their participation in programmes such as the NCC (Stakelum, 2008b).

Another mediating artefact is the possession and valuing of particular social or cultural capital by the teachers. As will be discussed shortly, the capital that stems from participation, in addition to the capital that teachers already possess, influences the outcome of participation from the AS. This is especially significant if the capital is valued and respected within the wider cultural field of the NCC and society in general (for example WAM). Throughout the interviews, participants identified various mediating artefacts including the repertoire, the prestige and tradition of choral singing and the NCC, and the "elite" nature of participation (Hannah). There is a value placed on the "experience" and "opportunity" afforded to children who take part, with many participants expressing that the NCC offered something that they would not be able to access in the traditional classroom (Paul; Charlotte). According to Jensen (2021), the link between capital acquisition within AT and the structural inequalities within activity systems is clear. Early indications in the data suggest similar inequalities regarding the NCC, and the impact of

theoretical artefacts such as habitus and capital on participation present a contradiction when viewed alongside the perceived inclusive nature of the choir. In this way, the power implications of the mediating artefacts may affect other parts of the activity system, such as the community or division of labour. Participants' perception that the NCC is accessible to all schools and teachers does not account for the limitations that these conceptual constructs may have on participation.

In addition to the theoretical mediating artefacts outlined above, there are also concrete or observable tools that the NCC, MDs and teachers engage with. The repertoire is an obvious example of a mediating artefact, alongside the CDs, rehearsals, and summer course. These all ensure control over the content of the choir and power over participation, which influences the nature of teachers' experiences and outcome from the activity. The reification (Wenger, 1998) of artefacts within the cultural and historical fabric of the organisation, such as the carefully constructed content of the repertoire, the recordings defining the exact interpretation of the repertoire and the organisation of the choir and the staging of the concerts, all objectify the phenomenon of participation in the NCC. Therefore, as Vygotsky conceptualised in his triangular diagram of mediated action (Bakhurst, 2009; Engeström, 1999, 2001), the mediating artefacts and tools will now be included in the emerging AS model presented in Figure 4.6 below:

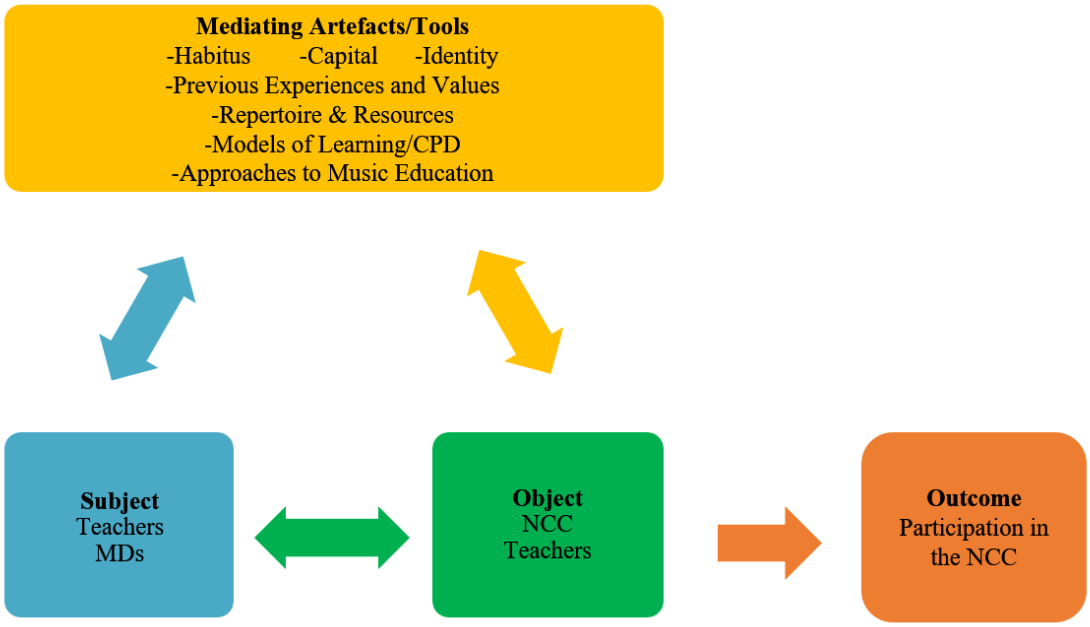


Figure 4.6: *The interactions between object and subject influenced by the mediating artefacts*

4.4.2.2 Labour, Community, and Rules

The final consideration before the NCC is critiqued as a complete AS, examines the nature and significance of *Division of Labour, Community,* and *Rules* on the interactions and outcomes of participation. As discussed in Chapter 2, the term division of labour refers to the people who are involved in the activity alongside the subject. Figure 2.3, discussed previously, represents the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the division of labour as outlined by Burnard and Younker (2008). As was argued above, the hierarchical nature of individuals' roles and responsibilities within the choir imply that the division of labour exists along this two-dimensional plane.

The horizontal axis consists of members working within the same role, whether that is conductor, supervising teacher, committee member, marginal participant, etc. Recalling the duties of each participant level (Table 4.1), members work together in a collaborative fashion "rooting for the same thing as you are" (Susan). Participants' individual roles are all focused on the outcome of the activity, in this case participation. However, for every participant or subject that takes part in the NCC, there are other members who are positioned with greater status and levels of power along a vertical axis of the division of labour. It is argued that these more powerful members may have a greater impact on the nature of the outcome. For example, long standing participants such as Mary and Susan who are (or have been) involved at regional and National Committee level lead participation in their schools and communities, delegating the operation of the choir on various logistical, organisational and musical levels. Therefore, they possess greater autonomy and decision-making power, when compared with other Full Participants who discharge the same duties as Mary and Susan but have not developed the moniker of "face of the NCC" (Susan) within the organisation.

The theoretical significance being that this study builds on Burnard and Younker's (2008) conceptualisation of the vertical and horizontal division of labour. In doing so, different levels of participation are organised hierarchically according to their role and responsibility within the choir, and corresponding status and power as shown in Figure 4.7 below:

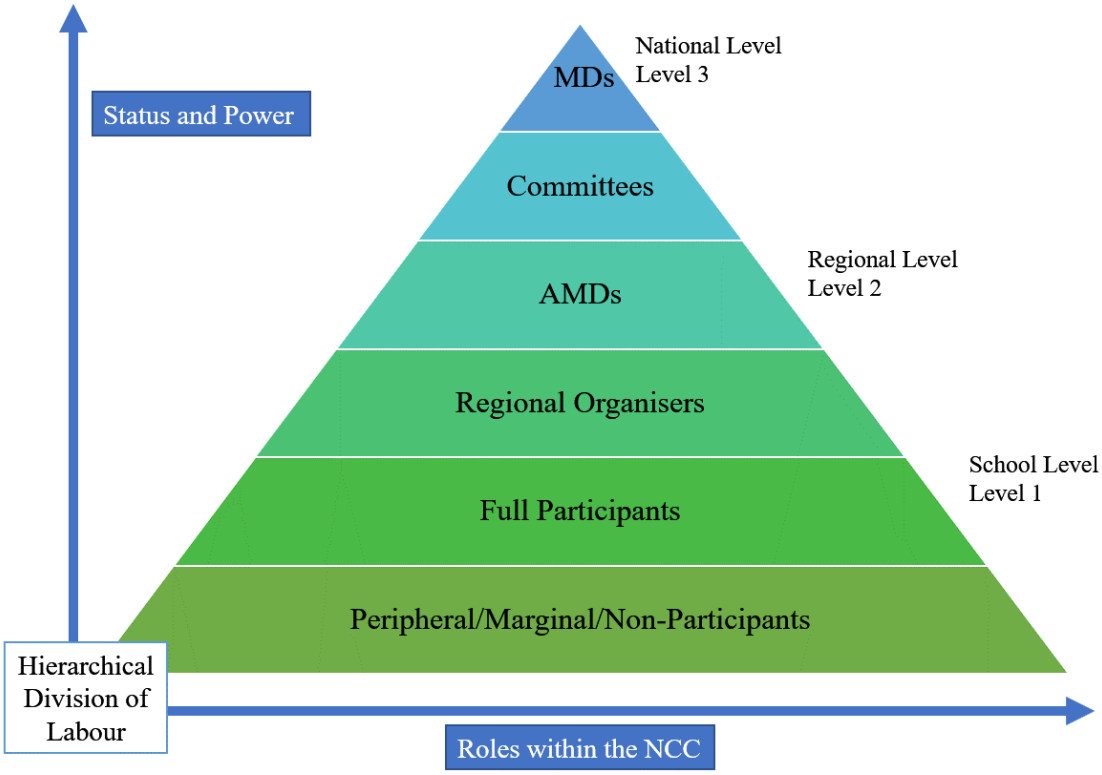


Figure 4.7: *The Hierarchical Division of Labour*

It is argued that participation in an AS, and in this case the NCC, is not homogenous or devoid of power dimensions, and this therefore creates disturbances with other parts of the activity such as the community and mediating artefacts, because teacher participation is accessible but may not be inclusive or equal.

Paul's description of a regional rehearsal, considered earlier as a transmissive form of learning, further illustrates the power dynamics mediating participation alongside the division of labour. In his example, teachers at a regional rehearsal observe the MDs teaching the choir and immediately gather to discuss and rectify any mistakes in their teaching of the repertoire. The power and control that the MDs and others have near the top of this hierarchical division of labour is noteworthy and removes any potential musical autonomy from teachers. In contrast with contemporary discourse, participants felt that this structure was necessary for the uniformity and scaffolding offered by the supporting structures of the NCC, and teachers enjoyed the prescriptive nature of participation with teachers citing the "ready-made" repertoire (Charlotte) and "format and structure" of the choir (Carol) as a positive rationale for participation.

In short, the power dynamics of the hierarchical division of labour endorses Lave and Wenger's work on legitimate peripheral participation whereby members of a community of learning struggle between the transformative possibilities of newcomers, and the "replacement of old-timers" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 57). The data suggests that participants identify with the latter scenario in this case, with members on Level 1 and 2 of the participation pyramid above

reproducing and replicating what members higher up the vertical axis of the division of labour have decided, rather than disrupting them with new ideas or practices. While their role in the operation of the choir is crucial, their transformational impact on the activity is limited by their status and power, maintained by the hierarchical organisational structures of the choir. The implication here is not to negatively judge these structures or divisions, but to acknowledge the inevitable manifestation of power through participation as an outcome of the "pedagogical machine" (Foucault, 1991; Peters, 2001). This is an important justification for moving beyond the CoP framework as it doesn't capture these disturbances within the NCC system. Therefore, the study finds that a contradiction exists between the various roles and responsibilities of members and the perceived inclusive nature of the NCC as a community and organisation, as reported by Charlotte, Hannah, and others and as promoted by the organisation itself.

Regarding community, participants use the word repeatedly to describe the workings of the choir. Burnard and Younker (2008) write that community is strongest when subjects are focused on creating the same outcome. On a surface level, this is clearly the case with the NCC, as participants worked towards participation. Paul rationalised his participation as he valued the clear "goal", "focus" and "objective" stemming from his school's involvement. Similarly, Susan explains how participation is about "meeting like-minded people who are all enthusiastic, as well as yourself, about the choir". Therefore, the focus of the activity is strengthened and made clearer due to this shared vision of the outcome with others in the community (Wenger, 1998). As was alluded to earlier, participants' sense of identity, as teachers, musicians, and professionals within the NCC, is reinforced alongside others comfortable in the habitus of participation. These "layers of experience" continue to build up over repeated participation and help to build confidence and competence among members (Wenger, 1998). From the data, the community of NCC members are united in their purpose and therefore are unaware of the power constraints on participation. Therefore, the arguably homogenous make up of teachers in the NCC and other organisations can result in members being not only comfortable in the habitus of participation but confined within the field of the NCC. The significance of these tensions will be discussed shortly.

The final element of the CHAT model considered here are what Engeström refers to as rules. The NCC does not articulate any rules or restrictions on participation, besides limiting participation to children in 4th-6th class only. However, as is clear by now there are many constraints on the NCC repertoire, teaching approaches and rehearsal structures, some which have their origins in the first iteration in 1985. As previously mentioned, some participants valued the top-down approach, feeling that the programme offered a pre-packaged musical experience that was more impressive than what teachers themselves could provide. The structures and rules of participation made it attractive, encouraging repeated participation as participants' expectations are raised through increased confidence and competence. There are also curricular constraints on the content that is taught within schools, however as we have discussed previously, there is

limited alignment between the curricular content objectives and the aim of the NCC, despite the positive views among participants of the NCC as a temporary curriculum replacement. This contradiction has been considered in detail under the theme of teaching and learning, but is also noted here as an obvious disturbance within the AS. Finally, reflecting on the description of participating schools in Appendix C, there may be particular school types that feel excluded from participation due to their size, location, etc. In short, not all the rules or procedures of the NCC are explicit, but they are internalised through repeated participation, presenting a problem for newer members in the activity who may not understand the rules or question their existence.

Wider than the procedural rules of participation, are the cultural and historical constraints on the activity. As seen in the previous chapter, the choir is drawn from "one man's vision" (Mary) and has "stuck very much to its original principles" (Carol). Noteworthy, these principles are not articulated in any formal way, but it is assumed that through participation one becomes attuned to the expectations of the organisation and, consequently, the rules of the field. As Mary explains when asked of the difficulties of other schools who wish to participate, she responded that "some schools just don't get what the NCC was about". This notion of the implicit "rules of the game" (Wright, 2015a) can mean that cultural, historical, and conceptual constraints on the organisation results in schools feeling that the NCC isn't suitable for them, or vice versa. Like the limitations of community and the division of labour, this can reduce any potential disruptors of practice that Engeström feels are necessary for "innovation" and "transformations in learning" (1999, p. 135). It is important to note that participants in this study did not advocate for changes in the organisational structures or rules, instead noting the largely homogenous nature of participation which they were happy to align with.

As a result, while the mediating artefacts, community, and rules of the NCC were viewed as broadly positive by respondents, the interpretation here has noted the potential problematic nature of constituent's interactions which could limit transformational learning and change within the AS. Therefore, the final section considers the contradictions and tensions that emerge from these interactions and their significance on participation as the outcome.

4.4.2.3 Tensions and Contradictions within the NCC Activity System

Engeström (2001) notes two places where contradictions often occur in an AS: between the mediating artefacts and the object, and the division of labour and object. This is also the case here in this study, with the addition of further contradictions emerging between the community and the hierarchical division of labour, and the historical and cultural context which manifest through the rules and mediating artefacts of the NCC. These contradictions, denoted as lightning shaped arrows as used in Engeström (1999, p. 31), can be seen in a revised diagram of the NCC as an AS in Figure 4.8 below.

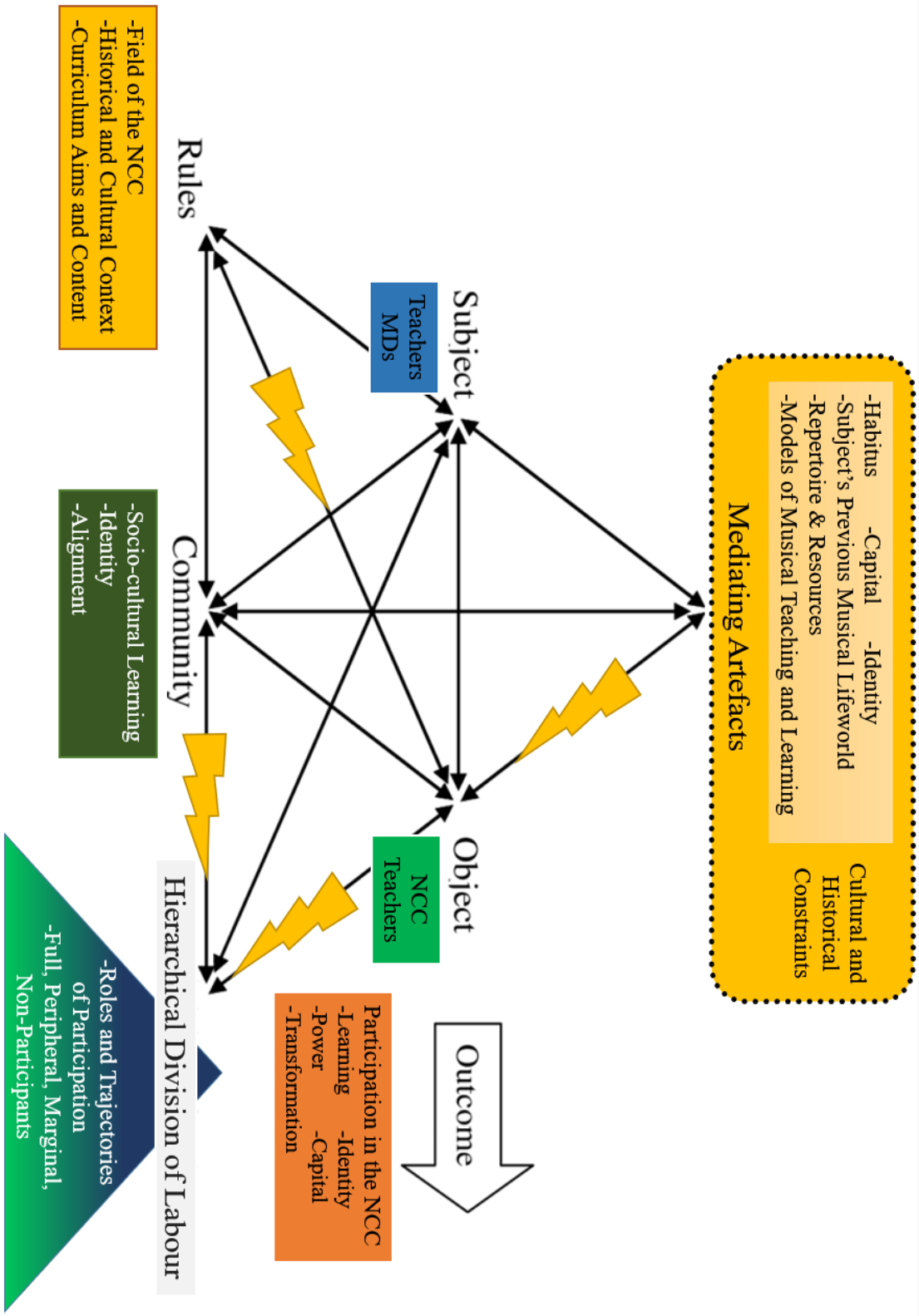


Figure 4.8: *The NCC as an activity system including contradictions*

These contradictions could impede the evolution of the dominant cultural and historical practices and values within the system, through the exclusion of dissenting voices and opinions, thus maintaining the status quo and hegemonic structures which influences the objects and outcomes of the system (Henley, 2015; Welch, 2011). Furthermore, they limit the transformational possibilities of teacher participation in various areas such as teaching and learning, identity, and capital. These contradictions will now be discussed.

Firstly, considering the interactions between the mediating artefacts and the object, the presence of historical and cultural constraints on the artefacts, with limited new theoretical or concrete artefacts being added over the organisation's lifespan, leads to what Avis terms "conservative praxis" (2007, p. 175). The habitus and capital that is valued and dominant within the NCC is mediated through the historical, political, and cultural context of the choir (the yellow box in Figure 4.8). Also, the previous musical lifeworld of participants and their school and family context, which have influenced their identity, are also represented within the activity's mediating artefacts. The dominant capital that is represented by the repertoire will be discussed in detail in the next section, however the prevalence of WAM music and "choral masterpieces" (MD2) is potentially stifling evolution in this regard. Also, the didactic nature of participation, with the objects in the activity operating as "instrument[s] of the conductor's musicianship" (Dolloff, 2013, p.11), ensures power is maintained by the one-way interactions between the subject – object – outcome (as illustrated in Figure 4.5 earlier). It is argued that this is problematic whereby new members' tensions or disturbances may not meaningfully affect the object and/or outcome of the activity system due to the stagnant nature of the mediating artefacts. In short, change within the AS is difficult and disruptive (i.e., innovative) members can remain non-participants or marginal participants, feeling restricted by the rules and mediating artefacts of participation in the field of the NCC. The evidence suggests that the highly structured nature of participation as described earlier, allows little teacher autonomy or transformational learning to take place, despite the data's endorsement of the positive learning and identity benefits of teacher participation.

Building on this, the hierarchical division of labour influences the power and control that objects of the AS have over the outcome. The discussion relating to levels and trajectories of participation earlier has identified the various member's roles within the NCC. However, the tension arises whereby these roles are organised hierarchically aligned with member's responsibilities, and corresponding power and status within the NCC. In this hierarchical division of labour, members are restricted to responsibilities on their level on the participation pyramid (Figure 4.4), either by choice, systemic factors, or both. As Wenger explains, learning shared in this way is "through a version of the same process" (1998, p. 102), handed down by masters of participation whereby newcomers, struggling with the steep learning curve of participation, are moulded into confident and competent replicators of practice. The concentration of power and

control by a minority of people is often the case in organisational structures (Ball, 2018; Foucault, 1991; Saiti & Stefou, 2020). Still, the influence of power as a construct of participation is a useful point for reflection in any future reimaging of the NCC's organisational structures. It is important to note that participants felt that the structures within the division of labour enabled the efficient operation and longevity of the choir. However, by encouraging greater autonomy and collaboration within and among members of the division of labour, new or existing participants may be encouraged to deviate from accepted norms and practices, transforming the mediating constituents of the AS.

Finally, members in this hierarchical division of labour can limit the power of the community to influence the system, creating further tensions between the community, division of labour and subsequently the object and outcome of participation. As the literature argues, communities have been "romanticised" in their power to change practices, leading to a constant struggle between preserving existing knowledge and practices while being open to new innovative ones (Avis, 2007; Levine, 2010). In the case of this research, the community of the NCC is reinforced by members with similar social and cultural values and experience. Furthermore, the community may be "blind and disempowering" for those who have an alternative view of choral practice or musical experience (Wenger, 1998, p. 181). This problematic view of community within music education is well established in the literature (Dolloff, 2013; Edwards, 2005; Kenny, 2010; Partington, 2018) and the data indicates that there is no formal communication channel where contradictions and alternative trajectories can be addressed, nor was there a desire for such a vehicle. Importantly, this may not be a deliberate omission on the part of the NCC or a criticism of the organisation, however it demonstrates how an AS that is very robust and well supported by members, can be limited by design. The challenge therefore is to reconcile the operational efficiencies of the division of labour and rules of the system with the requirement of CHAT to embrace potentially transformative disruptions and encourage subsequent innovation and evolution of practices within the AS.

In summary, the tensions identified above through the analysis of the data suggest a need to consider if these disturbances provide an opportunity to evolve and transform practices and participation within the NCC, or if they maintain the status quo and exclude diverse views and models of musical experience. These tensions provide a basis to critique participation in the NCC and consider the possibility of reimagining the interactions and outcomes of the AS, embracing more contemporary music education principles. Participants' endorsement of mediating artefacts constrained by the choir's cultural and historical rules and procedures, the levels and hierarchies of participation, and the limited influence of community on the outcome of participation could be argued as inevitable and unproblematic. However, the researcher suggests that the nature and significance of power within the NCC emerges in the homogenous, hegemonic interactions between subject, object and outcome.

4.4.2.4 The Significance of Power within the NCC

The significance of participation as a form of power is three-fold. Firstly, the ad-hoc nature of recruitment, support and progression evidenced through participation could encourage the maintenance of a like-minded, homogenous membership who share specific musical values and experiences, and therefore may lead to the alienation of members on lower levels. Many of the participants spoke about how lucky they are to participate and have the support of the community (Paul), their school colleagues (Susan), or the NCC themselves (Hannah). Susan explains how, in her view, new members need to "put [their] toe in the water…experience it and take the fear out of it". While the use of the word fear may simply be colloquial, it also reinforces the steep learning curve that participants must face in their early years of participation. Thus, the data suggests the perceived high expectations of the NCC, by those who decide and design the programme, could exclude new members who feel ill-equipped to participate, despite perhaps bringing fresh viewpoints to the organisation. Furthermore, the static nature of the rules and mediating artefacts discussed above mean that little change is on the horizon, due to the all-encompassing, time consuming nature of participation. Also, participants' possession of greater power over the outcomes of participation is further limited by the pace of learning and the challenge of the programme which restricts progression within the hierarchy. New teachers grappling with the realities of teaching the programme may have little time to consider alternative trajectories or progress to roles of responsibility.

Furthermore, teachers as the leaders of participation in their schools embody a sense of motivation and responsibility for participation that may emerge from within themselves or may stem from elsewhere, for example the principal. The power of the principal as a participant is outlined by the principal of School B: "This is what [our school is] doing for the year. This is what we want to do for the NCC. My role is appointing teachers that are going to be able to deliver the program. Or work with a teacher who will deliver it". Therefore, teachers may be employed or placed in a class level to lead participation in the NCC, supporting the musical vision and values of the principal. While teachers consulted in Phase 3 are all motivated, enthusiastic participants within the choir, there was evidence in Phase 2 schools whereby teachers "fall in line" with their colleagues in agreeing to participation.

The findings suggest that encouraging teachers to be agentic is difficult, limited by the lack of progression along the hierarchies of the system, the challenge of participation and the sense of responsibility borne by teachers who must lead participation in their school. This can lead to teacher learning and a musical experience and education that is traditional and didactic, which participants know from experience will produce the product or outcome that they desire (Green, 2008; Kennedy, 2005; Tarc, 2012).

In short, the preoccupation with participation at a school level (Level 1) means there are limited opportunities to explore tensions and contradictions that arise on a more national level within the AS. If participants spend much of their early years grappling with the practicalities of participation, while maintaining the perceived high standards as articulated by those in power and in the community, there is little space for reflection or critique. Participants reported a sense of deep satisfaction and pride near the end of an NCC cycle, when the children performed the pieces, remembered the lyrics, etc., suggesting a communal sense of success and achievement among the community. This further reinforces participation in a type of feedback loop. These teachers who have enjoyed a positive experience in the NCC, may have little desire for transformation, despite being aware of the limitations and tensions within the structures, and the incompatibility between the types of musical experience offered by participation in the NCC and those recommended by some contemporary music education research.

This section has considered teacher participation as a form of power that underpins the interactions of the AS. Organisations often contain implicit rules and hierarchical structures which govern their operation and participation in them (Ball, 2008), and in the case of this study, these have been outlined through the conceptualisation of the multiple levels of teacher participation in the NCC. What emerges is a hierarchical pyramid of participation, whereby teachers on a school level are differentiated by their various roles and responsibility, and more broadly, the NCC as an organisation operates with decisions delegated from senior members (MDs and committees) to teachers on lower levels. While this structure exists across many disciplines, it precludes opportunities for reflexive and transformation practice within contemporary educational systems and organisations (Liu, 2020).

Further exploring the model of participation as a form of power, the NCC was critiqued as an AS and contradictions emerged between the power held by the hierarchical division of labour alongside a community of like-minded members. In addition, the historical and cultural constraints placed on the mediating artefacts and rules that underpin participation are difficult to reconcile with the inclusive, child-centred approaches to music education advocated by some in Chapter 2. Finally, the significance of power as maintained through the steep learning curve of participation and the absence of a systematic induction for new members, leaves teachers working on a school level in a replicative, product focused musical endeavour which, while valued and lauded by many in this study, arguably lacks sufficient space for reflection and innovation within the 21st century primary school context. The next section of this chapter is closely linked to the power of participation, and considers the resulting capital that is exchanged, preserved, and valued by teacher participants and the NCC as an organisation.

4.5 Teacher Participation as Capital

Building on the previous section relating to participation as a form of power, the concept of capital as theorised by Bourdieu and others in the theoretical and conceptual frameworks also emerges as a significant outcome of teacher participation. In this section, the social and cultural capital that stems from participation will be discussed, with a particular focus on the repertoire as a form of cultural capital. Following this, the possible positive and negative consequences of enculturation through participation will be considered to explore the significance of teachers' musical field, habitus, and capital on the nature of participation.

4.5.1 Social and Cultural Capital: The Advantages of Participation

As has been discussed under the themes of identity and power above, participation in the NCC enables teachers to embody social capital through their collaboration with other like-minded members within the community, which has a meaningful impact on their professional and personal lives, while also offering possible social advantages as a result of participation. The possibility for teacher participation in music education to provide positive social outcomes such as social mobility and career progression has been evidenced in the literature (Kingsbury, 1988; Nettl, 1995; Perkins, 2013b). The school leaders consulted in this study, including principals (Carol; Paul; Principals, School B & C) and other members of in-school management teams (Charlotte; Susan) alluded to the link between participation and coordination of programmes such as the NCC and their careers. While it was not possible from the interviews here to determine a direct link between participation and the accumulation of social capital, it is likely that the prestige that some participants associate with the NCC and the benefits of repeated participation manifests as a form of social capital that benefits members in their personal and private lives. Also, the accumulation of social capital by some within an organisation or community could perhaps exclude others who do not identify with the capital or values of the NCC, as will become clearer through the exploration of cultural capital as an advantage of participation.

Considering the NCC as an organisation more broadly, MD1 reported that she was concerned that the programme could be viewed as "a middle-class initiative", while a teacher in the initial data collection phase said that "it does seem to appeal to a kind of middle-class school" (Class Teacher, School B). As considered in the analysis of NCC participants (Appendix C), the data relating to school representation did not link socio-economic status with participation, with a similar percentage of DEIS schools participating in the NCC when compared with the national statistics. However, there was a slight over representation of schools from urban areas, those with a Catholic ethos and all-female schools. This may suggest a particular social capital that is more valued by some types of schools. Conversely, it could be argued that a school's participation in the choir could help to challenge the stereotypical ideologies of disadvantaged areas, mobilising

that school into a more elitist (Hannah) social group through the exchanging of capital among fellow NCC schools.

Considering the cultural capital that stems from participation, the study reconsiders Bourdieu's three different subtypes of cultural capital; embodied, institutional and objective (1986, p. 17). These three types of capital are all evident as advantages of participation emerging from the interviews. Regarding the embodied capital, or changes in dispositions or mindset stemming from participation, the NCC CM explained above how participating in the choir as a child and as a teacher has impacted them positively, with their continued participation a result of the experience and knowledge (i.e., capital) they consolidated from taking part. Similarly, Hannah and Charlotte outlined earlier how music has impacted on their own personal, professional, and teaching identities, and that the capital they received at home and through their earlier musical experiences was instrumental in their decision to become teachers and facilitate the NCC in their schools.

Following this, the institutional capital from involvement in the NCC was also evident in the data. Participants including Hannah, MD1 and Mary differentiated the NCC from other musical programmes and activities, arguing that the NCC was "operating on a different level" (MD1) with "no comparison" (Mary) to other organisations. In this way, teachers valued the institutional capital of the organisation, and the resulting social capital from involvement in it. Like the mediating artefacts considered above, this capital is evident through the repertoire, the structures and supports of the choir, and the cultural and historical practices of the choir. Separate to other participants, Hannah refers to the prestigious and elite nature of the organisation, comparing the NCC with other musical and singing initiatives she is aware of. She valued being part of an institution that in her eyes embodied these attributes:

> NCC is more elite. And I think it's great that it's that, because it gives the chance for the people who are dedicated and want their classes to really thrive, to do that in an environment where you know… People aren't taking [sic] a joke about it? Like it's taken serious[ly]...I think that's what's special about NCC. And again, why is NCC different to somewhere [sic] else? Because you're taking it on, you're wanting your children and your school to be part of it. Because it's a bit more elite. It's a bit more prestigious. It's not your run of the mill school choir. And that's what makes it so special.

Therefore, the data suggests diverging opinions from teachers who on the one hand valued the prestigious and exclusive nature of participation, while also wanting it to be more representative and larger in scale. In short, the embodied and institutional capital that emerges from participation is valued by teachers, but could be problematic if, as some suggest, it alienates other potential participants who do not possess or identity with the cultural capital that the NCC values. As Grenfell (2012) argues, the gains possible from cultural capital can be very influential in future careers, with many members' existing capital playing a key role in their lives as teachers. However, the existence of O'Toole's "better cultural capitals" (2013, p. 36) can lead to an unequal distribution of capital (the insiders and outsiders) which limits the possible capital

advantages from participation to a narrow cohort of teachers. In this way, it may not be enough for teachers to possess cultural capital, it must also be the desired type of capital, with schools and education systems historically valuing more traditional, civilising values and practices (McCarthy, 2010; Stakelum, 2008b; T. Walsh, 2016). This leads to the consideration of arguably the most distinct type of cultural capital that members exchange and preserve as part of participation in the NCC: the choir's repertoire.

4.5.2 The Repertoire as Capital

Participants cited the repertoire as one of the main reasons for their initial and continued participation in the NCC. The data suggests three important points to consider regarding the NCC repertoire. Firstly, the rationale for the repertoire and how it is chosen is reflected on, implying an attempt to balance the various genres and resulting types of capital exchanged through the programme. Secondly, the repertoire's reliance on WAM and the choral aesthetic is a defining characteristic of the NCC (as discussed in the analysis of the choir in Appendix C). The capital embodied by the genres of choir's repertoire is relatively unique when one considers the difficulty of the music, and this capital influences the nature of participation. Finally, the significance of the repertoire as a form of capital that is transferred to teachers and children through participation and the perceived benefits of acquiring this capital vis-a-vis the appealability of the repertoire is considered.

4.5.2.1 Rationale for the Repertoire

The MDs as curators of the repertoire revealed how achieving a balance between "really rich choral masterpieces" and "songs that are specifically going to appeal to the children" was to the forefront of their minds when they were choosing the repertoire. The following extract from MD3 gives an insight into how the repertoire is compiled:

> It's quite an interesting process. I suppose our key aims in choosing the repertoire would be that we would be a nice balance of Amhráin i nGaeilge. And the three of us are very fortunate that we are very much on the same page. That our own Irish national language is of paramount importance and needs to be treasured and cherished, so we always ensure that we have…modern versions of our songs so that [the children are] also learning the traditional Irish songs, but that we also have some songs that are just coming out i nGaeilge [in Irish]. But it's very important to balance… that's one of the things that we look for is balance. We look for songs that are specifically going to appeal to children, that we know are going to be hooks for the children. And then… I say that this song is like spinach...You may not like it initially but it's good for you. We always put those 'spinach songs' into the repertoire because we believe as music directors, as musicians, as teachers, we have a responsibility to the children to ensure that they are being exposed to songs that will challenge them musically and challenge them mentally. And challenge them from a team singing point of view. So, we don't take the easy road. We could go down the road of doing things that are just popular and appealing to children and appealing to audiences…We deliberately place those 'spinach songs' in the mix.

The extract here illustrates several points relating to repertoire selection and the resulting capital. Firstly, there is an attempt by the MDs to appeal to the various stakeholders and participants within the NCC. There are songs that the teachers may enjoy, which may include some from previous repertoires or ones that they can link to curricular areas, such as songs in Irish or with a historical theme. Also included are songs that will appeal to the children and act as "hooks", used perhaps as a break for children while ensuring their perseverance with the more difficult songs. In addition, MD1 explains that "likeability for parents" is an important consideration. She describes how many "parents [go] to sit through a concert of 90 minutes of kids singing [which] isn't maybe their ideal Friday night out. So, there is an element of making sure that that works as well for them". Therefore, the breath of the repertoire's composition is partly due to the wide range of participants and consumers who will interact with it, including children, teachers, parents, etc. Hence the conceptualisation of capital as an outcome of participation can be problematic, balancing the desires of pleasing audiences and parents alongside the aim of exploring various musical genres and teaching and learning musical challenging works.

Also, MD3 above outlined the deliberate focus on the Irish language, which correlates with the notion of national identity and language being part of the choir's cultural and historical context as shown in the CHAT model earlier. The promotion and preservation of national ideals through music was discussed in detail earlier in the thesis (McAuliffe, 2004; McCarthy, 1999a; B. Walsh, 2016), and continues to be a key consideration today, albeit focused primarily on the promotion of an Irish identity with little inclusion of choristers in broader cultural contexts. Hannah and Carol endorse the presence of Irish language and Irish folk music repertoire, outlining how the MDs are "staying true to like, you know, including those few Irish songs in every repertoire, just to make sure that the Irish language is still kind of being carried on" (Hannah). This aligns with Pitt's conceptualisation of participation as a way of "promoting and preserving repertoire", maintaining the capital that is embodied by some musical works that could be lost if not passed on (Pitts, 2005, p. 142). While there are concerns relating to the authenticity of performing various genres of music through a Western, choral aesthetic, the inclusion of Irish language repertoire and Irish folk songs is valued by participants and the MDs feel it's their duty to protect this type of cultural capital.

Therefore, considering the participant data relating to the repertoire, there appears a clear intention to include songs that are complex and challenging in the repertoire, avoiding what MD3 terms "the easy road". MD2 explains how, in their view, the repertoire should contain "really good choral songs that every child should get experience singing", referencing art music staples such as "Ave Maria" and "Ave Verum" as examples of these "choral masterpieces". The implication being that there are particular genres or songs that children should sing as part of any choral experience. We may understand these pieces as the "spinach songs" to which MD3 referred. Her comment regarding these songs is significant, and the metaphor of spinach provides

an interesting image underpinning the rationale of the various songs in the programme. The MDs as designers of the repertoire aim to ensure an adequate diet of these "spinach songs" within a repertoire, using their experience and knowledge to choose pieces that they regard as essential learning for children. In this way, these pieces represent valued capital that is promoted as worthy of acquisition due to their cultural, historical, social, and musical significance. This point regarding the hierarchy of cultural capital will be addressed later, but the data suggests a struggle for MDs and perhaps teachers between appeal of the repertoire for the many stakeholders and the simultaneous aim of "expanding the repertoire in primary schools" (NCC, 1985) through the inclusion of these "spinach songs" (MD3).

4.5.2.2 "Choral Masterpieces": Constructing the Repertoire

As is clear by now, the participants in this study view the difficulty of the music and the breadth of genres explored as a defining characteristic of the NCC. Every member, when asked about the aim of the programme, referenced the repertoire in some form. Teachers often singled out pieces from the WAM tradition for particular praise. These, participants felt, raised the profile of the programme when compared to other programmes, as Carol explains:

> The music is the key thing that's different. [It] isn't just popular music, or, you know, trendy music or music that the kids might like…They don't like all the music… some of it we don't like, you know what I mean? But, it's not about that. It's about exposing them to different types of music at all levels from ancient classical Baroque, to modern to pop to whatever, and to difficult music, and it's a challenge. Because [the children] sing music that is challenging. And they have to put their back into singing it.

Affirming Carol's views, MD1, Mary and Hannah all distinguished the NCC from other organisations operating within primary schools, citing that the repertoire of the NCC represents a greater range of genres and level of difficult than other comparable programmes. In many ways the repertoire defines the NCC, which participants feel is unique and largely positive in nature.

However, there are some problematic and negative views regarding the mix and treatment of repertoire. The interviews suggested that participants view the repertoire hierarchically, especially when they spoke about the inclusion of popular music in the NCC and other programmes. The data suggests that popular genres are possibly included for the benefit of the audience, as "it's important to put in something popular…that somebody will know" (Mary), or for the children as a "hook" to maintain their interest (MD3). This resonates with the findings of the literature review which described the tensions between popular music and WAM within formal schooling (Green, 2002, 2006; Jaffurs, 2004). Participants' responses supported the findings of Jaffurs whereby she suggests the presence of popular music within music education is "similar to giving a child candy: You know it's not good for them but, once in a while, won't hurt them too much" (2004, p. 190). Once again, the food metaphor here is interesting and appropriate given that the bulk of the NCC programme is made up of healthy WAM, alongside folk music

arranged in a choral style, with a sprinkling of popular music. Interpretation of the data suggests a hierarchy exists whereby the dominant capital embodied within the repertoire is valued and promoted by the MDs, and to some extent the teachers who participate. This contrasts with contemporary music discourse which values the broad and authentic selection and treatment of music genres as part of music education in schools (Hargreaves et al., 2007; Kelly-McHale, 2013; McCarthy, 2015; Spruce, 2015). While the quality of the supports and repertoire have been referenced extensively here, it is significant that popular and folk music is arranged in a choral style which may be problematic when viewed within the cultural context of the song, as alluded to earlier by Nettl (1995) and Barton and Riddle (2021). For example, the arrangement of an Irish traditional song, designed to be sung unaccompanied, but notated for three upper-voice parts is arguably impressive but may lack the authenticity of the genre's heritage and context.

The perceived imbalance between traditional school music genres and more popular musical styles familiar to the children was cited by Mary as a breaking point for one school within her area. She explains:

> Now, [this particular school] were a huge support to me and they were fantastic. They were an all-boys school and they began to think that the repertoire was not suiting the boys, it was…in the last number of years, they really kind of looked at it and they just felt that there could have been more modern music and something that the boys would appreciate. This is how they felt. And I know there's lots of other choirs with boys. And they knew that, and they accepted all that. But it just stopped working for them. Maybe it was their clientele of boys. And they just felt it was a chore. It really was getting harder, and harder, and harder and harder to motivate the boys to do it. And they're huge into music. This school now is really big into it. And they pulled out. That was a big issue. Not a big issue. But that was a big disappointment really.

This extract suggests that the NCC repertoire can be exclusionary and subsequently, it may become increasingly difficult for children, and by extension teachers, to relate to the choice of repertoire. This presents a challenge to the accessible, inclusive nature that participants in this study ascribe to the choir and represents an important contradiction within the AS. It is argued that some present and potential members may not identify with the capital being offered through the repertoire and therefore are isolated from participation. Mary also explains that, despite her commitment to the choir, she understands that the above example is not unique. While the focus of this study has focused on the experiences of teachers who participated in the choir, it is acknowledged that the voices of schools and teachers who have never participated and who hold different values regarding the objective capital on offer from the NCC are not represented and would provide further guidance and opinion. The consideration of these both positive and problematic issues relating to the rationale and composition of the repertoire will follow in a discussion of the significance of the repertoire as a form of capital.

4.5.2.3 The Significance of the Repertoire as Capital

The significance of the repertoire within the NCC is considerable from the viewpoint of those outside of the organisation looking in and for the participants who are insiders. The focus of the repertoire on difficult, multi-part works that may not always be to the taste of teachers, children or schools is understood to be both a positive and negative attribute of the choir, depending on the viewpoint one takes. It is a key rationale for participants such as Charlotte, Carol and Hannah. However, it is problematic for Mary and Paul, alongside others in the initial phase of data collection, who feel that the challenge of the programme is admirable but limiting in a curricular and inclusive sense.

Reflecting on participation as teaching and learning discussed above, music in Irish schools historically consisted of hymns, folk songs and in some cases choral works from the art music tradition (McCarthy, 1999a). The repertoire in Irish music education has pivoted from the civilising WAM of the pre-1900 curriculum to the focus on Irish language and culture in the mid-20th century (McAuliffe Ryng, 2005). Thus, the musical genres align with the historical, political, and cultural values of the time. However, it is argued that a substantial part of current repertoire is out of sync with the current cultural context in Ireland now, which includes more diverse cultures, ethnicities, levels of need, identities and pressures within our schools and societies (NCCA, 2020). MD2 defends the relevance of the repertoire: “There has been a change in repertoire… I'd say that we do a lot more, maybe contemporary or modern [music]. And, you know, experimenting with songs too…that there's a lot more songs that have maybe voice percussion and/or movement in them”. More specifically, MD2 spoke about the introduction of contemporary choral music and modern arrangements of songs, alongside some film and musical arrangements. Therefore, while the songs themselves and their origins have changed over the history of the programme, the perceived broad nature of the repertoire may lack authenticity and be outside the musical lifeworld of the children. Furthermore, the researcher argued that given the changed landscape of primary schools over the past almost forty years (NCCA, 2020), organisations such as the NCC and others need to keep pace with socio-cultural trends. In short, the data suggests that the focus of the repertoire remains on teaching modern arrangements of difficult pieces within what Spruce (2015) refers to as a Western choral “aesthetic”.

Having considered the evolution of the repertoire over time, the capital that emerges as an outcome of participation reveals much about teachers’ own values, tastes, and dispositions regarding the types of songs children should learn and be exposed to (Welch et al., 2010). In this study, teachers recognise the benefits of a music education curriculum and experience that widens the perceived narrow range of genres that children currently engage in. According to Charlotte and Carol, the NCC is a vehicle to broaden the repertoire experienced by children and to engage with genres and styles that would not ordinarily be part of a primary school music lesson.

Significantly, participants valued the NCC repertoire as being a defining feature of the nature of participation and their successes in teaching and performing the repertoire positively impacted their sense of identity and learning that stemmed from participation.

One participant, Mary, did admit to enjoying one musical tradition while advocating for children's consumption of another: "I'm not big into opera now. I mightn't imagine myself sitting at Madame Butterfly. It's nice now and all that…but would I go to see it tomorrow night if you gave me free tickets? No." In her case, she explains how despite valuing the difficulty of the repertoire and challenge of the WAM works, this style of music doesn't necessarily appeal to her in her personal life. Therefore, Mary is content in passing on capital to the children in her class, despite not always enjoying the consumption of this capital herself. This further supports the healthy diet metaphor used earlier, and the corresponding hierarchy of cultural capitals that separates some genres taught in schools (O'Toole, 2016). As MD3 explained earlier, "you may not like [a particular song] initially, but it is good for you". These comments align with Spruce (2005) who viewed music teachers and children as often "curriculum consumers", or in this case repertoire consumers. Concepts such as appealability, autonomy and agency are difficult to reconcile alongside the dominant form of cultural capital represented by the repertoire, particularly when one reflects on the literature and some participant's views considered here.

In conclusion, the repertoire places the NCC and its participating teachers in a powerful position as curators of the musical genres and resulting capital that is promoted and passed on in schools, supported by the hierarchical structures of the AS through the tensions explored above. This is supported by the social capital that stems from like-minded communities working together within an organisation, and the prestige of participation that schools and teachers aspire to. What results is an absence of child, and indeed teacher, voice in the selection and design of the repertoire. The choral classroom setting itself was identified in the literature as particularly didactic, given the centrality of the conductor (Dolloff, 2013). This field is constrained by a hierarchy of musical genres, whereby WAM and songs prepared and performed in a Classical, choral style remain dominant, limiting the inclusive and culturally diverse possibilities of repertoire as a form of capital and teacher participation more broadly.

While this may be problematic, the repertoire equally represents an objective form of capital that can advantage people. Teachers explained how they used their experiences, knowledge, and habitus to affect their own position within school and societal hierarchies, with their motivations being to also advantage the children that they teach (O'Toole, 2016; Pollard & Alexander, 2019; Prior, 2013). As Charlotte explains, in her all-boys school, she hopes that participation will present music and singing as a desirable subject and activity for her students as they progress to secondary school, having the capital to access the types of music experiences that still underpin much of formal school music curricula (Green, 2002; Stakelum, 2008b). Therefore,

while this study acknowledges that the repertoire is a defining characteristic of the NCC, and therefore does not suggest abandoning its current construction, the critique of it provides a reflection point to consider the positive and problematic nature of the repertoire as a form of capital exchanged, preserved, and promoted through teacher participation in the NCC.

4.5.3 Enculturation through the Musical Field, Habitus and Capital

This final section explores the possible link between teacher participation in the NCC and a corresponding process of enculturation of participants through the organisation's field, habitus, and capital. It considers how Bourdieu's three sociological concepts discussed thus far can be viewed as a positive or problematic process of inculcation into the dominant cultural and societal capitals and practices through participation.

As has been argued thus far, capital is both an advantaging and problematic concept within the field of education (Campbell, 2011; Valenzuela & Codina, 2014; Wright, 2015a, 2015b). By extension, enculturation through the field, habitus, and capital of music education, or indeed any other subject, will influence the nature of participation in different ways. As previously discussed, all the participants had primarily positive musical experiences in their early years. They engaged with music at all levels of their education and they were motivated to bring their own positive experiences of music into their careers as teachers. In this way teachers' musical lives and practices draw heavily on their own experiences of education (Stakelum, 2008a) as well as on their social experiences and communities (Ward, 2009).

From the data, Susan explains how she valued the music education that she received from the nuns in her secondary school and invited them as guests to her NCC concert to see the "fruits of their [labour and] what they have taught us". In addition, Susan, Carol, and Mary also outlined how their previous musical lifeworld, identities as teachers and musicians and existing capital influenced their work as teachers. This led them to pass on musical values and practices that aligned with their own experiences to their students. McCarthy defines this reproduction of culture, or as she terms it "enculturation", to mean "the generational transmission of cultural knowledge, skills and values" (1999a, p. 14). Due to participants sense of loyalty to the programme and their own musical experiences, they reside comfortably within the habitus and field of participation, confident in the capital benefits that they have acquired and desire to pass on. The inheritance of social and cultural capital from their parents (in the case of Charlotte), teachers (Susan), previous participation with the NCC founder (Carol), or from their colleagues (Paul, Mary, and Susan) all advantage participants within the field of the NCC.

The process of enculturation through participation is evidenced further with the current cohort of teacher participants, including Hannah and the CM interviewed here, who were child participants and have returned to the choir to replicate their own experience in their work as

teachers. Teachers' own habitus and understanding of the field means that participating teachers can maintain the status quo, while those with different experiences or values are "excluded from the inner circle" (Pitts, 2012, p. 90). Hannah describes the NCC as a "very established, tight-knit community" who she feels are open to new members, albeit members who are dedicated and up to the challenge of the prestigious phenomenon she spoke of earlier. Mary's description of schools who found entry to the field of the NCC difficult suggest that they perhaps lack the capital or experience necessary to become enculturated: "[some schools] never really got what the NCC was" (Mary). However, the data also argued that once the capital benefits of participation have been experienced, teachers become confident and comfortable in the habitus of participation and seek to replicate it. Therefore, it is suggested that through the community of the NCC, maintained by the multiple levels and hierarchies of participation, members can accumulate cultural and social capital through participation, supported by others in the dominant cultural field who reside in a similar habitus to them. Subsequently, participants desire to pass on and maintain this culture within its own field, offering the advantageous capital that stems from participation (McCarthy, 2010; Prior, 2013).

The problematic side of the possible enculturation of participants emerges whereby the reproduction of capital and habitus through replicating familiar experiences can lead to teaching and learning that is static in nature. Dewey and Peter's warned of the "mis-educative" possibilities of maintaining "established customs" and only transmitting knowledge and skills that are deemed to be worthwhile (1916, p. 79; Becket, 2019, p. 383). This is evidenced in participants' preoccupation with the technical challenges, logistical hurdles, and eventual successes of teaching the repertoire in its current form. In participating to completion, the reproduction of these works is seen as a valuable and worthwhile form of capital to aspire to. All participants spoke about the lessons learned from earlier experiences of the choir, and through repeated participation became expert replicators of these practices, aided by the structured, "task-focused" programme (Paul). With participation being inextricably linked to producing a product, there was little desire for change, with teachers remaining within their "comfort zone" (Bresler, 1998b, p. 17).

The significance of enculturation through teacher participation is twofold. Firstly, the outsiders or those on the margins of participation may be prevented from full participation and therefore remain in a form of "restricted participation" (Wenger, 1998, p. 166). Carol explains how in a previous school which was set in a disadvantaged area, participation in the NCC would be, in her view, impossible given the very different starting point of the children and demands of the choir. Like Mary's anecdote, there appears to be schools, teachers and children who are kept on the margins due to a lack of capital; those marginal participants (Figure 2.1).

As identified under the theme of power, Wenger (1998) and Foucault (1991) both explain how communities and cultures are not always explicit or even aware of the constraints of their

structures, but that these rules are inevitable when considering participation within a social system. Therefore, despite warnings from the literature (Bresler, 1998; Kingsbury, 1988; McCarthy, 1999a; Wright, 2015b), a hidden curriculum of valued experiences and genres of music continues to be transmitted through the enculturation and reproduction of the dominant cultural capital, limiting the possibility of any transformative change in the culture of primary music education. As argued under the theme of learning, the enculturation of teachers through participation leads to an accessible view of music education whereby teachers are initiated into a musical culture and field that values traditional socially and culturally valued capital, rather than working in a space where the capital and content of curricula and programmes responds to the various lifeworlds of the participants.

In this section, teacher participation as a form of capital has been explored. The data suggests that teachers do accumulate social and cultural capital through participation in the NCC, and that these capitals can be advantaging in affirming one's identity and validating one's previous musical experiences and practices. However, it can also be problematic in so far as teachers that reside comfortably in the habitus of participation may seek to replicate and reproduce practices which they feel benefit them and the children that they teach. The repertoire is an important form of objective capital that stems from participation, and the significance of its composition on the type of capital exchanged and preserved through participation is noteworthy. Participants valued the repertoire as a defining characteristic of the NCC and the data aligns with the hierarchical view of musical genres which values WAM over popular genres. These arguments were synthesised in the consideration of participation as a process of enculturation for teachers (and by extension children), whereby those within the musical field who are comfortable in their habitus of participation, reproduce dominant cultural practices and neglect to critically examine the type of capital being exchanged. Participants viewed the community and shared experiences of other like-minded members positively and the perceived positive benefits that stem from the capital acquired through participation justified the current operation of the NCC, despite the contradictions posed by contemporary music discourse and child-centred pedagogies which form much of the current literature. The process of enculturation that exists through participation in any organisation has both positive and negative outcomes, and this study finds that participants who are conditioned into the culture of the NCC are comfortable in the habitus of participation, content in the field of the choir and conscious of the capital that is valued, exchanged and desirable.

4.6 Teacher Participation as Transformation

The final domain of teacher participation considered is the possible transformational potential of participation. This section draws on the preceding ones in exploring the nature and

significance of participation as a construct that can overcome some of the challenges and problems of participation identified thus far, eliciting from the data the potential transformative possibilities of participation across the dimensions of teaching and learning, identity and community, and power and capital. This section will also draw together some of the missed opportunities for transformation alluded to earlier, which will inform some of the recommendations that stem from this research in the conclusion chapter.

4.6.1 Overcoming the Challenges of Participation

This section considers three main challenges to participation identified by teachers which impedes participation. These include the musical challenges to participation, the issues relating to the poor status of music and the mindsets among some teachers and schools, and finally the conceptual and theoretical challenges that emerge when participation is viewed alongside the literature and data. In addition, possible ways for participation in the NCC to overcome these challenges, from the perspectives of teachers, is also considered. With the aim of teacher participation as transformation being to foster "expansive transformation [whereby] the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualised to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137), the nature and significance of these challenges and how teachers potentially overcome them is explored.

4.6.1.1 Musical Challenges and Transformations

Teachers and senior NCC members all acknowledge the musical challenges of participation, especially the challenge of teaching this complex programme and repertoire to primary school children. Mary explains that participation is "a big task, [that] it's daunting [and] it's not easy". While the MDs felt that any teacher with an interest in joining the programme, regardless of their previous musical background, could participate effectively, the participants did not always agree. Carol feels that participation requires "a degree of musical literacy that not all schools have access to" while Hannah admits that while the support of the summer course and her NCC colleagues is invaluable, she feels that there should be at least one person within the school with musical knowledge and skills to enable successful participation in the NCC. Therefore, some participants viewed a lack of musical knowledge as a barrier to participation that could not be completely overcome alone.

However, as alluded to earlier, many participants felt that the challenge of participation becomes easier through repeated cycles as Paul explains:

> I suppose once you start, you know, there is such work involved in it that, you know, it's not really something that you would just take part in once, and then just leave, you know, because there is a lot of work into getting it set up and started. Now, I know, a lot of schools, you know, schools do that to kind of delve in and out of it you know, every so

> often. But I think there is so much work involved that, you know, a lot of the groundwork is probably done in the first concert or two. So, I think, you know, it is kind of a pity to leave it.

The steep learning curve alluded to, both here and earlier, is both an obstacle for those wishing to participate and a sense of satisfaction and encouragement to those who have persevered. Carol explains how she never received musical CPD and therefore thinks the NCC is "the best musical CPD you're going to get actually, because [teachers] don't get musical CPD". In addressing challenges of teacher confidence and perceived lack of musical knowledge, opportunities for CPD are often hailed as a key solution (INTO, 2009; Biasutti et al., 2015; Hennessy, 2017). However, the very low number of CPD summer courses relating to music education discussed earlier (Usher, 2022) leaves teachers acquiring their musical knowledge and skills from organisations such as the NCC. Furthermore, the generalist-specialist debate discussed above may mean that generalist teachers with little musical confidence may be drawn to programmes such as the NCC to fill the musical gap in their teaching.

In response to these challenges, the data relating to participation in the NCC demonstrated that, from the point of view of the teachers, there was much learning experienced through participation. They repeatedly recounted the "learning days" they experienced at the regional rehearsals (Paul), the efficient manner in which the summer course teaches the repertoire quickly to teachers (Charlotte), and the contextualisation of the learning that takes place while observing the MDs and other teachers (Hannah). Reflecting on the specialist-generalist debate in primary music education, historical reports have advocated for music specialists to act as consultants to support teachers in the provision of music education (Benson; 1979; Herron, 1985). It is argued that the NCC operates a limited model of this, through the distribution of experienced members throughout the country.

Furthermore, as mentioned by MD1 earlier, the NCC allows generalist class teachers to access and facilitate a musical experience with their classes that would generally be beyond their musical confidence and competence prior to participation, and the numbers participating is growing every cycle. In this way, the NCC can transform teachers' views of their musical competence and confidence, becoming experts in facilitating group choral singing of this nature in their practice. Significantly, in the absence of much formal CPD or a focus on teachers' musical learning from policy makers, the NCC and other organisations provide a veil of confidence and competence for those who seek to address their perceived musical weaknesses. As mentioned earlier, the challenges of the programme may be off putting for some, but for those who "dip their toe in" (Mary) and persevere, the structured and efficient organisational structures can overcome the musical challenges of participation and arguably has resulted in transformational mindsets for some teachers who heretofore would have lacked confidence to teach a repertoire and programme

as difficult as this. Also, while not evidenced by participants in this study, participation may also lead newly competent participants taking further steps to improve their musical skills.

4.6.1.2 Mindset Challenges and Transformations

Emerging from these musical challenges is the long-standing concern regarding the poor status of and mindset towards music within primary schools (Benson, 1979; DE, 1995; Herron, 1985; INTO, 2009). Participants reported that some of their colleagues expressed a negative attitude to participation, possibly due to their perceived lack of confidence in teaching music or lack of interest in music education. Returning to the initial data collection phase, class teachers in School A and D compared their role with their full-participant colleagues feeling that musically they were very limited, that they lacked confidence and that their expert colleagues were much better placed to teach music in general, and the NCC in particular. These teachers provide very honest accounts of their own perceived shortcomings in music, admitting that they, like many other schools, default to their school expert for guidance on the provision and organisation of music education.

Further evidence of this problematic musical mindset comes from Charlotte who feels that "music is one of those subjects that I always feel gets pushed to the side a little bit... I suppose it's that one art subject that you can kind of get away with not doing because nobody can know whether you're doing music in your class or not". Carol expressed a similarly negative mindset among policy makers, whereby she felt that "[the arts is] not well funded. It's really badly funded. And it's really badly funded by the Department of Education...They don't put money into the arts, they don't value the arts and it thrives anyway". This is supported by the evidence earlier regarding the lack of CPD opportunities in music education, the abolition of the DE Music Inspector service and the lack of oversight from the DE on participating in programmes such as the NCC and others within curriculum time. This gap in the provision of music education is masked by the success and prestige of a performance such as the NCC concerts, which eminent figures in Irish music education (see Appendix A) have supported. Furthermore, there seems to be limited information about the future of music education from a departmental or curricula viewpoint, with few alternatives to programmes such as the NCC proposed.

In summary, participants and the literature note the "elitist thing about music" (Charlotte) that is perpetuated by the uneven provision of music education countrywide, changing policy targets, and financial barriers to music making, all of which lead to many teachers neglecting or outsourcing music education in their classrooms (Stakelum, 2008a; INTO, 2009; Shiel, 2008). These challenges, coupled with the perceived lack of ownership or engagement by some in facilitating musical experiences, can mean exploring the transformational possibilities of participation are often overlooked by teachers, schools, and systems (Partington, 2018).

Countering the perceived low status of music in schools, the evidence in this chapter suggests that participants value and enjoy being part of a community of NCC members. These members are spread across varying levels of participation and can be advocates for music in their schools and local areas. Therefore, the collective mindset of the staff can be enhanced through the "buy-in" (Charlotte) of the entire school community in a programme such as the NCC. It is argued that the all-encompassing nature of participation (both the time and resource demands of the choir) can make music more visible in schools, through many teachers' interactions with the programme and the presence of the choir within the wider school environment.

As mentioned earlier, Charlotte notes that sport has always taken priority in her all-male school, and she praises the NCC for enhancing the status of music in the school, even if it is just the single class level that participates. Paul similarly comments on the focus that participation in the NCC gives to schools, establishing it within the school calendar and as part of the whole school plan for the academic year. Furthermore, he comments that participation is an "excellent PR exercise" to promote and improve the status of music in a school and among the community, building links with other schools, and providing a pathway for potentially transformational outcomes in teacher's personal and professional lives, as described earlier. This suggests that for some NCC participants the extra-musical benefits identified earlier may be equally, if not more valuable than the musical outcomes. The school leaders in this study presented participation as a positive initiative in their schools, due to the organisation's history, prestige, and efficiency of operation. In this way, participation can become a tool to enhance the status of music within schools, facilitating teachers of all levels to at a minimum observe, interact with and experience a choral singing programme in their schools.

While the different self-expressed identities of teachers as musical and unmusical will continue to be problematic in the outsourcing of music education (Hargreaves et al., 2003, 2007; Woodford, 2002), participants in this study are advocates for the NCC and the promotion of music education in their schools. The importance of advocacy in the domain of music education has previously been referenced (Hallam et al., 2009; The Arts Council, 2020), and the data here affirms the importance of musical organisations and participation in transforming mindsets and improving the status of music among primary school stakeholders, ensuring music is more than a niche for certain teachers or schools to explore.

4.6.1.3 Conceptual and Theoretical Challenges and Transformations

The final section considers the conceptual and theoretical challenges to participation and the possible transformational potential of participation in any future reimagination of the NCC and similar programmes. As has been argued, the potential process of enculturation facilitated through the continued dominance of didactic, reproductive musical experiences and the value

placed by teachers on the efficiency, practicality and predictability of participation is incompatible with the contemporary perspectives of music education explored earlier. Participation in the NCC for teachers and children can endorse a teacher-led, capital-rich, product-focused experience of music education. This approach is lauded by participants, but arguably remains disconnected from the real-world musical lives of the children (Green, 2002; Spruce, 2015). While performance-based music education does exist within primary schools (e.g., Music Generation), the music teacher guidelines note that they must not replace the child-centred, activity-based curriculum (GoI, 1999b). This study reinforces many of the problematic concepts which have been evidenced in music education, such as teachers remaining comfortable in the habitus of participation (Stakelum, 2008a), teachers acknowledging but feeling unable to break reproductive cycles of musical teaching and learning which align with the dominant cultural values of WAM (Wright, 2015b), and the difficulty in moving beyond musical training towards a creative, culturally responsive music education that is inclusive of all learners (Bowman, 2018; Kelly-McHale, 2013). Teachers' professional and personal identities are often strengthened by participating in the like-minded community of the NCC, and through consideration of the organisation through the lens of CHAT, the research has identified the tensions and contradictions that emerge from participation that can limit the possibility for transformation.

However, as has been discussed throughout this chapter, there are opportunities for the disturbances that emerge in the consideration of the NCC as an AS to lead to transformative outcomes for teachers, whether they be in the domain of teaching and learning, identity, power, or capital. The literature presented an alternative view of music education which could spark the reorganisation of the NCC, or a restructuring of participation to greater support the curriculum now and into the future. Furthermore, while the inevitable hierarchies and power structures of the NCC are typical of many organisations, there may be opportunities to involve teachers and children in the decision making of the choir. These findings will inform the recommendations in the final chapter, but the theoretical and conceptual implications of this study not only indicate why the NCC operates as it does but provides some signposts for its reimagination.

In conclusion, many possible opportunities exist to integrate the fields of formal and informal music in schools alongside the musical lives of participants inside and outside school (Green, 2008; Hargreaves et al., 2007). In doing this, the study suggests a reconsideration of teacher and student autonomy within a choral programme such as this, reimagining the NCC for the 21st century school. Some of these possibilities of participation will now be considered in the final section of this chapter.

4.6.2 Teachers' Possibilities of Participation

The teacher interviews revealed many glimpses of transformation as an outcome of participation throughout this study. Teachers reported that participation positively benefited their career progression and professional relationships. In the initial phase of data collection, the principal of School B explained that in her view, the NCC encourages teachers to work together and learn from one another, and "take on scary moments". As explored under the theme of identity, the principal also linked their professional participation in the NCC with their decision to move into school management. Paul similarly acknowledges the role of the choir in building the relationship between his other management colleague: "[working together on the NCC] kind of taught us a lot about ourselves and our working relationship…and I think that is something that has stood to us". He reflects and affirms what others have said regarding the possibility of NCC to encourage teachers who may have "potential leadership capabilities" to be part of the organisation on a local or regional level, which facilitates collaboration, networking and is viewed positively in career opportunities. Therefore, the significance of participation in the NCC on the career trajectory of some members is noteworthy and offers a possible transformative outcome from participation beyond the final concert or performance.

Teachers also reported the possibility of participation to shape their sense of job satisfaction, instilling a sense of pride in their work with the NCC. As was discussed earlier, the mindset regarding music and the arts in primary schools has often been challenging, however Susan admits that since the pandemic, she surmises that participation "definitely enriched my teaching career…and I'm glad to think that towards the end of my career that I'm still as passionate about it". As a retired principal, Carol says that she was very proud to have reintroduced the choir in her school during her tenure. While having her own musical life outside of school, her school's participation in the choir was a great source of satisfaction and motivation:

> I think it gives you a great kind of job satisfaction, that you're able to give kids that confidence, that they will take that memory, and that confidence, that seed that you've sown, and they'll build on it. And it mightn't be for 10 years, or 15 years. But they'll remember, they will remember that.

For teachers like Carol, the perceived impact and outcomes of the NCC programme in the initial months after participation are arguably not as important as the seemingly transformative aspect of participation that she can see reflecting on her career and former students. This affirms the link between school participation in music and positive influences on adult life found by McQueen and Varvarigou (2010) and Stålhammer (2006), with Carol feeling that only when the programme is finished, and with the benefit of hindsight, do teachers and children appreciate the impact of participation. As evidenced by Mary's daughter's encounter with her fellow student teachers earlier in this chapter, the longevity of participation and sense of affiliation among members are arguably a source of comfort and celebration for teachers that sustains their participation and

enhances their careers. The significant impact of participation on long-standing participants' identity and mindset was expressed by all experienced teachers in this research.

Beyond the professional possibilities, teachers spoke personally about how participation transformed their relationship with students in the class and their personal engagement with their careers as teachers. Drawing on her own experience as a child participant, Hannah explains how "it brings a different layer to [teaching] because you can speak on your own experience, and it makes children think that things are possible". She can tell her class that, "I was in the choir, and I always really wanted to teach it and, you know look at me, I'm able to do this now". The personal connection Hannah has to the NCC allows her to speak more authentically about the experience as she understands the children's point of view. Similarly, Carol as a principal feels her relationship changing from "Oh the principal is in the room…to 'Oh sure there's [Ms. X] coming to sing!". She enjoyed the personal interaction with the children, which is often rare as an administrative principal, and these positive personal and professional interactions lead to positive relationships and influences between participants (Stakelum, 2008a). Therefore, the possibilities for personal and professional identities and attitudes of teachers to be transformed through participation is evident in the data, however there is more scope for teacher autonomy and creativity to really embed transformational change as an outcome from participation and reflect this change onto the other dimensions of participation.

Finally, teachers in this study all commented on the link between the NCC and their own musical interests, passions and motivations, which has been well established by the literature (Campbell et al., 2007). The interview data suggests that the NCC allows participants to bring their own interests into their school lives which can transform the nature of their musical selves and their teacher selves. As explored earlier, Hannah, Charlotte and Paul speak of their desire to bring music into the classroom as a personal motivation for choosing teaching as a career and incorporating part of their personality within the classroom. As referenced earlier, many studies (Hargreaves et al., 2007; Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003; Lave, 2009; Sweet, 2010) have found that teacher's own interests affect their teaching and influence the types of activities they engage with, and the possibility of participation to transform musical mindsets and the perceived specialised nature of music (Hallam et al., 2009) is a positive finding which could be further developed in future reiterations of the choir.

As MD3 mentioned before, the NCC summer course and participation more broadly, allows teachers "the opportunity to refill [their] own vessel...to be refilled with musical fire in some way". This suggests that teachers' own personal sense of musicality can be reignited through participation and that participation has a personal and psychological significance for teachers, transforming their sense of identity as musicians, teachers, professionals, and community members. Therefore, the NCC could be envisioned as fulfilling the musical desires of

teachers, motivating them to continue to participate in music within their busy lives and reifying them in their choice of musical experiences in their classrooms through the choir's alignment with their own personal values and motivation regarding music.

As suggested above, there are many possibilities of participation that have been alluded to by participants, the literature, and from my own interpretive standpoint. Participation as a form of transformation is generally promoted as the most desirable goal of organisations and structures such as the NCC, and there is evidence that this is possible through a reconsideration of participation (Engeström, 1999; Henley, 2015; Liu, 2020). These possibilities include the possible transformation of teaching and learning approaches through participation, the reimagining the power and hierarchical structures that govern the choir, the re-examination of the capital that is valued by policy makers and society, and the possible personal, professional and musical transformations that could, and arguably should, stem from participation. These findings will be reflected upon in the final concluding chapter which will consider the key recommendations and implications from this study.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored, interpreted and critiqued the multi-dimensional nature and significance of teacher participation as evidenced by the participants data and informed by the empirical and theoretical literature. The consideration of participation as a form of teaching and learning discussed the musical and extra-musical aims and benefits of the choir which are lauded by participants, while an examination of the current curriculum suggested the NCC resided primarily in the Song Singing strand of the curriculum which narrows the focus of the primary music curriculum for the participating groups. Teachers in this study concluded that the choir is a flawed but adequate replacement of the curriculum due to the high standard of performance and clear focus of participation, as opposed to the perceived "wishy-washy" (Charlotte) nature of the curriculum. Similarly, teacher learning through participation is effective in developing confident and competent participants within the narrow confines of the programme, yet the nature of this learning is informal and ad-hoc. What emerges is a conceptualisation of teaching and learning through participation that seems to overlook child-led, inclusive musical experiences in favour of a training model of musical learning and a product focused outcome for teachers and children. Importantly this exists within the context of an unpopular music curriculum at primary level, a policy environment of poor curriculum implementation and ambiguous musical aims, and the continuing low status of music within many primary schools.

The influence of participation on teachers' identity and the negotiation, reinforcement and challenging of participants' multiple identities has been outlined. One noteworthy finding concluded that teachers in general did not view themselves as musicians, despite the confidence and experience level of participants. However, they did recognise the influential impact of their

musical backgrounds and personal and professional identities on participation, with some members identifying as the “face of the NCC” (Susan). Community was found to be a significant influence on one's identity and encouraged the maintenance of their familiar habitus of participation, with participants happy to align and belong within a community of like-minded members. It is argued that while this sustains participation and the longevity of the choir, it may also stifle possible alternate trajectories and opportunities for reimagining the possible outcomes of participation.

Combining the themes of identity and power, the multiple levels of participation were considered alongside the corresponding roles, responsibilities, and hierarchies of these levels. What emerges from the analysis of the data is a hierarchical division of labour whereby a small number of members (MDs and NCC CM) retain much of the control and power within the organisation, and various forms of participants (full, peripheral, marginal, and non-participants) inherit and reproduce these practices within the structures of the NCC AS. Using Engeström’s (1999, 2001) CHAT, many tensions emerge from the conceptualisation of the NCC as an AS, including the disturbances caused by the hierarchical division of labour interacting with the shared habitus of the NCC community and the limitations of the cultural and historical constraints on the rules of the NCC field. It is argued that these inhibit the development of possible transformational approaches to music education or the evolution of the mediating artefacts. The significance of teacher participation as a form of power is that teacher autonomy and child-led creative pedagogies are stifled by tensions between the labour, community, and rules of the AS. This suggests that possible progressive mediating artefacts that accompany potential disruptive subjects entering the system cannot meaningfully influence the outcome of the system.

Following this, teacher participation as a form of capital was discussed suggesting that participants do accumulate and exchange social and cultural capital through participation in the NCC. Furthermore, this exchange of capital can be empowering and advantaging for some culturally dominant groups, while potentially alienating others who value different forms of capital. The NCC repertoire emerged as an important form of objective capital that is preserved by the organisation. Analysis of the data concludes that while teachers viewed the repertoire as broadly positive, a hierarchy of musical genres exists that values WAM and music in the classical, choral aesthetic as the dominant form of capital desired by participants. These arguments were synthesised in the consideration of participation as a process of enculturation for teachers and students, whereby members comfortable in the habitus of participation may reproduce dominant cultural practices and fail to critically reflect on the types of capital being exchanged. Participants viewed the capital within the community and the shared experiences of other like-minded members positively, neglecting to consider alternative, more inclusive forms of capital as advocated by contemporary music discourse. The implication being that capital can be both a

transformative as well as restrictive outcome of participation (more the latter in the evidence discussed here).

The final section considered teacher participation in the NCC as a form of transformation. Some of the key musical, mindset and conceptual challenges that emerged from the research were explored, followed by an examination of the possibilities of participation to be transformative. The potential to address the poor status of music in schools through the facilitation of an impressive musical experience in their schools (despite its limited nature) was discussed. Also, the alignment of the data with the key theoretical and conceptual ideas of the study was noteworthy, with the conceptual framework not only adding to the understanding of the NCC as a system but pointing towards the potential innovation of tensions emerging from the choir.

To conclude, the research argues that the outcome of teacher participation as a form of transformation ought to contribute to the national discourse relating to music education and singing within the primary school curriculum, to further teachers' musical learning, to understand teachers' personal, professional, and musical identities, and to reimagine the possible future of programmes such as the NCC within schools. The findings of this chapter will be summarised in the final chapter which will outline the key implications and recommendations of this research for teachers, the NCC and the wider music education landscape.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will summarise the conclusions of the research. The key research findings will be presented, bringing together the data that was critiqued and discussed in the previous chapter. Following this the recommendations and possible implications of these findings will be discussed. The possibility for further research building on this study will then be outlined, before a final concluding comment will close this dissertation.

5.2 Research Findings

This section synthesises the discussions, critiques and interpretations explored in the last chapter addressing the study's research question: ***What is the nature and significance of teacher participation in the NCC*****?** The findings suggest that the nature of teacher participation has both positive and problematic dimensions. Through the consideration of teacher participation in the NCC as a form of teaching and learning, identity, power, capital and transformation, the research provides insight into the empowerment of teachers who participate in the NCC, but also reveals the restrictive nature of teacher participation due to the dominance of WAM and traditional music education ideals within the static, hegemonic power structures of the organisation.

The following section considers the significance of teacher participation in the NCC as part of a 21st century school, reflecting on the context in which it operates and the anachronistic nature of the phenomenon within the evolving contemporary music education landscape. It considers where systemic and policy failings in the area of music education and teacher learning creates a space for programmes such as the NCC to operate. The significance of the NCC's structures, teachers' thoughts and opinions, and the primary music education landscape in Ireland today are explored, signposting recommendations for future policy makers, teachers and the NCC as an organisation.

5.2.1 The Nature of Teacher Participation as a Multi-dimensional Construct

The key finding that arises from the interpretation and discussion of the data is that the nature of teacher participation is complex and multi-dimensional. As was discussed in the literature review, participation as a construct is often influenced by its social context and it is the rich context of the NCC and its members that lead to the multiple domains and outcomes of teacher participation discussed here. In this study, the data indicates that participation is all-consuming and that particular dimensions of participation emerge as positive and problematic as will be argued below. The key findings, both in terms of the positive effects of participation

(pluses) and the problematic implications of participation (minuses) are summarised in Figure 5.1 below.

Participation as Teaching and Learning

+ Builds confidence through predictability and stability of participation.
- Linear, training-based learning.
- Absence of growth or innovation.
- Acts as a curriculum replacement.
- Inconsonant with contemporary music education philosophies.

Participation as Identity

+ Strengthens Lifeworld/Habitus.
+ Positive impact on professional, personal and musical identity.
+ Positive sense of community and belonging.
- Participant experiences are largely homogenous in nature.
- Conservative, static communities focused on affiliation.

Participation as Power

+ Multiple levels of participation – roles and responsibilities.
- Hierarchical and hegemonic power structures.
- Disempowering for innovators of practice.
- Absence of teacher agency and autonomy.

Participation as Capital

+ Accumulation and preservation of culturally and socially valued capital (repertoire; choral etiquette).
+ Social mobility and status through capital.
- Reliance on WAM and music in the choral aesthetic.
- Reproduction of capital at variance with contemporary music education pedagogy.

Participation as Transformation

+ Transformations possible in response to CHAT tensions.
+ Musical, professional and personal mindsets transformed.
+ Potential for transforming systems, structures and society.
- Potential for transformation to be linked to enculturation.

Figure 5.1: *The Multi-Dimensional Nature of Participation*

The research argues that teaching and learning are perhaps the most obvious outcomes of participation in the NCC for both teachers and the children that they teach. The data suggests that teacher learning is evident in teachers' interactions with the NCC, however it is primarily restricted to facilitating the programme, teaching the repertoire, and building confidence in participating. Teachers valued the structured, predictable nature of the NCC and felt that their participation furthered their musical knowledge and exposed them to a wide range of musical genres. The support offered by the resources and the summer course were very positively viewed, however they are limited in the transferability and breadth of learning facilitated. The nature of the learning is aligned with a training or transmission model of CPD (Kennedy, 2005), which focuses on developing action happens and the transfer of knowledge, rather than encouraging deeper reflection and critique of practice. Teachers and MDs agreed, feeling that the summer course was not intended to be a broad musical CPD course, and that teachers' learning primarily takes the form of observation and imitation of the practices of the MDs, AMDs and other experienced NCC members. In summary, there appears to be an absence of growth and innovation in the learning through participation, which relies heavily on repeated participation from loyal teachers who desire the replication offered by the programme. This neglects the requirement of all learning theories to encourage dynamic cycles of progress and innovation by all members of a learning community.

Participation in the NCC was also found to be used as a form of music pedagogy (i.e., the use of choral classroom methodology) and lesson content (i.e., the repertoire), which often replaced the curriculum in schools for the duration of the programme. Participants reported mixed views regarding the current music curriculum, feeling that it was too broad and was being poorly implemented. They felt their participation in the NCC was a response to this and they valued the high standard of musical experience (i.e., the final performances) that stemmed from participation. Teachers reported positive links between the curriculum and the nature of participation in the choir, however an examination of the curriculum objectives for 5th and 6th class suggests that participation greatly limits the breadth of curriculum coverage during an NCC cycle.

Furthermore, the focus of teachers in this study on the outcome of participation and the lack of learner agency and creativity evidenced during the teaching and learning process, suggests a musical training approach to music education, primarily focused on performance. This is incompatible with contemporary music education philosophies and implies that teachers (and by extension children) are consumers of a particular product, which provides for a level of musical activity in schools but is anachronistic in its conceptualisation of what music education looks like in schools. It is argued that teaching music through the lens of participation can develop teacher confidence, despite their musical backgrounds, but also masks a lack of musical skills through the streamlined, efficient nature of participation and quality of the final performance. Therefore, the

curriculum consumed by learners is attractive, historically and culturally valued, but ultimately lacks the depth and breadth underpinning contemporary music education philosophies.

The data also finds that teacher identity is impacted by participation through the constant renegotiation of participants' multiple identities. In line with the literature, teacher's previous musical experiences and habitus directly influence their work in the classroom, and in this study, those teachers whose musical lifeworlds aligned with the choral, WAM aesthetic of the NCC were positively disposed to participation. The data showed how participation had a positive impact on teacher's professional and personal identities, with the interviews suggesting a deep affiliation and veneration of the choir. Participants' identities are strengthened further by their sense of belonging within a community of NCC members, most of which share a like-minded approach to music teaching and learning, enriching their identity in the habitus of participation. However, the research is critical of the static, conservative nature of the communities which may confine participation, therefore maintaining the status quo, and alienate those who identify with differing views and values.

The similar lifeworlds and habitus of the participants in this study suggest that the NCC may be homogenous in nature. While the number of participants consulted makes it difficult to generalise the findings to all teachers in the NCC, the data suggests that the community of the NCC may be stifled by "conservative praxis" (Avis, 2007, p. 175), and that ideas, practices and identities are constrained by the cultural and historical context of the organisation". A consideration of the multiple identities of teachers revealed that many viewed their own musical expertise as inadequate and undeserving of the title musician. Consequently, participation can reinforce a subservient sense of identity as merely a teacher among participants, rather than encouraging a composite musician-teacher identity (Bernard, 2004).

Drawing on Wenger's (1998) work on participation in a CoP, the study conceptualises four forms of participation in the NCC, distinguished by teacher's roles within the choir: Full, Peripheral, Marginal and Non-Participants. These categories of participants are used in the consideration of the NCC as a hierarchical activity system (AS), with teachers in this study considered along a horizontal and vertical axis of labour (Figure 4.3), corresponding with their choir roles and responsibilities and levels of status and power respectively. The study organises teachers on a hierarchical pyramid of participation (Figure 4.4), which is divided according to the level of power commanded by participants in the NCC on a school, regional and national level. Reflected through Engeström's (1999, 2001) CHAT, the research found that the mediating artefacts, rules of the field and the influence of the community reinforces the status quo, supports the efficient, attractive nature of participation, while also limiting the transformational power of activity members to consider alternate trajectories of participation and practice. The study concludes that participation is unequal in nature, and that power and decision making is

maintained on the upper levels of the participation pyramid through hegemonic structures and mindsets of senior NCC members (Figure 4.7). The progression of members along this hierarchy is ad-hoc, but is often linked to teachers' experience, alignment and endorsement of the vision and practices of the choir. Therefore, the current NCC structures are disempowering for potential innovators or disruptors of practice, and there exists a missed opportunity to foster teacher agency or autonomy in the process of participation. These findings, like the theme of teaching and learning, present the challenging task of reconciling the positive benefits of the highly efficient and structured nature of participation with the problematic hegemonic nature of participation constrained by the cultural and historical dimensions of the AS which focuses on reproducing the practices of previous iterations.

Consequently, Bourdieu's concept of capital is key to the maintenance of the hegemonic nature of participation. Capital in the form of musical works, practices, institutions and mindsets are a significant outcome of participation, evidenced through the accumulation and preservation of social and cultural capital by NCC members. Teachers valued the accrual of valued capital, which include the experience and knowledge of WAM and other revered genres of music, the chance to sing in the choir and develop choral etiquette, and the possible social mobility opportunities stemming from participation which may enhance one's professional and personal identity now and in the future. However, it is argued that the potential exclusive reliance on WAM, coupled with the narrow approach to music education, is antiquated within the current, contemporary education landscape. Furthermore, it fails to consider learner-centred, informal, creative or integrated approaches to music education and attend to the culturally diverse needs of learners and society which have evolved considerably over the choir's forty-year history. Capital acquisition and its subjective nature is inequitable, with some participants suggesting that the NCC may not be suitable for all schools given their socioeconomic status (Carol) or their differing musical mindsets (Mary). In this way, it could be argued that the NCC as an organisation is accessible in theory, but exclusive in practice. Participation in the NCC, while respected for its prestigious history and challenge of participation, aims to reproduce and replicate dominant forms of capital that have long been problematic within the music education sphere.

Reflecting on the data, the researcher argues that the practice of participation can be a powerful form of transformation. Through the lens of CHAT theory, the research aims to see beyond the contradictions between the hierarchies of the organisation and the rules and cultural constraints that impede its change, to explore the possibility of more inclusive, culturally responsive practices and artefacts becoming embodied in a future reimagining of teachers' musical learning, the NCC as a system and the broader area of music education. All participants spoke proudly and sincerely of the impact participation in the NCC had on their musical, personal, and professional lives. Notwithstanding the problematic nature of participation considered in this section, participants acknowledge the significant influence the NCC has on

their teaching and learning, their sense of identity as teachers, their exposure to musical capital and their work within their schools and community contexts. Therefore, while the author notes the conservative, static nature of participation, interpretation of the data suggests that transformative opportunities arising from participation exist, as well as the possibility for the NCC to be part of a grander reimagining of music education and musical attitudes in primary schools. There is evidence of participation in the NCC to be transformational for teachers such as Carol, who says she takes "great pride in the fact that we did it while I was there [as principal]", Susan who states that participation "has definitely enriched my career", and Mary who admits "I have given a lot of years to it...But I loved it. And I still do…And I still believe in it". The comprehensive picture of participation contributes to and responds to the parallel research question underpinning this study which will be now explored: What is the significance of teacher participation in the NCC in the 21st century?

5.2.2 The Significance of Teacher Participation in the 21st century Primary School

As has been argued previously, teacher participation in the NCC is significant as it reveals participants' opinions and experiences of music education and contributes to the wider primary music education conversation. From examining participation in the NCC by teachers and interpreting the data through the conceptual and theoretical lenses of this study, several significant and meaningful issues for teachers, schools and policy makers have emerged which are now considered.

As outlined in Chapter 2, many of the issues and challenges for music education in primary schools have been well flagged by the literature, including the reproduction of practices by teachers drawing on their own experiences (Bresler, 1998; Wright, 2015a); the troubled development of music education in primary schools and curricula in the Irish educational context (Kerins, 2019; McCarthy, 1999b; Walsh, 2016); the influences of the historical and cultural field and the dominance of particular cultural and social capital within school music programmes (Stakelum, 2008b; Wright, 2015a); the perceived lack of confidence among primary school teachers due to poor teacher education opportunities (Biasutti et al., 2015; Grennan, 2017; Hennessy, 2017; INTO, 2009); and the poor status of music and the arts across the education systems (Grennan, 2017). These factors represent the challenges to music education in the 21st century primary school which the NCC addresses or compounds in different ways. Furthermore, the literature review considered contemporary perspectives on music education which would respond to these challenges. These include the need for creative, culturally responsive programmes that are inclusive of the diverse range of students, experiences and musics within 21st century classrooms (Bond, 2017; Kelly-McHale, 2013; Sharp, 2004; Spruce, 2015) and the realignment of teachers as co-participants alongside learners in music education (Green, 2002; 2008).

As outlined above, the data indicates that the NCC does contribute greatly to teacher's sense of confidence and impacts their professional, personal, and musical identities. The impact of the choir on teachers' careers and sense of job satisfaction, as well as their identity within their schools, is broadly positive. The choir enables teachers with limited musical confidence and technical knowledge to learn and teach a complex range of songs, through the resources and encouragement of the organisation, in a manageable, efficient manner. It also exposes them, and their classes, to a broad range of musical styles, albeit through a primarily WAM, choral lens. Participation also provides children with the opportunity to sing in a group and in venues which hold status and pride in the minds of the participants.

The significant presence of the NCC within the music education has been acknowledged, as the choir has been noted as being "an exemplar for group singing in primary schools" (Doyle, 2019, p. 15), praised for its facilitation by primary teachers themselves, with the support and direction of a relatively small group of leaders. As McCarthy notes: "at no other time in the history of Irish primary music education were the national musical talents of classroom teachers tapped with such effectiveness as they have been in this creative project" (1999a, p. 153). While the creativity of the choir is questionable in light of the data considered here, the positive mindset among participants is encouraging given the current policy narrative in support of further partnerships being established within primary music education (Fahy & Kenny, 2021; Flynn & Johnston, 2017; GoI, 2017; Partington, 2018). The continuing legacy of the historical and cultural context of the choir makes it popular and trusted among schools, teachers, and arguably the DE themselves. The research acknowledges the significant presence of the programme in the primary school sector in Ireland and the possible future place of the NCC in responding to some of the challenges facing music education.

However, it must be acknowledged that much has changed over the past four decades in Irish primary schools, with teachers now navigating vastly different curriculum demands, classrooms, student populations and societal environments (NCCA, 2020). Considering the NCC within the contemporary primary school context, interpretation of the data suggests that the narrow, performance-focused nature of participation in the NCC and the training of teachers to be replicators of a predefined musical experience is in many ways an out-dated approach to music making. While some participants claim that the NCC does not aim to replace the curriculum, the all-encompassing nature of participation means that it largely makes other forms of music making in the classroom impossible. Fundamentally, teachers in this study understand and accept the limitations of the NCC, but felt that ultimately participation was a positive music education initiative.

It is proposed that the complex policy and contextual space outlined at the outset of this thesis has arguably prevented teachers and schools from embracing contemporary music

education philosophies. Compounded by the learning and identity limitations of teachers outlined thus far, their attraction to the high standard and quality of the repertoire reinforces the continued preference for music to act as a particular form of capital in education (McCarthy, 2010; 2015). Significantly, this capital is regarded as the "unique selling point' of the NCC which is facilitated and preserved through teacher "buy-in" (Charlotte) and participants in this study, despite what the literature argues, still value the reproduction of WAM music and choral singing as a worthwhile educative activity. This may be due to the resulting capital's power to enhance social mobility, facilitate access to lifelong engagement in music making, or reinforce a school or teacher's status and identity (Brändström, 1999; Elpus, 2018; Pollard & Alexander, 2019; Wright, 2015a). Crucially, the research uncovers a music education discourse within primary schools that favours the accessibility of music making over inclusivity. This approach misses the possible opportunities for tensions in the system relating to the inclusion of diverse student and teacher demographics to be transformative for the organisation, broadening their musical values and worldviews. These findings are significant considerations when one reflects on who participation in the choir is for, who benefits from it and what it reveals about music education in primary schools in Ireland today.

Arguably the most striking finding regarding the place of the NCC within the 21st century school is the participants' deep respect and reverence for the programme and its founder. Many historical figures from the Irish music education landscape have praised both the choir and its founder (Appendix A and B). Not surprisingly, in this study Creamer continues to be a key person within this historical and cultural phenomenon, even after his passing. Carol recalls the significance of Creamer on her music making: "I know where it started off for me, I know very clearly where it starts off, because I know the effect that… I have the highest regard for Seán Creamer, but I know the effect that he single-handedly had on my life." This effect is not limited to Carol's own participation in Creamer's choirs, but also in her involvement in choral music as an adult chorister and teacher. Nettl (1995) writes about the relationship between student and teacher within music conservatories as a type of heritage or identifier. In this study, members such as Carol, Susan, Mary and Hannah (as a child) could be described as 'Creamerites', following in the vision, tradition and actions of Creamer. Through their dedication and participation, the teachers affirm the historical and cultural tropes of the choir, especially the NCC's promotion of the Irish language, inclusion of religious, historical and WAM repertoire, taught through the choral classroom teaching style. In summary, Creamer's 1980s vision and values are still alive today in teachers who embody the tradition of the NCC, and those who have inherited it in 21st century schools. The significance of one man's influence is impressive and it is possible that any future developments in the NCC will always be considered within the context of Creamer's original vision of the choir.

The research findings suggest that participants are aware of the contradictions and tensions that emerge from viewing the NCC through a contemporary lens, however their concerns are surpassed by their trust in the programme, their desire to facilitate this type of choral musical experience within their schools, and the perceived poor level of music education and curriculum implementation among generalist teachers. This is significant in understanding the choices teachers make within the classroom with regard to pedagogy and lesson content, considering the balancing act of teaching the current wide range of curricular subjects.

Also, while hierarchical structures are not unusual for organisations such as the NCC, the conclusions drawn from this research implies that hegemonic nature of the choir which includes the dominance of socially valued capital, the maintenance of control over the pedagogical and philosophical underpinnings of the choir, and the static, replicative nature of the learning through repeated cycles cannot be ignored. Paradoxically, the NCC's hierarchical structures and cultural and historical traditions are both its greatest asset, in guaranteeing its longevity and popularity, and challenge, in impeding its evolution. The significance of programmes such as the NCC in shaping and defining the music education in primary schools requires the attention of policy makers and researchers working in the field. The choir is clearly an important part of the "tapestry" (Charlotte) of many schools across Ireland, not least to those represented in this study, however the COVID-19 pandemic pause presents an opportunity to consider the implications of this research and present some recommendations emerging from the study.

5.3 Research Recommendations

In this section, the implications of the research findings regarding teacher participation in the NCC will be considered, with reference to the multi-dimensional nature of participation described earlier, alongside the findings relating to the NCC as an organisation and a historical and cultural phenomenon. The research implications and recommendations emerging from the critical examination of teacher participation in the NCC will be discussed. This research suggests implications for many parties involved in the area of music education, namely teacher-participants in this study and beyond it, the NCC and other similar organisations, and the wider music education policy and curriculum space.

5.3.1 Recommendations for Teachers

The research demonstrates that teachers' musical and professional learning and capital, as well as their personal identities are enriched through participation. This participation is particularly valued by teachers whose habitus aligns with the field of the NCC and whose identity is supported and reinforced through participation. However, suggestions emerge from this study which could transform teachers' identity, musical experiences, and teaching and learning.

- The research recommends that teachers in this study, and in primary schools more generally, should reflect on their identities and musical habitus and challenge their musical comfort zones. This would facilitate a broader exchange of capital, repertoire and values through their teaching and learning.
- This study acknowledges the respect and trust that teachers place in the NCC as an organisation, however it would be beneficial for them to reflect critically on their participation within the organisation and to consider if the experience offered by the NCC is replacing rather than completing the current music curriculum.
- Following on from this point, this research recommends that teachers should be encouraged to critically examine their practices and consider alternative ways to facilitate music education and music making more holistically. They should be empowered to incorporate more innovative, progressive and contemporary music education philosophies.

5.3.2 Reimagining the NCC

As has been previously noted, this research is not an evaluation of the NCC; rather it aims to critically and comprehensively explore the practice of teacher participation. Notwithstanding participants' primarily positive views of the organisation, the prevailing aims and structures of the NCC provide for the maintenance of a homogenous, replicative vision of musical experience and music making, which is inconsonant with much contemporary research and policy. This research recommends that an opportunity exists for the NCC to reimagine the organisation across three areas: design, operation, and the musical approach of the programme.

Considering the current design of the NCC programme:

- Many participants in this study noted the potential for the current model to be more "explicitly linked to primary school curricular music requirements" (Doyle, 2019, p. 15) and proposed some additions to future NCC cycles including:
    - Composing accompanying ostinati.
    - Playing percussion instruments.
    - Producing a textbook or teaching manual that explores musical concepts and features of musical notation aligned with the curriculum and choir repertoire.
    - Isolating a smaller number of songs whereby musical concepts and curriculum strands could be explored in depth.
    - Digital resources and repertoire archives to facilitate greater engagement of a wider audience with the various historical and current repertoire.
- Regarding the repertoire, the study recommends a consultation with teachers and students with regard to the genres represented in the repertoire, with a view to ensuring it is relevant, appropriately challenging and suitable for all 21st century schools and singers.

- The study recommends the exploration of a revised or additional summer course or in-service CPD course linked to participation, that would support teachers meaningfully in their musical learning and expand their knowledge, experiences and skills in music education through choral singing, other musical activities and potentially digital technologies.
- The NCC as part of a potential National Singing Project (Doyle, 2019) could collate and share the resources produced thus far with schools all over the country. Nationally, schools could then perform the repertoire supported by a system of mentoring based on an enhanced model and provision of AMDs countrywide.

Considering the operation of the programme:

- The research suggests that NCC leaders reconsider the time-consuming nature of participation. One option could be to move the choir to outside curriculum time, ensuring it does not replace the content of the curriculum. Another option could involve reducing the workload of the programme through less complex or numerous songs.
- The structures of the NCC could evolve and become decentralised, encouraging more autonomy and feedback from teachers, schools, and regions. In this way, local schools and regions could be empowered to have more ownership over the musical and pedagogical aspects of participation.
- The current regional committee structures could evolve from their current role as implementation mechanisms for rehearsals and concerts, to embody a more consultative role. The establishment of communities of practice which respond to the local needs of teachers and schools and share good practice on a school (Level 1), regional (Level 2), and national level (Level 3) could be very empowering and agentic for teachers.

Finally, regarding a potential transformation of the musical philosophy and model of the choir, the following recommendations emerge from the research:

- The choir could establish a children's NCC committee(s), with oversight of areas such as repertoire, interpretation, performances, etc. This would establish the NCC as a child-centred or child-led organisation and would respond to some of the tensions relating to power and learning that emerged from the data. For example, Green's (2002; 2006) informal learning practices would allow the learners to lead participation with the assistance of teachers, through the choosing, interpreting, composing, and performing of an individual school's repertoire.
- The research recommends that revisions of repertoire and structures be explicated through a culturally responsive and inclusive lens (Kelly-McHale, 2013; Spruce 2015). This would ensure that musical success in a choir (and music education more broadly) is not only measured by participation and presenteeism, but through engagement by all learners in inclusive music making opportunities. Transformative participation should lead to the

performance of all music genres (e.g., Irish traditional or ethnic world music) in a culturally sensitive and authentic way, rather than through a WAM or choral filter.

- The findings suggest that the choir should reflect on the hierarchical, highly structured nature of the organisation and consider whether disruption and innovation is welcomed and encouraged through the engagement of a diverse range of participants, balancing the ideas and disturbance of newcomers with the desires of old-timers.
- The choir could create an alumni community to connect with students as they progress into secondary school and beyond. This may serve as a recruitment tool for future primary school teachers and/or choral music practitioners.
- In a possible future transformation of the organisation, the research recommends engaging with expert practitioners in the field of child-centred and child-led arts-based activities to explore how best to synthesise the formality of and excellence achieved by the NCC, and the natural creativity and intrigue of children.

The researcher acknowledges that change in any organisation is problematic (Fullan, 2006), and the participants of this study were ambiguous in their stance on the future of the NCC. It could be argued that the choir is of its time and therefore cannot be forced into a framework or philosophy of music education so distant from its origins. However, the researcher argues that given the current redevelopment of the primary school curriculum, there is an opportunity to reimagine the NCC, its nature and significance, and ultimately its contribution to music education in the 21st century.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Music Education in Primary Schools

The final section of the study provides broader recommendations across the areas of teacher learning and CPD, music curriculum design and implementation, policy making and the broader philosophical question of the purpose of music education.

Considering the recommendations for teacher learning and CPD in music education:

- The research concludes that the teacher learning evidenced in this study is largely antiquated and is heavily influenced by teachers' own experiences of music education, leading to the replication of inherited practices. It recommends that future music education initiatives and CPD programmes must challenge and expand the musical lifeworlds of teachers.
- The study identifies a gap in the teacher education continuum whereby teachers have little experience of musical learning outside of ITE. This should be rectified through the provision of a wide range of CPD opportunities in the area of arts and music education, which aim to develop the musical confidence and competence of primary school teachers, as well as expanding the breadth and depth of their musical knowledge and skills.

- Teacher learning should encourage greater integration of teachers' and children's musical lives inside and outside school, in addition to utilising informal teaching methodologies and shifting the mindset of teachers and learners from curriculum consumers to curriculum co-creators (Dolan, 2012; Green, 2002; Spruce, 2015). This would develop more culturally responsive and creative music classrooms and allow teachers and children more agency in their music making.

Regarding current and future curriculum and policy developments in the area of primary school music education in Ireland:

- The reported dissatisfaction and apparent patchy provision of the current primary music curriculum is concerning and this research recommends greater engagement between DE, the Inspectorate and schools to constructively address the reasons why teachers are unhappy with the curriculum and how to support the implementation of it.
- Future curricular revision and in-service training must consider contemporary perspectives on music education, moving beyond the traditional approach evidenced in this study. This would encourage best practice in primary school music, underpinned by creative, culturally responsive and inclusive practices and pedagogies.
- It is recommended that teachers' identity, teacher voice and their previous experiences are acknowledged and challenged in any future curriculum revision.
- This research recommends that future music curricula should re-examine the purpose of choral music within classrooms, reflecting on its place as one of the many musical activities available to teachers in their music lessons.
- The study recognises that teachers continue to feel stressed and overwhelmed by the current curriculum and the data suggests that teachers desire efficiency, predictability, and structure in their teaching lives. The research recommends that policy makers consider the impact of curriculum overload, teacher stress and the consequent reduction of the curriculum and narrowing of the learning outcomes for children.
- Education officials should monitor the current implementation of the prescribed curriculum across the primary school system as well as ensuring that teachers are supported in changing their methods to meaningfully affect practice in schools.
- This research supports the important role of outside arts organisations in the provision of music in primary schools and recommends the continued involvement of musical groups, artists and programmes in partnership with schools and teachers. However, the research concludes that partnerships that operate as curriculum replacements continue to be problematic and require careful consideration and monitoring by all stakeholders.

- The study recommends that any future music education policies or projects work with programmes such as the NCC to ascertain the optimum role of external musical organisations as optional curriculum content or extra-curricular activities.

Finally, regarding the broader theoretical and philosophical implications of the study:

- The research recommends the use of CHAT (Engeström, 1999, 2001) in the critique and review of organisations working in education and music education. The addition of the hierarchical division of labour to the framework could be theorised further to become a new constituent within the activity system model (i.e., power).
- The study affirms the possible limiting nature of capital and habitus in music education, as well as the potential problematic power implications of teachers and/or organisations as curriculum custodians. The research recommends that capital acquisition and the transformation of habitus and field is a desirable outcome from formal music education, through the engagement of teachers and learners in creative, culturally responsive practices and participation, and that this area warrants further investigation.
- The place of the researcher as an insider within the NCC could viewed as limiting, however this research affirms the importance of practitioner based, interpretive research that acknowledges the biases and preconceptions of the human condition, yet can enlighten the field with meaningful data and conclusions for many different stakeholders in the NCC and music education more generally. It is recommended that research such as this continue to be encouraged in music education, as the epitome of reflective practice and reflexive research, with the researcher at the heart of the phenomenon looking from the inside out and the outside in.
- This study recommends that all involved in music education reflect on the philosophical question explored in the opening chapter: What is the purpose of music education in primary schools? The research argues that policy makers, teachers and schools need to reflect on the desired aim of music education, the balancing of the potential musical and extra-musical benefits from participation, and the place and rationale of music education within schools today.
- Finally, the data suggests that there remains a preoccupation with the production of a musical product and on the facilitation of access to music education. It is recommended that teachers, policy writers and the NCC continually question if this narrow focus is sufficient to engage and encourage each teacher and child to develop their musical learning, identity, capital and practice in a holistic, inclusive, and ultimately transformative nature.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

There are three main ways this study could be developed or inform further research: through continuation, replication or extension. Firstly, the teachers consulted within this study, or a similar sample, could be part of a longitudinal project to measure the changes or others in the nature and significance of their participation. Replicating the study with a larger sample would be useful to challenge or further support the findings of this research, contributing to the recommendations proposed above. Also, with initiatives such as Creative Ireland, MG and the NCCA's curriculum review on the horizon, a continuation of the study in the future could yield very different results. Crucially, a useful follow on from this study would be to explore more deeply the implications of the research for the NCC as an organisation, reimagining its place within the 21st century school and aligning more closely with contemporary music education discourse.

The options to extend or build on the study are many. By extending the research focus to include more musical partnerships within schools, one could compare the nature and significance of teacher participation across a range of activities. Also, a future study could consider the children of the NCC through the use of observational methods and ethnographic enquiry and consider the possible link between child participation and musical learning or aptitude (cf. Welch, 2012; Welch et al., 2009). The importance of teachers' context and identity could also be further examined, through the studying of teachers' lifeworlds and the influences that teacher's pre-education and educational experience have on their practice. This could be conducted using a life study or narrative enquiry lens whereby the focus would be on the participants rather than the phenomenon. Also, building on the use of AT in this study, a further investigation may consist of examining two co-existing AS, the NCC and the curriculum, to identify similar or contradictory tensions between teachers' interactions. Finally, the question posed above relating to defining the purpose of music education in primary schools has been considered by many (Fautley & Murphy, 2015; Mills, 2005; Pitts et al., 2015; Stakelum, 2008b), however I would argue that there is an increasing urgency to address this question convincingly and comprehensively in a post-pandemic primary school music curriculum.

5.5 Conclusion

This thesis has explored the nature and significance of teacher participation in the NCC through an interpretive lens informed by the researcher's positionality as an insider within the choir, the perspectives of musical educationalists and policy makers in Ireland and elsewhere, and through the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of participation outlined earlier. The research concludes that participation is a complex phenomenon and multi-dimensional construct. In the NCC, teacher participation emerges as a linear but rewarding form of learning, reinforcing a positive sense of teacher identity within a homogenous community of members, governed by

hegemonic power structures and historically dominant forms of capital that underpin an efficient, attractive yet anachronistic organisation that teachers happily support and affiliate with.

The study finds that the nature of participation is both positive and problematic, and that the current context of music education in Irish primary schools provides a gap in provision that organisations such as the NCC are occupying. The study has highlighted the impact of power and conservatism within participation, while also pointing to the possible transformative potential of participation to change the mindset and narrative surrounding music in schools and to impact teachers' learning, identities and capital in an empowering way drawing on contemporary theories of music education already articulated in the literature. The significance of the author's role as the insider, narrator and critic of the phenomenon is key to the depth of the analysis and reflective nature of the work which points to many positive and problematic dimensions of participation, which one hopes will inform future developments in the organisation and in music education more generally. The work of the NCC in bringing musical participation to many thousands of schools, teachers and children must be acknowledged and celebrated, and the participants in this study advocated for its continued presence in schools. This research recommends that all within the NCC community build on the strong foundation that currently exists and reimagine a choir which represents all members, teachers and children within the 21st century primary school.

5.6 Coda

The late Lawrence Stenhouse wrote "it is the teachers who, in the end, will change the world of the classroom by understanding it" (1975, as cited in Ruddock, 1988, p. 35). As a teacher myself, and through my critical examination of the construct of participation, I now feel that I have gained a deeper understanding of the world of the NCC through the eyes of the teachers in this study. My own participation in the choir, and subsequently in this research has been transformative. My work with the organisation has always been fulfilling, giving me an avenue to practise my own piano playing and to sustain my musical life as a primary school teacher. As someone who came from a slightly different socio-economic background to the traditional classical pianist, I have participated in music and teaching through alternate pathways and accumulated a lot of experience performing with various ages and organisations. As I'm sure many doctoral scholars will testify, it is difficult to summarise the learning that occurs throughout a research process like this. This study has enabled me to explore a wealth of understanding regarding participation in the NCC and with the kind agreement of the participants, an understanding of their personal and professional lives. Also, the historical and cultural context of music education in Ireland and elsewhere, and the literature around teacher learning and organisational frameworks, have all contributed to my constantly evolving identity as a researcher-musician-teacher.

My hope is that the work conducted during this PhD, and summarised in this thesis, has recognised the cultural and historical significance of the NCC, representing the first significant enquiry that has been carried out on the organisation. Also, it aims to contribute to the wider discussion around music education's place in primary schools, to explore the importance, functioning and impact of musical partnerships between schools and outside organisations, and provide food for thought for any possible future reimagining of the NCC.

On a personal level, my doctoral journey has challenged and transformed my own understanding and values of the purpose of music education; my judgement of what a high standard of music education does, and could, look like; and my approach as a researcher (Coady, 2021a, 2021b). I have broadened my conceptualisation of music participation and music education, while also acknowledging my own musical journey and context, and can now appreciate a rainbow of possibilities from musical participation.

The participants in this study were referred to during the research process as "the teachers in the balcony" (referring to the NCC teachers who sit in the balcony of the NCH at the final concerts). Therefore, I aimed in this study to peek behind the NCC and examine what I termed the real participants, the teachers. However, in doing so I also investigated and critiqued my own habitus and capital and have developed a fuller balcony view of musical learning, identity, capital, education, and participation. I trust that this study is just my first contribution into the rich field of music education discourse and that my work with and in music education can continue the wishes of Saunders, Varvarigou and Welch: "Hopefully we will never again revert to a time when singing is for the few rather than the many" (2010, p. 80).

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Appendix A: Primary Document Sources

Appendix A contains primary sources collected as part of this research project. They include personal communications between the NCC founder, Seán Creamer and others in the Irish music education scene.

Document 1: Original NCC Programme, NCH Performances (8th & 9th June 1985)

Document 2: Letter from Kenneth Mills, Church of Ireland College of Education to Seán Creamer (10th June 1985)

Document 3: Letter from Gemma Hussey, Minister for Education (18th June 1985)

Document 4: Letter from John Harris, Department of Education (18th June 1985)

Document 5: Letter from Joseph Groocock, Educator, Composer, Conductor and Organist (June 9th 1985)

Document 6: Letter from Pat Cox, President of the European Parliament to Collette Hussey, National Organiser of the NCC (September 2004)

Document 7: Letter from Aloys Fleischman, Director of Cork International Choral and Folk Dance Festival (14th May 1985)

Document 8: Letter from Michael O' Sionadáis, Department of Education (10th June 1985)

Document 9: Article on the European Day of Music (21st June 1985, The Irish Times

Document 10: Poem and Drawing from the NCC Choir of Loreto Convent, Foxrock (n.d.)

Document 11: Excerpts from **"Thank You For The Music": The National Children's Choir celebrates 30 years of singing** (June, 2015)

NCCH, 1985

Cór Náisiúnta na nÓg

The National Children's Choir

National Concert Hall

Saturday 8th June 1985
3 and 8 p.m.

Sunday 9th June
3 p.m.

The National Children's Choir

Aims to further the cause of music in Primary Schools.

THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHOIR
Aims to heighten awareness of music during European Music Year.

THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHOIR
Aims to expand the repertoire of songs currently taught in our schools.

THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHOIR
Aims to highlight the importance of music in the social and intellectual development of children.

THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHOIR
Has already been formed. It has 4,500 members nationwide. They are drawn from fourth, fifth and sixth classes in Primary Schools.

These children are currently being taught an extensive repertoire by 120 National School Teachers in the Athlone, Cork, Dublin, Limerick, Meath, Waterford and Sligo Regions.

SEAN CREAMER

Sean Creamer was born in Mullingar. He was educated at C. B. S. Mullingar, Colaiste Einde Gaillimh, St. Patrick's College of Education and U. C. D. (Hons. B. Mus.).

He was appointed Music Inspector with the Department of Education and now has charge of music in Primary Schools.

He founded the Celtic Singers in Sligo, the Park Singers and Cantairi Avondale in Dublin. He also conducted Cor Chraobh an Cheitinnigh.

He has travelled extensively with choirs to Music Festivals and on Concert Tours to Britain, Europe and U.S.A.

He initiated experiments in mass singing for children in Sligo and Dublin.

He is a Director of Cumann Naisiunta na gCor and represents the Department of Education on the National Committee for European Music Year.

National Address.

Mr. SEAN CREAMER
Director
National Children's Choir
Department of Education
Primary Branch
Marlboro Street
DUBLIN 1

"I thoroughly approve of the concept of a National Childrens' Choir. It offers the school children of Ireland an exciting and creative way to celebrate 1985 – European Music Year.

I look forward to hearing the choir's performance."

GEMMA HUSSEY
Minister for Education

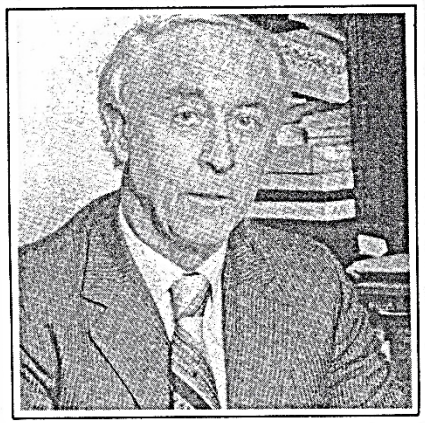
"The National Children's Choir has the full backing and the support of the National Committee for Music Year.

It is an imaginative and exciting concept."

Mr. FRANK CASEY
Chairman of the
National Committee for Music Year 1985

"A valuable educational development,, to be especially welcomed in Music Year 1985."

ADRIAN MUNNELLY
Director Arts Council



"It is with great pleasure that I welcome the establishment of a National Children's Choir and wish it continued growth and success.

Cuireann sé fíor áthas orm céim ar aghaidh mar seo a fheicéail agus thar ceann múinteoirí na hÉireann guím rath Dé ar an obair."

JOHN JOE CONNELLY
President Irish National Teachers' Organisation

"A great step in bringing children to the joy and fulfillment of choral singing. I am looking forward to the choir's contribution to the opening of the 1985 Cork Choral Festival."

Professor ALOYS FLEISCHMANN
Hon. Life President Cumann Naisiunta na gCor

"Musical activity in Ireland has developed by leaps and bounds in recent years. This development is of immense value because it involves children of primary school-age."

Dr. K. MILNE
President, Church of Ireland College of Education

Performances

The National Children's Choir

will present J. S. Bach's Peasant Conata, Irish Hunting Songs and Benjamin Britten's Friday Afternoons.

The work of the National Children's Choir will culminate in three performances at the National Concert Hall, Dublin, on June 8th and 9th, 1985.

The Choir for this occasion will be made up of 500 children representing all Regions and every participating school.

The Choir will participate in the opening of the Cork Choral Festival.

Other Regional performances will also be given.

The National Children's Choir

is a great celebration of youth and music.

. . . . . a magnificient contribution to EUROPEAN MUSIC YEAR.

The National Children's Choir

is an affiliate of Cumann Naisiunta na gCor.

Document 2: Letter from Kenneth Mills, Church of Ireland College of Education (10th June 1985)

Coláiste Oideachais Eaglais na hÉireann,
Bóthar Ráthmaonis Uacht.,
Baile Átha Cliath, 6.
Tel: 970033

Church of Ireland College of Education,
Upper Rathmines Road,
Dublin 6.
Tel: 970033

10. VI. 85.

Dear Sean,

Very many thanks for sending me tickets for last night's concert at the NCH. I went with a colleague, and we both enjoyed it greatly. I was talking afterwards, and the lot to the leaders for St Matthew's Lambeg, and they both expressed their admiration for the high degree of organisation that was involved.

Perhaps I might take this opportunity to express my appreciation of all the help you gave us over the past years. As a result, I feel sure that music is now in safe hands, and will go from strength to strength.

All good wishes for Cork (and 1987!)

Yours sincerely,

Kenneth Mills

Document 3: Letter from Gemma Hussey, Minister for Education (18th June 1985)

OIFIG AN AIRE OIDEACHAIS
BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 1

Mr. Sean Cremer,
34 Abbey View,
Monkstown,
Blackrock,
Co. Dublin.

18 June, 1985.

Dear Sean,

I praised you and your National Children's Choir sincerely and wholeheartedly on Saturday evening. That was before the show; if I had waited to speak until afterwards it would have been difficult to find words to praise sufficiently such a superb performance.

Please convey my appreciation and my congratulations to all who had a hand in the project - children, parents, teachers, helpers and, of course, to your marvellous accompanist, Ann Quinlan.

Some Southsiders tell me Sunday's performance even surpassed that of Saturday. I wonder!

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Gemma Hussey

Gemma Hussey, T.D.,
Minister for Education.

Document 4: Letter from John Harris, Department of Education (18th June 1985)

OIFIG AN AIRE OIDEACHAIS
BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH, 1
18. 6. 85.

Dear Sean,

I meant to write to you sooner to congratulate you most warmly on the quite outstanding concert given by the National Children's Choir. Both Barbara and myself thoroughly enjoyed the evening.

I have nothing but admiration for all your tremendous work in teaching the music to so many young people. Yet they all looked so happy, so proud, and absolutely under control. The diction was excellent.

You have done so much to bring music alive in schools and to give young people a love for it. Long may your work continue!

Yours very sincerely,
John Harris.

Document 5: Letter from Joseph Groocock, Educator, Composer, Conductor and Organist (June 9th 1985)

224 Lower Kilmacud Road,
Stillorgan,
Dublin 14.

June 9th 1985.

Dear Sean,

Thank you for the complimentary tickets for the concert last night. Doreen and I enjoyed it enormously !

I feel I have to write at once while the memory of it is still fresh. Surely this is one of the most momentous happenings in music in this country. We cannot understand how on earth so many children (and we realise that this was only a sample of the whole effort) could be so skilled, so highly polished. How you did it is entirely baffling. I am jotting down a few of the many thoughts that this concert aroused in my mind :-

The Irish songs were delightful, pleasantly contrasted. I have always enjoyed the Little Red Fox. (Forgive this old Sassenach for not remembering the correct spelling of the Irish title). In general I have always thought that Irish traditional songs, unlike those of some other countries, did not always lend themselves to singing by a big crowd. Many are so personal. But last night's performance proved that a big crowd of singers can put across traditional songs with wonderful effect. Sitting where we were, towards the back of the ground floor, they came across as a marvellous blended sound, with no sense of any passengers being carried ! How few adult choirs manage to sound like this.

The Britten songs were a real joy to hear. I realised Britten's cleverness in writing simple, extremely vocal and easily memorable melodic lines, with a generally simple harmonic support. Then, when

I only wish that all the conductors of all the choral societies in the country could have been present to hear this concert ! I hope a recording was made (though a recording could hardly do justice to the sheer impact of all that sound).

It must have been a great example and inspiration to teachers who heard the concert. It proved what Kodaly and all other sensible musicians who took an interest in music for the young always maintained, namely that children can not only learn good music, but very clearly can enjoy learning good music, and also that children can be expected to perform good music up to a very high standard of perfection. Obviously you have been able to pick the most musical and the most vocal youngsters from so many schools, but this great effort ought I think to act as a shining example to many humble but painstaking teachers to do more and more for music in their schools. I don't know whether I ever told you a story of An Grianan, Termonfechin, many years ago. I was going there every Thursday for many weeks, in order to do some informal singing with whatever ladies happened to be attending one of the I.C.A. courses there. And one week the warden - if that was her title - had brought in some 8 girls from the local primary school to join in. I sent round the song-books, and everybody enjoyed singing some Moore's Melodies etc. Then some lady asked whether the girls could sing a song by themselves I asked them, they consulted Mary the oldest girl, and Mary said they would. They stood up and sang one verse of an Irish song, then sat down. We expressed our thanks : I turned to Mary and asked her whether they would not sing some more verses of the song. "Our teacher only taught us the one verse, Sir " she said. I suggested that they might sing a second song : "Our teacher only taught us the one song,Sir."

he wanted, the more complex harmonies stood out with marvellous contr
And - as does not always happen in my experience, - the singers were
steady as a rock in intonation in spite of some of the discords in
the accompaniments. And the words ! How on earth can so many children
sing so many songs, not only with perfect memory for all the details,
but with such crystal-clear diction ? I know that it is usually
necessary to get singers to go on working at words long after they
know, or feel that they know, the songs. And yet this obviously
huge amount of work did not result in any sense of staleness : rather
the songs came across with an air of spontaneity, which must be so
very hard to achieve. It was a good idea to repeat the canonic one
as an encore.

We loved your Peasant Cantata. It was a splendid idea to have
groups singing recitatives etc. I did that with Handel oratorios
at St.Columba's sometimes. And I know that it is often very difficult
to get a well-timed result that does not seem stilted and artificial
They were all enormously successful. Those children will never forge
the chance you gave them : as members of future audiences they will
understand Messiah or St.Mathew Passion in a much more vivid way
than do many members of audiences who have never had such an experie
of singing something similar in style. The boys were so good ! Futur
choral societies may have a few tenors and basses with good luck.
As this movement which you have started grows (can it ?) let us hope
that more boys are found interested and able to take part.

You asked for some fairly fast speeds in some of the numbers,
and they rose to the challenge splendidly. The words were as far as
I could tell (and I know the work pretty well) almost 100% clear.
Again, this is not always the case with adult choirs (an understatem

Please do not initiate any official action on this matter : it happene a good many years ago, and the teacher in question is probably no longer there. But it does point a very interesting contrast between what may well have been the minimum lip-service paid to music in school a few years ago, and this demonstration of what can be done by schoolchildren in 1985 !

I also have memories of the time when I was somehow on the committ of Cor Fheile na Scol (forgive the misspellings please) in Dublin, and endured the most ghastly performances of songs and accorion pieces etc in the old Metropolitan Hall. All the audience seemed happy about it : the teachers on the committee appeared generally to be happy about it. But the standard (this I suppose was 20 or 30 years ago) was diabolical ! Now we go forward. You obviously have a vision of something far greater than has yet been found possible in young children. May you succeed in raising the whole concept of music for schooldhildren until school music in Ireland is the envy of the world !

Frankly, I had never imagined that you could get so many children to sound so beautiful ! From Doreen and myself, hearty congratulati

How nice it is to have widened my circle of friends, thanks to yo invitation to conduct the B Minor. Several teachers, members of your choir, came up to me last night and made themselves known to me. (Also, I must tell you that from time to time some charming young g irl speaks to me, and tells me how much she enjoyed singing Messia

what an enormous privilege and responsibility it is, whether the are children or adults, to direct such groups of singers !

Yours sincerely
Joe Groocock

Document 6: Letter from Pat Cox, President of the European Parliament to Collette Hussey, National Organiser of the NCC (September 2004)

To: Colette HUSSEY
National Organiser
National Children's Choir

September 2004

Last year I had the pleasure to attend the final concert of the National Children's Choir at the National Concert Hall, Dublin. I was especially pleased to be there in a small and simple way to acknowledge and celebrate the contribution of Seán Cramer to music and song in Ireland especially among the young.

On behalf of the European Parliament I presented Seán with a special case set of three medals to acknowledge and honour his unstinting commitment and dedication.

At an earlier stage of my presidency of the European Parliament I was invited to Áors an Uachtaráin by President McAleese. On behalf of the Parliament I presented to President with a similar set of medals : all three represent an idea of Europe.

The first medal carried the image of *Europa*, derived from ancient Greek mythology and from whence the name of our Continent, Europe.
The second medal was in the image of Charlemagne, the founder and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, a particular form of Europe in the early medieval period.
The third medal carried the image of Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister who in Paris on the 9 of May 1950 delivered a famous foundational speech as a call to action towards new European integration. His was a vision based not, like the preceding war, on the force of arms, but rather based on the force of reason and harnessing the power of what he called "creative reconciliation".

I was honoured to be able to make this presentation to Seán Cramer, a man whom I met years earlier when some of my own family members participated in his National Children's Choir.

I remarked just as I was pleased to present a set of medals to President McAleese, Uachtarán an hEireann, so to it was with great pleasure as a mark of gratitude and respect that I presented to Seán Cramer a similar set of medals in his role as Uachtarán an Cheoil and master of the most universal language of all, music.

Pat COX
President of the European Parliament (Jan 2002 - July 2004)

Document 7: Letter from Aloys Fleischman, Director of Cork International Choral and Folk Dance Festival (14th May 1985)

Cork International
Choral and Folk Dance Festival

OFFICES: FESTIVAL OFFICE, METROPOLE HOTEL,
MacCURTAIN STREET, CORK, IRELAND
Telephone: Cork 502221

14th May, 1985

Mr. Seán Creamer B.Mus.,
34 Abbeyview Estate
Monkstown
CO. DUBLIN

Dear Seán,

I deeply regretted on Monday night last not to have had a chance of telling you how enormously we all appreciated your marvellous initiative in setting up Cór na nóg and what a real pleasure, in fact an inspiration it was for me to have had the privilege of conducting them for the first time in public. They were absolutely delightful, and I have been receiving endless and enthusiastic plaudits ever since, and appreciation of what people generally think to be the best thing that has come out of the European Music Year.

I think a further word of congratulation is due to the organisation of the choir, since it was to me quite miraculous to see them coming on with such speed, and leaving again in the same way. Would you thank the gentleman who seemed to be in charge of this end of things - I fear I do not know his name.

With renewed congratulations and very best wishes for the continued success of the choir -

yours sincerely,

ALOYS FLEISCHMANN
DIRECTOR

Document 8: Letter from Míchéal O' Sionadáis, Department of Education (10th June 1985)

An Roinn Oideachais,
(Department of Education).
Baile Átha Cliath, 1.
(Dublin, 1).

10. 6. 85.

A Bhean, a chara,

Bhí sé ar eolas
maith gach uile neamhéad de Ríon
Ghá ach éisteacht leis an lucht
éisteachta ar an mbealach amach;
ní raibh éinse ann (leis féin sanúireamh)
nach raibh tóstha go mór leis an
National Children's Choir agus an éacht
eile a bhí déanta ag Séan Crémen.

Bain buaiú beannacht,
Do chara,

Document 9: Article on the European Day of Music (21st June 1985, The Irish Times

THE IRISH TIMES, FRIDAY, JUNE 21, 1985 C

ARTS AND STUDIES

Today is European Music Day and RONIT LENTIN talked to FRANK CASEY, Managing director of the Industrial Credit Corporation, about his work as chairman of the Irish European Music Year Committee.

A year and a day for Europe's music

Frank Casey. — (Photograph: Pat Langan)

WITH THE broadcast of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra concert on RTE 2 tonight and with many outdoors 24 hours events throughout the country to make European Music Day, even those who have not followed the squabbles and criticisms on the one hand and the profusion of musical activity on the other, will be unable to miss today's festivities.

Almost every musical committee and group will mark today in some way. Dublin will have its main event at the Phoenix Park, where massed bands will play throughout the day while Wexford and Clonmel will stage outdoors free musical events. Meanwhile, in Europe Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Eireann continues its tour, which today reaches Hanover.

At the hub of European Music Year activity stands the very modest figure of Industrial Credit Corporation managing director Frank Casey. "When I was asked by the Arts Council to head the EMY committee, I was more than surprised," he told me in his Harcourt street office. He accepted the appointment because he had the organisational skills and because he knew that because he was not involved in any musical establishment, he could remain objective about applicants for the various grants dispensed by EMY.

More than prepared for the hard work involved, despite his own hectic schedule at the ICC, Frank Casey was ill-prepared for the media criticism heaped on the committee through the year. He is reluctant to enter the arena with counter-accusations, in the hope that when the year's work is done, Ireland will have some on-going musical gains emanating from his committee's initiatives.

Set up in autumn 1983, the Irish EMY committee is aimed at making people more aware of music in all its forms from classical to rock, promoting Irish musicians at home and abroad, marking the year by some special events, and blazing a trial for the future with special emphasis on the involvement of young people in music making.

Halfway through his year as EMY committee chairman Frank Casey looks back reasonably contented. "One of the points of EMY was to mark the tricentenaries of Bach, Handel and Scarlatti and I am happy that so many of their works have been performed here this year," he says. "By the way, another thing worth noting is the commemorative series of stamps."

He is also particularly happy about the setting up of the Irish National Children's Choir and the Irish Youth Jazz Orchestra. "Jazz is going to become very important again," he says. "We have in Ireland many good jazz musicians, but few younger players, and thanks to the Bank of Ireland, we have now started working on the next generation of jazz players."

He is equally excited about the Children's Choir with which his own eight-year-old daughter sings. Words like "bringing together children from all over Ireland and creating a whole" sound pompous when put on paper, but there is nothing assuming or pompous about Frank Casey, who, if anything, wishes to minimise his own contribution to the success of the year hitherto. On October 5th Music in Schools Day is also aimed at enhancing Irish schoolchildren's interest in music.

He is less thrilled when talking about money. Perhaps his years with the ICC make him extra-prudent when discussing cash. "People ask me if the £100,000 we received from the government via the Department of the Taoiseach was enough. It was welcome when it came but, of course, if we had more and earlier, we could have done so much more."

He does wish to emphasise the committee's work in hustling for private sponsorship. "I know from my work here how difficult it is to elicit funds in a recession, and I am glad to say we have succeeded in getting sponsorship of some £80,000 plus money from the Council of Europe, which resulted in the European tour by Comhaltas Ceoltoirí."

Another important European involvement is the Irish-Swedish exchange. In the autumn the Irish Composers Centre will hold a series of lectures, concerts and a special exhibition on Swedish music at Trinity College, attended by at least one Swedish composer. A similar event will be staged in Stockholm featuring Irish music — the Swedes have extended an invitation to two Irish composers and the manager of the Irish Composers Centre to participate in the Stockholm event.

As we talk he keeps remembering other good things. There are the tapes of Irish composers and musicians to be issued this year and the grants for pianos for provincial centres and the tour by RTE's Music For Fun throughout the country and the Ballad Conference in Trinity in August.

But, I ask, would not many of these things have happened without the EMY committee? "I am sure the visit by the Vienna Phil would have happened without us, as would the forthcoming visit by the Pittsburg Symphony," Frank Casey says candidly. "In the last few years there has been a tremendous growth in activity thanks mainly to the NCH. However, in the folk area, there would have been less happening. And, compared with some other European countries, particularly the UK, we have done a lot, although some other countries are doing much more."

He agrees that it is not at all sure that the consumers of music, as opposed to its producers who know where their bread is buttered, are aware of his committee's work. "We have been very low key. We see ourselves as co-ordinators rather than prima donnas," he says. But even this unassuming chairman wishes to remind us that for a small country, Ireland can boast a huge amount of musical activity.

"Since I have started taking an interest in music, there has been a constant progression in standards and activity. It is frustrating that some musicians have had to leave Ireland but equally gratifying that people like John O'Conor and Bernadette Greevy still have their homes here. Shortage of funds has always hampered Irish musicians, but remembering that France, for

especially music, according to Frank Casey, are not a matter of the survival of the fittest: "Music cannot flourish without State support. Record companies prove this by the fact that it is their popular music which finances their classical recordings."

People have also criticised the EMY committee by saying that various members furthered their own interests through EMY funds. "In getting together such a committee, it would have been impossible to avoid people with particular interests," Frank Casey points out. "But any time we discussed funds to an organisation in which a committee member was involved, that person left the room."

He does feel sad to be thus criticised. "When you enter the public arena, you have to expect criticism and I welcome fair criticism. What saddens me is unfair criticism."

When European Music Year is over, Frank Casey confesses he will miss his work with the committee, although his time will be more his own. "I am happy but not complacent," he answers a question. "What I am happiest about is the seeds we have sown for the future as in the case of the National Children's Choir, the Irish Youth Jazz Orchestra and the tapes of Irish composers. I

When European Music Year is over, Frank Casey confesses he will miss his work with the committee, although his time will be more his own. "I am happy but not complacent," he answers a question. "What I am happiest about is the seeds we have sown for the future as in the case of the National Children's Choir, the Irish Youth Jazz Orchestra and the tapes of Irish composers. I hope too, that European Music Day will happen again in future years, and that as a result of this year's activity other European countries will be more aware of what we are doing here."

Document 10: Poem and Drawing from the NCC Choir of Loreto Convent, Foxrock (n.d.)

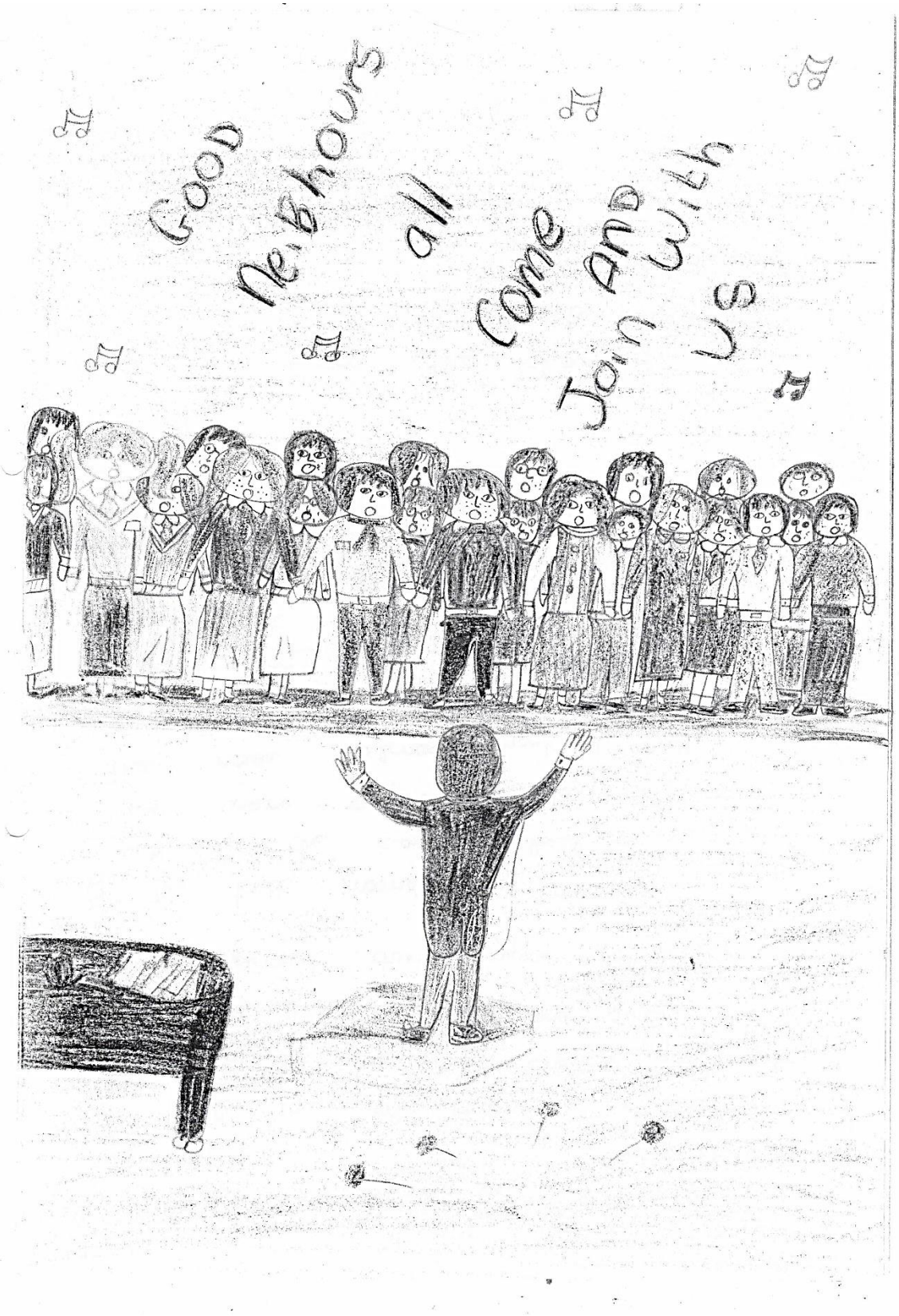
Dear Mr. Creamer,

1. Thank You Mr. Creamer,
You taught us every chance you got,
You trained both boys and girls,
And improved our singing a lot!

2. The best moment of all,
Was in the concert hall,
We were applauded by all,
The noise almost shook the hall!

3. We sang our very best,
And kept in tune with the rest,
We enjoyed ourselves too,
Mr. Creamer, We thank you!

From the choir of
Loreto Convent,
Foxrock.


Good
Neighbours
all
Come
Join and
With
Us

Document 11: Excerpts from "Thank You For The Music": The National Children's Choir celebrates 30 years of singing (June, 2015) (no page numbers)

FOREWORD BY

MARY HANAFIN

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC

Thirty years, 150,000 children, countless songs and millions of memories are the realisation of the vision of one man, Dr. Seán Creamer.

Seán's love of teaching and of music was the impetus for the establishment of The National Children's Choir, a choir which has afforded children the opportunity to perform in public with other children from different schools, backgrounds and counties. The repertoire was challenging, Gaeilge agus Béarla, international. Classical or modern and always fun.

I have had the pleasure of hearing the songs being rehearsed and words memorised as 11/12 year old family members practiced in the bedroom, knowing that only the best was good enough. The regional concerts have a particular atmosphere as local schools sing proudly together for family and friends but it is the performance in The National Concert Hall that evokes the strongest memories. The respect that every child showed their conductor, Seán Creamer, was a joy to behold. It was etched in their faces and their voices as they sang with pride on the National stage.

Everyone has memories of school, but those who sang in the National Children's Choir, and who continue in that tradition today, cherish the memories of a special opportunity given to them by a man of great talent, commitment, energy and love.

Ireland is a better place with Seán Creamer amongst us.

Mol an Óige agus Tiocfaidh sí go ceolmhar!

Mary Hanafin
Minister for Education and Science 2004-2008

MINISTER MARY HANAFIN WITH PUPILS FROM TINETERIFFE NATIONAL SCHOOL IN THE NATIONAL CONCERT HALL IN 2007

Quotes from participating children in 2015 – spread throughout the book.

The National Children's Choir Quotes

"When the concert was over I felt like I could do ANYTHING"

Holly 10

"It is a once in a lifetime experience if you sing in the NCC. Just remember you sang with an orchestra and a conductor and most importantly you sang for your family"

Aidan 11

"Absolutely amazing, I just want to do it again and again, everything about it was great"

Bahri 11

"One year of practice, one night of songs, but it will stay with me for a lifetime"

Reuben 12

"I loved it when the light shone on the stage, it felt like the world was watching us"

Holly 12

"We have never worked this hard together, it's something brilliant to look back on"

Josh 12

"The National Children's choir was an amazing experience, I used to hate singing before the choir but now I don't think it's half as bad as it used to be!!"

Joe 12

"During 'Holy City' I was remembering my Grandad and it was the best kind of a pain in my heart, a memory that felt like it was still living"

Róisín 12

"I loved the N.C.C because it gave those children who were previously embarrassed to sing an opportunity to sing their heart with a wonderful orchestra"

Luke 11

"My mam was in tears at the end of 'The Holy City" and that made me feel on top of the world!"

Daniel 12

"The National Children's Choir felt like a football or rugby match for me because if you put a lot of effort into it, it will all pay off"

Matthew 12

I didn't expect much last night, to be honest, but I really changed my mind after the first syllable flew out of my mouth"

Shaun 12

"Such an amazing experience, the rush you get when people were genuinely praising the amount of work and effort you put in, can't be put into words"

Caitlin 12

"The National Children's Choir was a highlight of primary school. A unique experience I will never forget"

Evan 12

"Singtastic!"

Augustina 12

"I think that the N.C.C. was a brilliant idea. It is great to get all the children into a bit of singing and just being on that stage I said to myself I actually have a brilliant talent. Well done me!"

Alexandra 11

"I liked the N.C.C because I thought it was going to be some normal singing thing but it was very special. It made me look at singing differently"

Christine 11

"I was a bit nervous at first but who wasn't? When we started it was a different story. Some of the songs made me feel like a warrior and others like a guardian angel. To be honest, I don't think I will get an experience like that again"

Aaron 11

"At the end I went over to my Granny and she said "This is the best night of my life!"...and she is 82!"

Luke 12

"I never knew children could inspire adults but the faith and inspiration that the audience had for us was overwhelming. Thank you for one of the best experiences of my life!"

Isobel 12

"Some woman came up and said "I saw you giving it socks," and I was like "Thanks!" because it was coming from a stranger, who wasn't pressured into saying I was good – and it made me happy"

Jamie 12

"Singing the last song, all the practices, all the rehearsals; it suddenly all made sense and it was perfect"

Matthew 12

"The National children's Choir to me was like trying a new food, you don't think you are going to like it but instead it turned into my favourite thing"

Adam 11

"The National Children's Choir made me feel like the most famous person in the world"

Dylan 11

"My Grandad was a famous singer and he was at The National Children's Choir. His name is Joe Cuddy and he was very proud of me"

Harry 11

"When the conductor told us to stand I was so nervous but also excited. By the time our first song was over there was not a bother on me. I forgot that anybody was watching me and I just enjoyed listening to us sing"

Daniel 11

"Performing in The N.C.C will be one of my many great memories at Bayside School and will always have a special place in my heart"

Sophie 11

I REMEMBER .

Sean Creamer is a Mullingar man with a great love of music. Nothing unusual in that except that Sean takes it much further than most, by involving himself and those around him in his projects, in a rewarding way. At present a couple of hundred pupils from several National Schools are taking part in the most imaginative inter-school project ever organised in Dublin. Under the title of Collage '82, children from seven different schools will go through a programme of music, mime and song at the St. Francis Xavier Hall, Dublin, the main items being a performance of Bach's Peasant Cantata and Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf." The Collage idea was started about three years ago by Sean Creamer, a B.Mus., with the Department of Education and has been a tremendous success.

In the early '60's while living in the North West, Sean was instrumental in forming the Celtic Singers, Sligo, a Choir which was to distinguish itself in Dublin at the Oireactas and at the International Choral Festival in Cork. Based in Sligo and with members drawn from places as far afield as Mayo, Leitrim and Donegal, this fine choir won the Premier award at the International Choral Festival in Cork in 1962. Sean, who conducted the choir, was singled out for special mention by the adjudicator for his fine ideas on musical phrasing.

In Sligo he was to form the first Eceumenical Choir when he conducted a performance of Handel's Messiah. The soloists for this performance were Bernadette Greevy and Patrick Ring. Sean also worked with the late Sean O Riada and was involved in the formation of the Dublin Voc. Schools Choir. As you can see a man deeply involved in music, the great love of his life. An Austin Friars Street man Mullingar may well be proud of.

IRISH NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHOIR

An Irish National Children's Choir has just been formed under the direction of Mr Seán Creamer, an Inspector of the Department of Education. The idea of forming such a choir arose a last year's Summer Course of Cumann Náisiúnta na gCór, when it was suggested that a choir consisting of children from all over the country would provide an excellent stimulus for the growth of music here, and would ultimately lead to the formation of a greater number of adult choirs.

Over 4,000 children are already involved in five centres namely Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Athlone. A central choir will be picked from the various centres, and the national choir will make its debut at the opening of the Cork Choral Festival in the City Hall on Wednesday evening, May 8th when excerpts from Bach's PEASANT CANTATA will be performed accompanied by the Cork Symphony Orchestra.

The choir has the full approval of the Department of Education, and will be one of the outstanding events to mark European Music Year.

Excerpt from In Choir Magazine 1985

of the opportunities offered by the playlet. The actress is played by Marie Moylan, who gives evidence that she could, if given the material, be convincing in that role. Karen Ward, as her dumbo flatmate, is so laidback as to be virtually invisible.

The author directs his own work with an understandable lack of objectivity.

National Children's Choir at NCH

By Philip Hollwey

QUITE APART from their fundamental role of music-making and providing a marvellous forum for children to perform in public, the National Children's Choir, director Sean Cremer, have produced some impressive statistics. Saturday night in the NCH saw a choir of well over 300, accompanied by Maeve Quinlan with the Hiernian Chamber Orchestra and Irish Youth Ballet. The repeat programmes on Sunday had, I assume, similar numbers, representatives from different primary schools nationwide. In all this year, Sean Cremer and 160 teachers have brought a repertoire of 25 songs to 6,500 in 95 schools!

Minor musical imperfections, to be expected from such a large and young choir, unused to singing together, were entirely swept away by the enthusiasm and freshness of the singing. The programme had an emphasis on attractive melody, rhythm and the well-known, featuring folk songs (Irish and international) in the first part, including the finger clicking Australian "Click go the Shears" and a spirited performance of the well known Russian "Kalinka". Irish Youth Ballet had a difficult act to follow and although well rehearsed, their four folk dances appeared rather rigid and suffered from poor quality recorded music.

The second part of the evening was accompanied by the Hibernian Chamber Orchestra and comprised of "A Review of Songs by the Great Composers". The choir throughout were controlled and united, with diction considerably better than many a more mature body, and above all singing with joy and obvious pleasure which, quite deservedly, brought the full hall to its feet at the end.

'Manon Lescaut' at Covent Garden

By Harriet Kinsella

IN the Abbé Prévost's "Manon Lescaut" des Grieux is by far the most important character, and though Massenet and his librettists clearly intended otherwise, he remains so in the new production of the opera at Covent Garden. This is entirely due to Neil Shicoff, who is wholly identified with the part from the moment he makes his first eager, shy approach to the girl to the great ringing anguish of *Ah, fuyez douce image*. This total commitment has its most impressive moments in those sequences shared with Robert Lloyd as the Comte des Grieux and Alexander Oliver as the evil Guillot, for both of these are superb singing actors

Julia Migenes is a practised singer and despite a few wayward top notes, her Manon is never less than competent. Presumably the fact that from the beginning she plays the role as a trollop to the manner born must be laid at the producer's door, but this inflexible concept of the character makes it difficult to feel much symapthy for her final plight.

Appendix B: Biography of Dr Seán Creamer

Creamer was born in Mullingar in 1928 and attended C.B.S. Mullingar and Coláiste Einde in Galway. He completed a Bachelor of Music (Honours) at University College Dublin and studied for his teaching qualification at St. Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra (NCC, 1985). He was appointed as Music Inspector of National Schools in Sligo in 1954, before moving to the DE in Dublin in 1968 (The Vocal Heritage Society of Ireland, 2002). He also established several musical groups including the Mourne Road Musical Society (1956), Celtic Singers (1959), Cór Chraobh an Chéitinnigh (1984), Cantairí Avondale (1970), The Park Singers (1970), and the Dublin Girls Secondary School Choir in 1985 (People of the Year, 2007; The Vocal Heritage Society of Ireland, 2002).

The NCC's establishment was prefaced by some earlier massed choir "experiments" by Creamer (NCC, 1985). One such programme was Collage '72 (1972) which brought children from seven different Dublin schools together to perform Bach's Peasant Cantata and Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf (Appendix A). Following this, he established the first choir for teachers, Cantairí Avondale in 1976 which continued his interest, and arguably his influence, in primary school music making. When deciding to form the NCC for the European Year of Music 1985, Creamer said: "I put toward the idea of a National Children's Choir, so that the primary schools of Ireland could celebrate the European Year of Music. The objective has always been to foster a love of choral singing among primary school children. Our choir is the tip of a vast iceberg and like all good icebergs, most of it unseen" (NCC, 2015, p. 3).

He received many accolades during his career. In 2003, he was awarded three medals from the European Parliament to "acknowledge and celebrate the contribution of Seán Creamer to music and song in Ireland especially among the young" (P. Cox, personal communication, September 2004). The President of the European Parliament at the time referred to Creamer as "Uachtarán an Cheoil" [President of Music] (2004). He was then conferred with an honorary doctorate by the Higher Education Training Awards Council in 2006 for his service to music education (NCC, 2015). A year later, he was awarded a People of the Year Award (2007) for "fostering a love of music among so many".

Seán's various musical endeavours have two unifying characteristics. Firstly, they are based around choral or massed-singing. Sean has created choirs for children, adults, and even religious congregations. His interest in choral singing is said to be due to his desire to offer as many people as possible the opportunity to participate in choirs, placing access at the centre of his vision (NCC, 2015). In establishing the NCC he was very clear that the choir was to be for entire classes and not an auditioned choir (Boyd, 1999). In addition to this was a preference, at least in

the accounts of his work, for music from the Western Classical Tradition and songs in the Irish language (Boyd, 1999; NCC, 2015). The repertoire will be explored in more detail later in this chapter, but his musical tastes are evident in the works performed by his children's choirs, which include renowned classical composers such as Bach, Prokofiev, Vivaldi, Fauré and Handel alongside choral arrangements of many traditional Irish songs. When considering more modern music, Creamer's repertoire of choice often showcased contemporary art music composers from the Western world including John Rutter (UK), Jane O'Leary (USA) and Rhona Clarke (Ireland). To summarise, his vision for music making centred around facilitating access to massed choral singing music in the WAM or choral tradition to as many people as possible.

In 2017, Creamer stepped down from the NCC and "passed the baton" to three new MDs who he hoped would "take the choir…to another level of excellence" (NCC, 2015). Following his death in June 2016, Una Mullally, a writer for the Irish Times and former NCC chorister, wrote that there is "now a part missing from all the harmonies we hear" and summed up his impact on choral music in Ireland as "immeasurable" (2016). The 2019 NCH programme pays tribute to Creamer saying, "the flame list in 1985 still burns as brightly as ever" (2019, p. 2).

In this section we have discussed the foundation of the NCC within a socio-cultural context that valued song singing as the primary music making activity in schools, as well as a tool to promote the religious, nationalist, and societal ideals of the 20th century. Additionally, a biography of Seán Creamer, the choir's founder, was presented in addition to a consideration of some of the primary document sources collected as part of this research. Finally, the positive views expressed by many to the NCC's foundation and its continued existence, have been outlined. This contextualisation of the establishment of the choir and its unchanging commitment to Creamer's vision for accessible, high-quality group singing first expressed in 1985, leads us to consider the composition of the choir and its representativeness when compared with national statistics.

Appendix C: Analysis of the NCC

This appendix draws on the statistical data of schools who participate in the NCC, collected from various NCC sources (NCC, 2015, 2017, 2019) and compared with national statistics available from the DE (DE, 2020; Lawlor & Burke, 2020) and CSO (CSO, 2021). This will consider the gender, size, location, DEIS status and patronage of the schools that participate and explore tentative links between school profile and participation within the choir. It is important to point out that the national statistics draw on mainstream primary schools only, and do not consider special schools or other settings. While the NCC does not explicitly exclude special schools from participating, the data gathered and presented in Appendix D shows that only one special school has participated in 40 years and therefore, for meaningful inferences to be made, only mainstream school data is consulted.

As of 2022, the last performance of the NCC took place in the NCH in May 2019. The choir has been prevented from reforming due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with government restrictions on large gatherings and singing indoors in schools continuing until Spring 2022. In 2019, 9,301 children performed from 139 schools in 28 concerts around the country (NCC, 2019). When compared with the CSO Statistical Data, this represents 4.45% of all the school children in 4th, 5th and 6th class in Ireland in 2019. Looking at the number of schools represented, 4.29% of all the schools in the country were part of the 2019 NCC programme, from 18 different counties on the island. This is a substantial number of participant schools, and the MDs reported that the number of schools and children participating continues to increase. The 2019 programme mentions that over 450 teachers were part of the programme, which represents approximately 1.2% of all primary teachers in the state (Lawlor & Burke, 2020). A list of schools who have participated since the choir's foundation are contained in Appendix D. This was created through extracting the names of participating schools from NCC sources and cross-referencing this data with national statistics to identify the school's gender, size, location, patronage and DEIS status. These characteristics will now be considered in turn.

Gender

The first school parameter under examination is the gender mix of schools who participate. The data reveals that single-sex schools represent a greater proportion of schools who participate in the NCC when compared with the national statistics of schools in Ireland. This is particularly evident when we consider all-female schools, which represent over 14% of the choir compared with 6% on a national level. This trend continues with the number of all-male schools within the choir (8.2%) marginally higher than the national statistics (7.9%). There is no breakdown of the class levels who take part in the NCC nationally, and therefore this study is unable to comment on any differences between male and female representation from 4th class to 6th class. There has been

extensive research comparing participation in choral singing from boys and girls (Ashley, 2013; Saunders et al., 2010; Sweet, 2010; Welch, 2010; Welch et al., 2009), particularly the difficulties of maintaining participation among boys in their early adolescent years which the NCC targets, and these findings statistically support the greater participation of girls in choral singing in schools when compared with boys.

Another finding regarding school gender is the low number of mixed schools participating when compared with the national statistics. In recent times there has been a shift in school profile from single-sex schools to mixed-sex schools for many reasons including amalgamations and changing school patronage (DE, 2021b). The analysis of participating schools did find several single-sex schools who participated in the early years of the NCC and have since amalgamated to form mixed-sex schools or closed. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain whether the low proportion of mixed schools represented over the 1985-2019 period of the NCC is due to developing school profiles, or due to other factors such as school location. Rural locations tend to have predominately mixed-sex schools (Lawlor & Burke, 2020) and therefore may not feel able to participate in the choir due to their size or geographical location, however it was not possible to explore this hypothesis using the available statistical data.

Size and Location of School

Having discussed the gender profile of participating schools, the study now considers the enrolment size and location of schools who take part and any links with participation. According to the DES, 41.6% of the schools in Ireland have 4 mainstream class teachers or fewer (DE, 2021b), which according to the 2021 Staffing Schedule equates with an average of 100 enrolled students (DE, 2021a). Having consulted the programme data from the NCC NCH 2019 concert, cross-referenced with data from the CSO, reveals that only 14% of NCC participating schools had an enrolment of 100 or fewer pupils, compared with approximately 41% nationally. On the other hand, one in three schools who took part in the NCC during 2019 had an enrolment of over 400 pupils. While there are limitations to the inferences that can be made from this data (for example the number of schools which do not have a 4th, 5^{th,} or 6th class programme and therefore who are excluded from joining the choir), it would seem to suggest that the NCC can be difficult to access for smaller schools. The limitations placed on schools due to their size will be commented on through the discussion of the data, however the requirement for collaboration and networking among small or rural schools to facilitate large projects such as the NCC may act as a barrier to participation for schools such as these. Furthermore, these small schools may have fewer teachers on their staff, none of whom may feel confident enough to participate.

Considering the issue of location, the NCC is primarily centred around Leinster with 93 of the 126 schools in the NCH 2019 Concerts being from 11 counties in Leinster. By comparison,

there is only one county, Mayo, representing Connaught which had 12 schools participate in the NCH concerts. Similarly, in Munster there were four counties represented, with the vast majority from Cork. This suggests a focus on urban areas and clusters of schools working together in a region rather than a truly 'national' representation. Comparing the NCH concerts with the NCC official statistics for 2019, reveals that 126 schools participated in the NCH concerts while 139 took part in the programme overall. Therefore, there may be a slight over representation of clustered, urban groups who travelled to Dublin for the concerts, with 13 schools absent from the final concerts.

Not surprisingly, the county with the largest representation of schools is Dublin with 58 schools. This implies that 1 in 2 schools that participate in the NCC are from Dublin, supporting the inference that larger schools from urban areas make up the majority of the choir's participants. Nationally, only 1 in 8 schools are located in Dublin's four county areas however 31% of pupils in mainstream primary schools in 2019 were located in Dublin, narrowing the discrepancy (CSO, 2021). Having considered the tentative links between participation and the school's size and location, this research will finally attempt to comment on the significance of a school's socio-economic profile and patronage on participation.

DEIS Participation and Patronage

The proportion of participating schools with a DEIS identifier was found to be very similar to the national average. In Ireland, schools that have a DEIS identifier are generally located in an area or population who are more at risk of educational disadvantage, and therefore receive more support and funding from the DE to address educational disadvantage (Citizen's Information, 2020). The statistics reveal no significant difference in the number of schools with a DEIS identifier represented within the choir and nationally. It is noteworthy however that participants' views did not always align with this, as will be discussed later. During the initial contextual interviews, MD1 did report that in recent years there has been an increase in so called 'DEIS schools' taking part in the choir, with the support of neighbouring schools who act as mentors. This was a development that she welcomed and wanted to encourage into the future. This suggests that Creamer's vision of widening access to choral music, at least statistically, is being achieved through representative participation of schools serving disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

Finally, the patronage of NCC schools compared with national data will be commented on, both in relation to the numbers of English and Irish-medium schools participating, and the denominations of these schools. According to the data, there is an equal representation of Gaelscoileanna and Catholic schools when compared with the national statistics, and an under-representation of multi-denominational and Church of Ireland schools within the NCC. In 2019,

2.1% of NCC schools were from multi-denominational or other patronage (e.g. non-denominational), whereas they represent 5.7% of primary schools nationally. Multi-denominational schools in Ireland have seen a rapid increase in recent years, growing from 73 in 2009 to 150 in 2019, a 105% increase. However, they still represent only 4.8 % of all the primary schools in the state, followed by Church of Ireland schools at 5.5% and then by Catholic at almost 89% (Lawlor & Burke, 2020). As the NCC has operated for nearly 40 years, it is reasonable to assume that many multi-denominational primary schools did not exist in the early years of the choir and therefore could not take part, thus skewing the data once more. A teacher and principal from a multi-denominational school were interviewed as part of the initial data gathering phase, however the lead teacher who taught the programme was a parent who voluntarily led participation, and therefore was outside the selection criteria for the in-depth interviews that followed.

Therefore, the significant evolution of the primary school system and environment is further supported by the statistics consulted here which suggests a decline in smaller, single-sex schools, and a move to larger, mixed schools with an increasingly multi-denominational ethos. By examining the gender, size, location, DEIS status and patronage of the schools, we can build a picture of the demographic of the choir. The statistics suggest that the NCC is more favoured in single-sex, larger schools close to urban areas, while smaller, mixed-schools or those who do not identity as Catholic are less likely to participate when compared to national statistics. While the significance of this will be considered later in the discussion of the data, it appears that the composition of the NCC is evolving at a slower pace than the national picture of schools, perhaps being favoured by those schools who have a long tradition of participation, or those who identify with the vision and aims of the choir. In the context of this study, the opportunity to participate may be linked to the type of school a teacher is working in, with particular schools more open to participation due to factors such as gender, size, location and patronage. In any case, having considered the school contexts of the participant schools, one of the defining characteristics of the choir is the repertoire which will now be examined.

The Repertoire of the NCC

The NCC prides itself on the wide range of musical genres that it exposes children to. Its initial programme cited “expanding the repertoire of songs that is taught to children” as one of only two aims of the choir (NCC, 1985). The word ‘repertoire’ comes from the French ‘repértoire’ which dates from the mid-15th century originally meaning an “index” or “body of transmitted knowledge” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2009). In this section, the repertoire of the NCC from 1985 to 2019 will be analysed and discussed, drawing some significant conclusions that impact the nature of participation as argued in the body of the thesis.

Firstly, the researcher compiled a complete list of the repertoire since the choir's formation (NCC, 2015, 2017, 2019) and cross-referenced each song with the streaming service Spotify to assign a musical genre to each one (See Appendix E). The issue of musical genre and categorisation is difficult, with the term genre representing more than just a musical category, but a combination of "performer's, listener's and cultural orientations and conventions" (Lena, 2012, as cited in Siles et al., 2019, p. 2). The cultural connection between songs that are enjoyed by similar listeners and promoted by similar artists is assigned a genre by the machine learning algorithm of Spotify (Anderson et al., 2021). Through Spotify's substantial user based and commercial prominence, the accuracy of its categorisation of musical genres has been used in other studies relating listener's musical tastes and styles in other research (Anderson et al., 2021; Siles et al., 2019). Therefore, the researcher used Spotify to ensure some level of consistency when classifying the genres of the song lists. The different proportions of past NCC repertoires representing each of genres is listed in the table below:

Genre	% of Repertoire
WAM (Classical)	26%
Irish Traditional/Folk	24%
Other	13%
Folk songs from other countries	12%
Pop/Rock	11%
Musical Theatre	7%
Contemporary	7%

From this data, the most popular genre by number of songs in a repertoire list is WAM or 'Classical' music, followed closely by Irish traditional music (primarily in the Irish language). This correlates with the vision for the choir as outlined in the body of the thesis and the historical focus of Irish policy makers on Irish and WAM outlined earlier. Green (2002, 2008) found that WAM is often used as the meat of the music education curriculum, and findings from the thesis align with this.

When we consider the CD recordings of the most recent NCC performances, 2017 and 2019, the weighting of genres becomes even clearer (The timings and genre distribution is contained in Appendix E also). In 2017 and 2019, 33% and 27% respectively of the recording time was of music categorised as 'Classical'. Irish traditional music followed with 14% in 2017 and 18% in 2019. Therefore, if we assume the performance CD is an accurate representation of an NCC concert, approximately one third of the most recent two concerts consisted of WAM. In

contrast with this, on average 1 in 10 songs in a repertoire are classified as ‘popular’ over the past four decades.

In this section, the composition of the NCC is outlined providing contextual information relating to the types of schools that participate in the choir and the repertoire of the choir. In the context of this study, the opportunity and desirability of participation may be linked to the type of school a teacher is working in, with some schools more open to participation due to factors such as gender, size, location, patronage and their thoughts and values regarding the repertoire.

Appendix D: NCC School Data

This table was created through extracting the names of participating schools from NCC programmes (NCC, 2017; 2019b) and from a 30-year Souvenir book (NCC, 2015). This data was then cross referenced with the DE Website Find a School page (DE, 2019), Education in Ireland: Statistical Snapshot (Lawlor & Burke, 2020) and CSO Data Website (CSO, 2019) which detailed the school's size, location, gender, patronage and DEIS status.

Gender	Boy	Girl	Mix
NCC (2019)	8.29%	14.22%	77.01%
National (CSO, 2019)	7.9%	6%	82.1%

DEIS Status	Yes	No
NCC (2019)	22.22%	76.60%
National (DES, 2019)	22.30%	76.7%

Patronage	NCC (2019)	DES (Lawlor & Burke, 2020)
Catholic (Includes Gaeilscoileanna)	94.52%	88.9%
Church of Ireland	2.36%	5.6%
Multi-Denominational/Other	2.1%	5.7%
Gaelscoileanna	6.6%	7.2%

Total Number of Schools in NCH 2019 Concerts	126	
Size of School		% of total
Less than 50	8	6.35%
50-99	12	9.52%
100-199	15	11.9%
200-299	31	24.6%
300-399	16	12.7%
400-499	27	21.43%
>500	17	13.50%
	126	100%

School Size and Locations for NCH 2019 Concerts (DE, 2020; NCC, 2019)

Province	County	Number of Participating School in 2019 NCH Concerts
Munster	Cork	13
No. of Schools 17	Clare	1
	Tipp	1
	Waterford	2
Leinster	Dublin	58
No. of Schools 93	Kildare	8
	Laois	2
	Wicklow	7
	Louth	1
	Meath	4
	Westmeath	3
	Carlow	1
	Kilkenny	3
	Leitrim	1
	Longford	6
Connaught	Mayo	12
No. of Schools 12		
Ulster	Mon	1
No. of Schools 4	Cavan	1
	Donegal	2

School Name	County	DEIS	Patronage	Gender
St. Ann's N.S., Bailieboro	CAVAN	N	C	MIX
St. Clare's N.S., Cavan	CAVAN	N	C	MIX
St. Killian's N.S., Mullagh	CAVAN	N	C	MIX
St. Michael S.N.S., Cootehill	CAVAN	Y	C	MIX
Holy Family N.S., Askea	CARLOW	Y	C	BOY
Queen of the Universe N.S., Bagenalstown	CARLOW	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal, Green Lane	CARLOW	N	C	GIRL
St. Mary's N.S., Bagenalstown	CARLOW	N	COI	MIX
Kilrush N.S., Kilrush	CLARE	Y	C	MIX
C.B.S., Ennis	CLARE	N	C	MIX
Clarecastle N.S., Ennis	CLARE	N	C	MIX
Gaelscoil Donncha Rua, Shannon	CLARE	N	C	MIX
Kilmurry N.S., Sixmilebridge	CLARE	N	C	MIX
Mercy Convent M.S., Kilrush	CLARE	Y	C	MIX
Parteen N.S.	CLARE	N	C	MIX
Scoil Eoin Baiste, Ballyvaughan	CLARE	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire, Meelick	CLARE	N	C	MIX
St. John's N.S., Cratloe	CLARE	N	C	MIX
St. Senan's N.S., Kilrush	CLARE	Y	C	MIX
St. Tola's N.S., Shannon	CLARE	N	C	MIX
Ballygarvan N.S.	CORK	N	C	MIX
Barryroe N.S., Bandon	CORK	N	C	MIX
Drimoleague N.S.	CORK	N	C	MIX
Our Lady of Lourdes, Ballinlough	CORK	N	C	GIRL
S.N. Cros tSeain, Crosshaven	CORK	N	C	BOY
Sacred Heart N.S. Glounthane	CORK	N	C	MIX
Sc. Aiseiri Chríost Fearann RI	CORK	Y	C	GIRL
Sc. An Spioraid Naoimh, Bishopstown	CORK	N	C	BOY
Sc. Naomh Therese, Bishopstown (CLOSED)	CORK	N	C	MIX
Scoil Bhride, Crosshaven	CORK	N	C	GIRL
Scoil Bhricle, Midleton	CORK	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire, Carraig Tuathail	CORK	N	C	MIX

St. Columba's G.N.S., Douglas	CORK	N	C	MIX
St. Joseph's G.N.S., Macroom	CORK	N	C	MIX
St. Luke's N.S., Douglas	CORK	N	COI	MIX
St. Patrick's B.N.S., Skibereen	CORK	N	C	BOY
Archbishop Ryan N.S., Balgaddy	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Bayside Senior School, Sutton	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Belgrove Girls N.S., Clontarf	DUBLIN	N	C	GIRL
Brackenstown Senior N.S., Swords	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Carysfort N.S., Blackrock	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Castaheany E.T.N.S., Ongar	DUBLIN	Y	ET	MIX
Corduff N.S., Lusk	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Corpus Christi Girls, Homefarm Rd., Drumcondra	DUBLIN	N	C	GIRL
Divine Word N.S., Marley Grange	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Dominican Convent G.N.S., Dun Laoghaire	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
Dublin 7 E.T.N.S.	DUBLIN	N	ET	MIX
Edmondstown N.S., Rathfarnham	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Gaelscoil an Duinninigh, Sord Colmcille	DUBLIN	N	C/GS	MIX
Gaelscoil Bhrian BorOimhe, Sord	DUBLIN	N	MD/GS	MIX
Gaelscoil Chluain Dolcain	DUBLIN	N	C/GS	MIX
Gaelscoil Inse Char	DUBLIN	N	C/GS	MIX
Gaelscoil Naomh Padraig, Leamhcan	DUBLIN	N	C/GS	MIX
Gaelscoil Thaobh na Collie	DUBLIN	N	C/GS	MIX
Gardiner St. Convent N.S.	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
Golden bridge G.N.S., Inchicore	DUBLIN	Y	C	GIRL
Good Shepherd N.S., Churchtown	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
Guardian Angels N.S., Blackrock	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Harold Convent G.N.S., Glasthule	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Holy Child B.N.S., Larkhill	DUBLIN11	N	C	BOY
Holy Child G.N.S., Larkhill	DUBLIN11	N	C	GIRL
Holy Spirit G.N.S., Ballymun	DUBLIN11	Y	C	GIRL
Holy Trinity N.S., Glencairn, Leopardstown	DUBLIN18	N	C	MIX
Holy Trinity Senior N.S., Donaghmede	DUBLIN13	N	C	MIX

Kill O'the Grange N. S.	DUBLIN	N	COI	MIX
Loreto Convent, Foxrock	DUBLIN	N	C	GIRL
Loreto G.N.S., Dalkey	DUBLIN	N	C	GIRL
Marist N.S., Crumlin	DUBLIN8	Y	C	MIX
Mother of Divine Grace, Finglas	DUBLIN11	Y	C	MIX
Mt. Anville N.S., Stillorgan	DUBLIN	N	C	GIRL
Mt. Sackville N.S., Chapelizod	DUBLIN20	N	C	GIRL
Our Lady Help of Christians G.N.S., Navan Rd.	DUBLIN	N	C	GIRL
Our Lady of Good Counsel G.N.S., Johnstown	DUBLIN	N	C	BOY
Our Lady of Lourdes N.S., Inchicore	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
Our Lady of Mercy N.S., Booterstown	DUBLIN	N	C	GIRL
Our Lady of the Wayside, Kilternan	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Our Lady's Girls, Milltown	DUBLIN	Y	C	GIRL
Our Lady's Grove, Goatstown	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Our Lady's B.N.S., Ballinteer	DUBLIN	N	C	BOY
Pembroke School, Ballsbridge (CLOSED)	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Pope John Paul II, Malahide	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Presentation Convent Primary School, Terenure	DUBLIN	N	C	GIRL
Presentation Convent, Clondalkin (NOW SCOIL MHUIRE)	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Queen of Angels N.S., Wedgewood, Balally	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
Rathdown Junior School, Glenageary	DUBLIN	N	COI	GIRL
Rathfarnham Parish N.S., Templeogue	DUBLIN	N	COI	MIX
Rusk & Lusk Educate Together N.S., Corduff	DUBLIN	N	ET	MIX
S.N. Realt na Mara, Na Sceiri	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Sacred Heart N.S., Huntstown	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Scoil Aine Naofa, Esker, Lucan	DUBLIN	N	C/GS	MIX
Scoil An Spioraid Naoimh, Rathfarnham	DUBLIN	N	C	BOY
Scoil Bhride, Raghnallach	DUBLIN	N	C/GS	MIX
Scoil Chaitriona, Baggot Street	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
Scoil ChaitrIona, Coolock	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Chaoimhin, Sr. Mhaoil Bhride	DUBLIN	Y	C/GS	MIX
Scoil Cholmchille, Wyattville	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX

Scoil Cholmcille, Ballybrack	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Cholmcille, Donaghmede	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Scoil Chroi Ro-Naofa Iosa, Huntstown, Mulhuddert	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Scoil Eoin, Kilbarrack	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
Scoil iosa,Tymon North	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Lorcain Naofa, Stigh Lorcain	DUBLIN	N	C	BOY
Scoil Mhuire (Senior), Blakestown, Mulhuddert	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire agus losef, Bayside	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire G.N.S., Lucan	DUBLIN	N	C	GIRL
Scoil Mhuire Oigh 1, Crumlin Rd.	DUBLIN	Y	C	GIRL
Scoil Mhuire, Ballyboden	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire, Chapelizod	DUBLIN	N	C	GIRL
Scoil Mhuire, Marino	DUBLIN	N	C	BOY
Scoil Mhuire, Mount Sackville, Chapeliz'od	DUBLIN	N	C	GIRL
Scoil Mhuire, Sandymount	DUBLIN	N	C	GIRL
Scoil N. Maolruain, Tallaght	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Scoil na Maighdine Muire, Ballinteer	DUBLIN	N	C	BOY
Scoil Naithi, Baile an tSaoir	DUBLIN	N	C/GS	BOY
Scoil Naomh Caoimhin (BuachaillÍ), Kilnamanagh	DUBLIN	N	C	BOY
Scoil Naomh Padraig, Ballyroan	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Neasain, Baile Harmon	DUBLIN	N	C/GS	MIX
Scoil San Treasa, Mount Merrion	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Scoil Santain, Tamhlacht	DUBLIN	Y	C/GS	MIX
Scoil Treasa, Firhouse	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Sisters of Charity N.S., Stanhope St.	DUBLIN	Y	C	GIRL
St. Agnes' N,S., Crumlin (AMALGAMATED)	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
St. Aidan's Senior N.S., Brookfield	DUBLIN	Y	C	MIX
St. Pius X G.N.S.,Terenure	DUBLIN	N	C	GIRL
St. Thomas' S.N.S., Tallaght	DUBLIN	N	C	MIX
Star of the Sea B.N.S., Sandymount	DUBLIN	N	C	BOY
Virgin Mary G.N.S., Ballymun	DUBLIN	Y	C	GIRL

Virgin Mary N.S., Ballymun	DUBLIN	Y	C	BOY
St.Theresa's Primary School, Enniskillen	FERMANAGH	0	C	GIRL
Ballinderry N.S., Curnmer,Tuam	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Athenry N.S.	GALWAY	N	C	
Barnaderg N.S.	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Belclare N.S.	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Belmont N.S.,Tuam	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Briarfield N.S.,Tuam	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Brownesgrove N.S.	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Clonberne Central N.S.	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Convent Primary School, Gort (AMALGAMATED)	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Creagh N,S., Ballinasloe	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Creggs N.S.	GALWAY	Y	C	MIX
Derrycomber N.S., Loughrea	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Gardenfield N.S.,Tuam	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Garrafrauns N.S., Dunmore	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Lavally N.S.,Tuam	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Lawrencetown N.S., Ballinasloe	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Lisheenkyle N.S.	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Mercy Convent N.S.,Tuam (PP)	GALWAY	N	C	GIRL
New Inn N.S.	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Presentation G.N.S.,Tuam	GALWAY	Y	C	GIRL
Presentation Primary School, Tuam	GALWAY	Y	C	MIX
Sc. Chaitriona	GALWAY	Y	C	MIX
Sc. Mhuire, Moycullen	GALWAY	Y	C	MIX
Sc. Nioclas Naofa, Dun Mar	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Scoil an Chrof Naofa, Ballinasloe	GALWAY	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Bhride, Shantalla	GALWAY	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Chrof fosa, Newcastle Rd.,	GALWAY	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Chroi Naofa, Athenry	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Scoil Fhursa, Gaillimh	GALWAY	N	C/GS	MIX
Scoil ide, Salthill	GALWAY	N	C	MIX

Scoil Mhic Amhlaigh, Cnoc na Cathrach	GALWAY	N	C/GS	MIX
Scoil Mhuire na Dea Chomhairle, Headford	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire, Clarinbridge	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire, Tuam	GALWAY	Y	C	MIX
Scoil na TrIonaide Naofa, Mervue	GALWAY	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Rois, Taylor's Hill	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
St. Annin's N.S., Rosscahil	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
St. Brendan's N.S., Eyrecourt	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
St. Catherine's N.S., Aughrim	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
St. Colman's N.S., Corofin, Cummer	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
St. Gabriel's N.S., Kilconnell	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
St. Ita's G.N.S., Loughrea	GALWAY	N	C	GIRL
St. James's N.S.	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
St. Patrick's N.S., Fohenagh, Ahascragh	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Sylane N.S.	GALWAY	N	C	MIX
Convent N.S., Balloonagh	KERRY	N	C	MIX
Fenit N.S.	KERRY	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire, Killorglin	KERRY	N	C	MIX
Scoil Bhricle, Athgarvan, Curragh	KILDARE	N	C	MIX
Convent of Mercy N.S., Naas	KILDARE	N	C	MIX
Kildare Steiner School	KILDARE	N	MD	MIX
Presentation G.N.S., Maynooth	KILDARE	N	C	GIRL
Scoil Bhricle Naofa, Kildare Town (AMALGAMATED)	KILDARE	N	C	GIRL
Scoil Bhricle, Clane	KILDARE	N	C	GIRL
Scoil Bhricle, Kill	KILDARE	N	C	MIX
Scoil Bhride, Lackagh	KILDARE	N	C	MIX
Scoil Chearbhail O Dalaigh, Leim an Bhradain	KILDARE	N	C/GS	MIX
Scoil Choca Naofa, Cill Choca	KILDARE	N	C	MIX
Scoil Eoin Phoil, Leixlip	KILDARE	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mhichil Naofa, Athy	KILDARE	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire, Leixlip	KILDARE	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mochua, Celbridge	KILDARE	N	C	MIX

Scoil na Maighdine Muire, Broadford	KILDARE	N	C	MIX
Scoil na Mainistreach, Celbridge	KILDARE	N	C	BOY
Scoil Phadraig, Clane	KILDARE	N	C	BOY
Scoil San Treasa, Kilshanroe	KILDARE	N	C	MIX
Scoil UI Riada, Cill Choca	KILDARE	N	C/GS	MIX
St. Brigid's N.S., Celbridge	KILDARE	N	C	GIRL
St. Joseph's B.N.S., Kilcock	KILDARE	N	C	BOY
St. Oliver Plunkett N.S., Killina, Carbury	KILDARE	N	C	MIX
Two-mile-house N.S.	KILDARE	N	C	MIX
Boys' N.S., Castlecomer	KILKENNY	N	C	BOY
Bunscoil McAuley Rice, Callan	KILKENNY	N	C	MIX
Burnchurch N.S., Cuffsgrange	KILKENNY	N	C	MIX
Church Hill N.S., Cuffesgrange	KILKENNY	N	C	MIX
Convent of Mercy, Graiguenamanagh	KILKENNY	Y	C	GIRL
Gaelscoil Osraf, Cill Chainnigh	KILKENNY	N	C/GS	MIX
Kilkenny School Project N.S., Bennettsbridge Road	KILKENNY	N	MD	MIX
Lisdowney N.S., Ballyragget	KILKENNY	N	C	MIX
Model School, Castlecomer Road	KILKENNY	N	COI	MIX
Moneenroe N.S., Castlecomer	KILKENNY	Y	C	MIX
Presentation G.N.S., Kilkenny (AMALGAMATED)	KILKENNY	N	C	GIRL
S.N. M6in Ruadh, Huggenstown	KILKENNY	N	C	MIX
Sc. Mhuire, Presentation N.S., Parnell St.	KILKENNY	N	C	GIRL
Scoil Bhricle, Goresbridge	KILKENNY	N	C	MIX
Scoil Bhricle, Paulstown	KILKENNY	N	C	MIX
Scoil lognaid Ris, Stephen St.	KILKENNY	N	C	BOY
Scoil Mhuire, Callan	KILKENNY	N	C	MIX
Scoil NaisiOnta Bhride, Ballyragget (AMALGAMATED)	KILKENNY	N	C	GIRL
St. Brigid's N.S., Kells	KILKENNY	N	C	MIX
St. Canice's N.S., Kilkenny	KILKENNY	N	C	MIX
St. Eoghan's N.S., Kilmoganny	KILKENNY	N	C	MIX
St. Leonard's N.S., Dunnamaggin	KILKENNY	N	C	MIX

Ballyfin N.S.	LAOIS	N	C	MIX
Castlecuffe N.S., Clonalsee	LAOIS	N	C	MIX
Emo N.S.	LAOIS	N	C	MIX
Holy Family B.N.S., Durrow	LAOIS	N	C	BOY
Our Lady's Meadow N.S., Durrow	LAOIS	N	C	MIX
Sacred Heart N.S., Portlaoise (AMG)	LAOIS	n	c	MIX
Sc. Cholmcille, Durrow	LAOIS	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire, Portlaoise (AMG)	LAOIS	n	c	MIX
St. Mary's C.B.S., Portlaoise (PP)	LAOIS	0	0	0
St. Paul's N.S., Portlaoise' (AMG)	LAOIS	n	c	MIX
Aughavas N.S., Carrigallen	LEITRIM	Y	C	MIX
Drumnamore N.S. (closed)	LEITRIM	N	C	MIX
St. Brigid's N.S., Drumkeerin	LEITRIM	N	C	MIX
St. Joseph's N.S., Leitrim Village	LEITRIM	N	C	MIX
St. Patrick's N.S., Drumshanbo	LEITRIM	N	C	MIX
Tarmon N.S., Carrick on Shannon	LEITRIM	N	C	MIX
An Mhodhscoil, Luimneach	LIMERICK	N	C/GS	MIX
Athlacca N.S., Kilmallock	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Ballylanders N.S	LIMERICK	Y	C	MIX
Bilboa N.S., Cappamore	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Cappawhite N.S.	LIMERICK	Y	C	MIX
Castleconnell N.S.	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Convent N.S., Cappamore (AMALGAMATED)	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Croagh N.S., Rathkeale	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Foynes N.S.	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Gaelscoil ö Dbghair	LIMERICK	N	C/GS	MIX
Kilcoran N.S., Pallaskenry	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Mainistir N,S., Croom	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Mary Queen of Ireland, N.S. Caherdavin	LIMERICK	Y	C	MIX
Milford School, Castletroy	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Monaleen N.S.	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Nicker N.S., Pallasgreen	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Presentation G.N.S., Sexton St., Limerick	LIMERICK	Y	C	GIRL

Salesian G.N.S., Limerick	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Scoil an Spioraid Naomh, Roxboro, Ballysheedy	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Scoil (de, Corbally	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Scoil fosagain, Hospital	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mhathair De, Limerick	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire, Murroe	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Shanagolden N.S.	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
St. John's N.S.,	LIMERICK	Y	C	MIX
St. Nessan's N.S., Mungret	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
St. Paul's N.S., Dooradoyle	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Tineteriffe N.S., Cappamore	LIMERICK	N	C	MIX
Sacred Heart Convent of Mercy N.S., Granard	LONGFORD	Y	C	MIX
Melview N.S., Longford	LONGFORD	N	C	MIX
Sacred Heart N.S., Ballymahon	LONGFORD	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire, Newtownforbes	LONGFORD	N	C	MIX
St. Dominic's N.S., Keenagh	LONGFORD	N	C	MIX
St. Emer's N.S., Longford	LONGFORD	Y	C	MIX
St. Joseph's Convent N.S., Longford	LONGFORD	Y	C	MIX
St. Mary's N.S., Edgeworthstown	LONGFORD	Y	C	MIX
St. Michael's N.S., Longford	LONGFORD	Y	C	BOY
St. Patrick's N.S., Dromard	LONGFORD	Y	C	MIX
St. Therese N.S., Killoe	LONGFORD	Y	C	MIX
Holy Redeemer G.N.S., Dundalk	LOUTH	Y	C	GIRL
Le Cheile E.T.N.S., Drogheda	LOUTH	N	ET	MIX
Scoil Josef Dundalk	LOUTH	Y	C	MIX
St. Oliver Plunketts, Blackrock	LOUTH	N	C	MIX
Barnacarroll N.S,, Claremorris	MAYO	N	C	MIX
Brackloon N.S., Westport	MAYO	Y	C	MIX
Breaffy N.S., Castlebar	MAYO	Y	C	MIX
Carrowkennedy N.S., Westport	MAYO	Y	C	MIX
Crimlin N.S., Castlebar	MAYO	N	C	MIX
Gaelscoil na Cruaiche, Cathar na Mart	MAYO	N	C/GS	MIX

Gaelscoil Uileag de Burca	MAYO	N	C/GS	MIX
Meelickmore N.S., Claremorris	MAYO	N	C	MIX
S.N. Phadraiog Naofa, Louisburg	MAYO	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Chrof fosa, Ballina	MAYO	Y	C	MIX
St. Angela's G.N.S., Castlebar	MAYO	N	C	GIRL
St. John's N.S., Castlebar	MAYO	Y	C	MIX
St. Joseph's N.S., Killasser, Swinford	MAYO	Y	C	MIX
St. Patrick's De La Salle B.N.S., Castlebar	MAYO	N	C	BOY
Coole N.S., Kilcock	MEATH	N	C	MIX
Culmullen N.S., Drumree	MEATH	N	C	MIX
Dunboyne G.N.S.	MEATH	N	C	GIRL
Gaelscoil an Bhradain Feasa	MEATH	N	MD	MIX
Gaelscoil na Rithe, Domhnach Seachnaill	MEATH	N	C	MIX
Newtown N.S.	MEATH	N	C	MIX
Our Lady of Mercy N.S., Kells	MEATH	N	C	MIX
Rathbeggan N.S., Dunshaughlin	MEATH	N	C	MIX
Rathfeigh N.S., Tara	MEATH	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire Naofa, Kiltale	MEATH	N	C	MIX
Scoil na Rithe, Domhnach Seachnaill	MEATH	N	C/GS	MIX
Scoil San Treasa, Enfield	MEATH	N	C	MIX
St. Andrew's N.S., Curragha	MEATH	N	C	MIX
St. Brigid's N.S., Kells	MEATH	N	C	MIX
St. Colmcille's B.N.S., Kells	MEATH	N	C	BOY
St. Joseph's Mercy Primary School, Navan	MEATH	N	C	MIX
St. Mary's & St. Michael's N.S., Trim	MEATH	N	C	BOY
St. Mary's N.S., Ashbourne	MEATH	N	C	MIX
St. Paul's N.S., Navan	MEATH	N	C	MIX
Whitecross M.S., Julianstown	MEATH	N	C	MIX
Bunscoil Lughaidh Naofa, Carrickmacross	MONAGHAN	N	C	GIRL
Gortnamona N.S.	OFFALY	N	C	MIX
Killeigh NS., Tullamore	OFFALY	N	C	MIX
Naomh Colmcille, Tullamore	OFFALY	N	C	MIX
Scoil Bhride, Ballyboy, Kilcormac	OFFALY	N	C	MIX

Scoil Bhride, Clara	OFFALY	Y	C	GIRL
St. Kieran's N.S., Broughall, Kilcormac	OFFALY	N	C	MIX
St. Philomena's N.S., Tullamore	OFFALY	Y	C	GIRL
Ardkeenan N.S., Athlone	ROSCOMMON	N	C	MIX
Ballybay Central N.S., Kiltoom	ROSCOMMON	N	C	MIX
Cloonakilla N.S., Bealnamulla, Athlone	ROSCOMMON	N	C	MIX
Convent of Mercy N.S., Boyle	ROSCOMMON	N	C	MIX
Cornafulla, N.S., Athlone	ROSCOMMON	N	C	MIX
Scoil Aine Naofa, Castlerea	ROSCOMMON			
St. Ciaran's N.S., Athlone	ROSCOMMON	N	C	MIX
St. John's B.N.S., Ballaghadereen	ROSCOMMON	N	C	MIX
St. Ronan's N.S. Taughmaconnell	ROSCOMMON	N	C	MIX
Carbury N.S.,The Mall	SLIGO	N	COI	MIX
DunaIly N.S., DunaIly	SLIGO	N	C	MIX
Girls N.S., Colloney	SLIGO	Y	C	MIX
Ransboro N.S., Knocknahur	SLIGO	N	C	MIX
Rathcormick N.S., Drumcliffe	SLIGO	N	C	MIX
ReaIt na Maidne N.S., Knocknahur	SLIGO	N	C	MIX
Rockfield N.S., Coolaney	SLIGO	N	C	MIX
Sc. Naomh Molaise, Grange	SLIGO	N	C	MIX
Sc. ReaIt na Mara, Rosses Point	SLIGO	N	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire gan Smal, Ballymote	SLIGO	N	C	MIX
Scoil N. Eanna, Ceathrii Rua	SLIGO	N	C	MIX
Scoil Ursula, Strandhill Road	SLIGO	N	C	MIX
Sligo School Project N.S.	SLIGO	Y	MD	MIX
St. Brendan's N.S., Cartron	SLIGO	N	C	MIX
St. Edward's N.S., Forthill	SLIGO	Y	C	MIX
St. John's N.S., Ballisodare	SLIGO	N	C	MIX
St. Patrick's N.S., Calry	SLIGO	N	C	MIX
Ardfinnan N.S., Clonmel	TIPPERARY	N	C	MIX
Ballylooby N.S.	TIPPERARY	N	C	MIX
Cahir B.N.S.	TIPPERARY	N	C	BOY
Crehanna N.S.	TIPPERARY	N	C	MIX

Gaelscoil Bhride,las tile	TIPPERARY	N	C/GS	MIX
Gaelscoil Chluain Meala	TIPPERARY	N	C/GS	MIX
Gaelscoil Thiobraid Arann	TIPPERARY	N	C/GS	MIX
Holy Family N.S., Templetuohy, Thurles	TIPPERARY	N	C	MIX
Killurney N.S., Ballypatrick	TIPPERARY	N	C	MIX
Moycartey N.S.	TIPPERARY	N	C	MIX
Presentation Primary School, Thurles	TIPPERARY	N	C	MIX
Presentation Primary, Clonmel	TIPPERARY	N	C	GIRL
Sc. Na nAingeal, Clonmel	TIPPERARY	N	C	MIX
Scoil Ailbhe CBS, Thurles	TIPPERARY	N	C	BOY
Scoil Angela, Ursuline Primary School, Thurles	TIPPERARY	N	C	GIRL
Scoil Mhuire na TrOcaire, Cahir	TIPPERARY	N	C	GIRL
Scoil Mhuire, Thurles	TIPPERARY	N	C	MIX
SS. Peter and Paul's CBNS, Clonmel	TIPPERARY	Y	C	BOY
St. Joseph's Special School, Ferryhouse, Clonmel	TIPPERARY	N	C	MIX
St. Kevin's N.S., Littleton	TIPPERARY	Y	C	MIX
St. Mary's N.S., Irishtown, Clonmel	TIPPERARY	N	C	BOY
St. Mary's N.S., Templemore	TIPPERARY	N	COI	MIX
St. Mary's Parochial School, Clonmel	TIPPERARY	N	COI	MIX
St. Michael's G.N.S., Tipperary Town	TIPPERARY	N	C	GIRL
St. Michael's N.S., Holycross, Thurles	TIPPERARY	N	C	MIX
St. Oliver's N.S., Clonmel	TIPPERARY	Y	C	MIX
St. Peter's N.S., Horse and Jockey	TIPPERARY	N	C	MIX
St. Mary's N.S., Ballygunner	WATERFORD	N	C	MIX
Mount Sion CBNS, Barrack Street	WATERFORD	Y	C	BOY
Our Lady of Lourdes N.S., Slieverue	WATERFORD	N	C	MIX
Our Lady of Mercy N.S., Military Road	WATERFORD	Y	C	GIRL
Presentation Convent N.S., Waterford	WATERFORD	Y	C	GIRL
Sc. Ursula Naofa, Ballybruckle	WATERFORD	N	C	GIRL
Scoil Mhuire, Butlerstown	WATERFORD	N	C	MIX
Scoil na nAingeal, Convernt of Mercy, Dungarvan	WATERFORD	N	C	GIRL
St. John of God N.S., Passage Road	WATERFORD	N	C	GIRL

St. Mary's Primary School, Dungarvan	WATERFORD	Y	C	GIRL
St. Paul's Senior B.N.S., Lisduggan	WATERFORD	Y	C	BOY
St. Saviour's N.S., Ballybeg	WATERFORD	Y	C	MIX
Star of the Sea, Tramore	WATERFORD	N	C	MIX
Clonmellon N.S.	WESTMEATH	N	C	MIX
Convent N.S., Moate	WESTMEATH	N	C	GIRL
Convent of Mercy, Kilbeggan PP	WESTMEATH	N	C	MIX
Cornamaddy N.S., Athlone	WESTMEATH	N	C	MIX
Crowenstown N.S., Delvin	WESTMEATH	N	C	MIX
Drumraney N.S., Athlone	WESTMEATH	N	C	MIX
Presentation G.N.S., Scoil na Maighdine Muire, Mullingar	WESTMEATH	N	C	MIX
Scoil Eoin Naofa, Ballymore	WESTMEATH	Y	C	MIX
Scoil Mhuire Marist N.S., Athlone (amalg)	WESTMEATH	N	C	MIX
Scoil na gCeithre Maistri, Ath Luain	WESTMEATH	N	C/GS	MIX
St. Anne's N.S., Tyrellspass	WESTMEATH	N	C	MIX
St. Caillin's N.S., Rashina, Ballinahown	WESTMEATH	N	C	MIX
St. Coleman's N.S., Mullingar	WESTMEATH	N	C	MIX
St. Kenny N.S., Mullingar	WESTMEATH	N	C	MIX
St. Mary's N.S., Collinstown	WESTMEATH	N	C	MIX
St. Peter's Girls, Athlone	WESTMEATH	Y	C	GIRL
The Bower Senior N.S., Athlone	WESTMEATH	-	C	MIX
C.B.S., Wexford	WEXFORD	N	C	MIX
Gaelscoil Inis C6rthaidh	WEXFORD	N	C/GS	MIX
St. John of God G.N.S., Wexford	WEXFORD	Y	C	GIRL
St. Michael's G.N.S., New Ross	WEXFORD	N	C	MIX
Our Lady's N.S., Rathdrum	WICKLOW	N	C	GIRL
Delgany N.S.	WICKLOW	N	COI	MIX
Gaelscoil UI Cheadaigh, Bre	WICKLOW	N	C/GS	MIX
Scoil Chaoimhin Naofa, Glendalough	WICKLOW	N	C	MIX
Scoil Chualann, Bre	WICKLOW	N	C/GS	MIX
Sisters of Charity, Ravenswell, Bray	WICKLOW	Y	C	MIX
St. Anthony's B.N.S., Kilcoole (Amalgamated)	WICKLOW	N	C	BOY

St. Brigid's Girls, Kilcoole (AMLG)	WICKLOW	N	C	GIRL
St. Brigid's Girls, Newtownmountkennedy (AMLG)	WICKLOW	Y	C	GIRL
St. Cronan's B.N.S., Bray	WICKLOW	N	C	BOY
St. Fergal's, Ballywaltrim	WICKLOW	Y	C	MIX
Greystones Education Together	WICKLOW	Y	ET	MIX
Ravenswell	WICKLOW	N	C	mix
St. Kevin's N.S., Greystones	WICKLOW	N	C	MIX
St. Laurence's N.S., Greystones	WICKLOW	N	C	MIX
St. Patrick's Loreto, Bray	WICKLOW	N	C	GIRL
St. Patrick's N.S., Curtlestown	WICKLOW	N	C	MIX
St. Patrick's N.S., Glencullen	WICKLOW	N	C	MIX
St. Peter's B.N.S., Little Bray	WICKLOW	Y	C	BOY
St. Philomena's N.S., Ravenswell, Bray	WICKLOW	Y	C	MIX

Appendix E: NCC Repertoire Data

These are the Repertoire Lists from 1985 to 2019 taken from the 30-year souvenir book (NCC, 2015) and NCH 2017 & 2019 programmes (NCC, 2017; 2019). They have then been cross referenced with their entry on Spotify to assign a genre to each one (as outlined in Chapter 3 and 4). Where two genres were present, the most often used one in the song search list is listed as primary genre, and the other as secondary. Songs that have been repeated over the cycles are in bold. This is to illustrate the level of repetition from cycle to cycle.

The first tables represent the percentage of pieces from each genre category, when considering all the repertoires together:

Genre	Repertoire %
WAM (Classical)	26%
Irish Traditional/Folk	24%
Other	13%
Folk songs from other countries	12%
Pop/Rock	11%
Musical Theatre	7%
Contemporary	7%

The next table details the timings from the 2017 and 2019 Repertoire Recordings (NCC, 2017; 2019) representing the duration that each of the main musical genres occupies when compared to the overall duration of the NCC programme.

Genres	2019		2017	
Total Timings	1:01:42		46:21	
Classical	16m 14sec	27%	15m 19sec	33%
Irish Traditional	11m 18sec	19%	6m 33sec	14%
Popular	8m 32sec	14%	7m 05secs	15%
Musical Theatre	14m 41 sec	24%		
Other Genres	8m 39 sec	15%		

Finally, the repertoire for every cycle of the NCC is reproduced. The genre(s) as linked through a Spotify search is also included to inform the discussion on the mix of genres contained within each repertoire (as outlined in Chapter 3).

1985	*Primary Genre*	*Secondary Genre*
Friday Afternoons	Classical	Choral
Begone, DullCare		
A Tragic Story		
Cockoo!		
“Ee-oh”		
A New Year Carol		
I Must be Married on a Sunday		
There Was a Man of Newington		
Fishing Song		
The Useful Plough		
Jazz-Man		
There was a Monkey		
Old Abram Brown		
The Peasant Cantata	Classical	Baroque
Good Neighbours All	Irish Trad	
Spring Comes Laughing		
Of the Factor you had Best Beware		
Happy is the Land		
Good Cause Have We		
Fifty Florins Seem a Lot		
Of Flowers the Fairest		
If Fortune had Made Me the Master Hey Derry Down Derry		
Good Fellows, Be Merry		
Come Let Us to the Bagpipes Sound		
1987		
Oró mo Bháidín	Irish Trad	
Tá na Báid	Irish Trad	
Buachaill ón Éirne	Irish Trad	
An Mhaighdean Mhara	Irish Trad	
Mo Cheallachain Fionn	Irish Trad	
Báidín Fheidhlimidh	Irish Trad	

Click go the Shears	Irish Trad	
Fhira Bhata	Irish Trad	
Kalinka	Folk	Russian
Cornish May Song	Classical	Classical
Wooden Heart	Pop/Rock	
The Swallow		
Funiculi Funicula	Folk	
Summerisa Comin ’in	Spiritual/Gospel	
Jesu Joy of Man’s Desiring	Classical	Classical
Spring is Coming		
Now on Land and Sea Descending	Sacred	
Lullaby		
Ye who can Measure		
Cradle Song	Classical	Romantic
Speed Your Journey	Classical	Romantic
Night Song		
Yesterday	Pop/Rock	
The End		
1989		
Shortnin’ Bread	Folk	American
Do Chuirfinnse Féin	Irish Trad	
Cnocainín Areach Cill Mhuire	Irish Trad	
Sweet Thames	Irish Trad	
Raglan Road	Irish Trad	
Ag an mBóithrín Buí	Irish Trad	
Fuigfidh mise an Baile Seo	Irish Trad	
Apron of Flowers		
Tá mé ‘mo Shuí		
Be Still my Soul	Sacred	
Pie Jesu	Classical	
In Paradisum	Classical	Romantic
When I’m 64	Pop/Rock	
Angels that Around us Hover	Classical	Opera/Romantic

Memory		
Summertime	Jazz	
Evening Prayer		
I Dreamt that I Dwelt		
Bacarolle	Classical	
All I ask of You	Musical	
Hunter's Chorus	Classical	
Pilgrim's Chorus	Classical	
Nun's Chorus	Classical	
Birdcatcher Song	Classical	
Easter Hymn	Sacred	
Speed Your Journey	Classical	
1991		
It's Easy to Sing	Musical	
My Singing Bird	Pop/Rock	
Coinleach Glas an Fhómhair	Irish Trad	
Suantraí Vendulca	Irish Trad	
The Cuckoo Cries	Contemporary	
Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head	Pop/Rock	
CarnivalNights		
Tiocfaidh an Samhraidh	Irish Trad	
Laudate Dominum	Classical	Classical
Walking in the Air	Contemporary	
Spring		
Now on Land and Sea	Sacred	
Cavalleria Rusticana	Classical	
O Rest in the Lord	Classical	
Ceol a Mhála	Irish Trad	
Skimbleshanks	Musical	
Linden Lea	Classical	contemporary
Ninth Street Bridge	Pop/Rock	
On Wings of Song	Classical	
Amhrán na Gealaí	Irish Trad	

Nocturne	Classical	
I've Been Working on the Railroad	Folk	
I Have a Dream	Pop/Rock	
1993		
Evening Prayer		
Báidín Fheidhlimidh	Irish trad	
Tá 'n Coileach a' fogairt an Lae	Irish trad	
Jazz Man	Jazz	Pop
Spring		
Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring	Classical	Baroque
Shortnin' Bread	Folk	American
Easter Hymn		
Pie Jesu	Classical	
Tá mé im' Shuí	Irish trad	
Kalinka	Folk	Russian
The Swallow		
Speed Your Journey	Classical	
The End		
Tá na Báid	Irish trad	
Amhrán na Gealaí	Irish trad	
Bendemeer's Stream	Folk	Irish
Ceol a' Mhála		
I've been Working on the Railroad	Folk	
Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head	Pop/Rock	
Carnival Nights		
Seán Ó Duibhir a' Ghleanna	Irish trad	
1995		
An tAiséirí	Irish trad	Sacred
Balm in Giliad	Sacred	
Heal the World	Pop	
Fuaireasa Cuireadh	Irish trad	
What a Wonderful World	Folk	Pop/Rock
I'd Like to Teach	Pop	

Beidh Aonach		
Beidh Aonach Amárach	Irish trad	
I'm Gonna Ride my Chariot	Spiritual/Gospel	
Standing in the Need of Prayer	Sacred	
World of Our Own	Folk	American
Ré Chnoc Mná Duibhe	Irish trad	
Ching a Ring	Classical	Contemporary
Top of the World	Pop/Rock	
Bhíos –saLá	Irish trad	
A Shaighdiúirína Chroí	Irish trad	
Everybody Wants to Rule the World	Pop/Rock	
Rockin' All Over the World	Rock	
One World Love	Pop	
What the World Needs Now	Folk	Jazz
A Whole New World	Musical	
1997		
The Road to the Isles	Folk	Scottish
Fhira Bhata	Irish Trad	
Bheir Mí Ó	Irish Trad	
Blayden Races	Folk	
Tom Bowling	Classical	Contemporary
David of the White Rock	Classical	Folk
Amhrán na nÉan	Irish Trad	
Reynard the Fox	Folk	Irish
Sliabh Geal gCua	Irish Trad	
I'll tell me Ma	Folk	Irish
Dublin Saunter	Folk	Irish
This Land is Your Land	Folk	American
I've Been Working on the Railroad	Folk	American
CityofNewOrleans	Country	Folk
TheWabash Cannonball	Country	Folk
Simple Gifts	Classical	
Goin' Home	Classical	

Battle Hymn of the Republic	Classical	Folk
Some where Out There		
You'll Never Walk Alone	Musical	
The Rhythm of Life	Musical	Movie
1999		
Salve Regina	Classical	
TheLordisMyShepherd	Classical	Sacred
Alleluia	Sacred	
Hear my Prayer		
Scenes that are Brightest	Classical	Opera
Sweet Spirit Hear My Prayer		
Turn on Old Time		
Prologue	Classical	Choral
Windy Nights		
Singing		
Where go the Boats?		
Marching Song		
From a Railway Carriage		
Night and Day		
The Swing		
Looking Glass River		
The Land of Counterpane		
Epilogue		
Oró mo Bháidín	Irish Trad	
Mo Cheallacháin Fionn	Irish Trad	
An Maighdean Mhara	Irish Trad	
Báidín Fheidhlimidh	Irish Trad	
Tá na Báid	Irish Trad	
The Lord Bless You and Keep You	Sacred	Choral
2000 (Not Full Cycle)		
Sound the Trumpet	Classical	Baroque
Thank You for the Music	Pop/Rock	
Confusion		

Do Bhíos Lá I bPortláirge	Irish Trad	
Fuaireasa Cuireadh	Irish Trad	
Beatles Medley	Pop/Rock	
Easter Hymn	Classical	
2001		
Sound the Trumpet	Classical	Baroque
Thank you for the Music	Pop/Rock	
Hallelujah Chorus	Classical	Baroque
Confusion		
Do Bhíos Lá i bPortláirge	Irish Trad	
Fuaireas Cuireadh	Irish Trad	
Easter Hymn	Pop/Rock	
Beatles Medley	Classical	
Spring Comes Laughing	Classical	
Sweet Spring is Advancing	Classical	Baroque
When Over Sun lit Paths	Classical	Choral
Walking in the Air	Film	Classical
The Music Master		
Winter Wonderland	Classical	Choral
Summer Nights	Musical	
Tiocfaidh an tSamhraidh	Irish Trad	
Summer is Icumenin	Classical	
Coinleach Glasan Fhómhair	Irish Trad	
Raglan Road	Irish Trad	
Linden Lea	Classical	Choral
2003		
The Birdcatcher	Classical	
Come to the Fair	Folk	
An Aiséirí	Irish Trad	
Funiculi Funicula	Classical	Opera
Amhránna Gealaí	Irish Trad	Folk
Speed Your Journey	Classical	
Tá Dhá Ghabhar	Irish Trad	

Pearl Fisher's Duet	Classical	Opera
An Mhaighdean Mhara	Irish Trad	
Hallelujah Chorus	Classical	Baroque
Fhira Bhata	Irish Trad	
We're Looking for a Piano	Musical	
Ceol a Mhála	Irish Trad	
Pie Jesu	Classical	Contemporary
What a Wonderful World	Folk	Pop/Rock
Rockin' All Over the World	Pop/Rock	
Heal the World	Pop/Rock	
Waltzing on Borrowed Time	Folk	Irish
The Lord Bless You and Keep You	Classical	Contemporary
Easter Hymn	Classical	Opera
The Rhythm of Life	Film	Musical
2005		
Far Away Places	Pop/Rock	Folk
Túirne Mháire	Irish Trad	
Driving to Market	Folk	
On Eagles' Wings	Sacred	
Pé 'n Éirinn Í	Irish Tra	
Thy Home in Fair Provence	Classical	
The Gendarmes' Duet	Opera	
Old Abram Brown	Classical	Contemporary
Bless This House	Sacred	
Say Goodbye Now	Classical	Opera
Mo Ghile Mear	Irish Trad	
Good Fellows, Be Merry Peasant Canata	Classical	
Down by the Sally Gardens	Irish Trad	
Buachaill ónÉ irne	Irish Trad	
On Wings of Song	Classical	Romantic
Sweet Thames Flow Softly	Folk	Irish
Beidh Aonach Amárach	Irish Trad	
Ye,Who Can Measure	Classical	Romantic

yulishka Under the Lilac Tree	Folk	Hungary
The Battle Hymn of the Republic	Folk	America
Top of the World	Pop/Rock	
2007		
Place in the Choir	Choral	Contemporary
An Puc ar Buile	Irish Trad	
Garden Song	Pop/Rock	Folk
The Mermaid	Folk	Sea Shanty
Peigín Leitir Mór	Irish Trad	
Calypso (arrangement)	Choral	Contemporary
I'd Give my Finest Feathers	Classical	Opera
For the Beauty of the Earth	Choral	Contemporary
Rock and Roll Party	Choral	Contemporary
Tá 'nCoileach ag Fógairt an Lae	Irish Trad	
Precious Lord	Choral	Sacred
Oklahoma	Musical	
Water of Tyne	Folk	English
Nymphs and Shepherds	Classical	Baroque
Proclaim the Story	Sacred	
Úcaire na Bandon	Irish Trad	Folk
Euromix	Pop/Rock	
Don't be Cross	Classical	
Ode to Joy	Classical	
All Things Bright and Beautiful	Choral	Contemporary
Thank you for the Music (Dedication)	Pop/Rock	
2009		
Any Dream Will Do	Musical	
Get Me to the Church	Musical	
If I were a Rich Man	Musical	
Túirne Mháire	Irish Trad	
The Lord is my Shepherd	Sacred	
Five Eyes	Classical	Choral
Tá Mé 'Mo Shuí	Irish Trad	

Duetto Buffo Di Due Gatti	Classical	Opera
Ave Maria	Classical	
Daydream Believer	Pop/Rock	
Do You Hear the People Sing	Classical	
Siúil a Ghrá	Irish Trad	
Listand Learn	Musical	Opera
A Neansaí Mhíle Ghrá	Irish Trad	
Skimbleshanks: The Railway Cat	Musical	
Love Changes Everything	Musical	
Food Glorious Food	Musical	
Dilín Ó Deamhas	Irish	Folk
Goodbye		
You Raise Me Up	Sacred	Contemporary
2011		
We Sail The Ocean Blue	Musical	
Mo Ghile Mear	Irish Trad	
Nozone		
Earth Song	Pop/Rock	
Funiculi Funicula	Opera	Classical
Over the Rainbow	Musical	
Toreador Song	Classical	Romantic
Beidh Aonach Amárach	Irish Trad	
A Clare Benediction	Classical	Choral
Ag Críost an Síol	Irish Trad	Sacred
Do Bhíosa Lá‘ bPortláige	Irish Trad	
Down to the River to Pray	Spiritual/Gospel	
Ave Verum	Classical	
Songs of Ireland	Irish Trad	
Carrickfergus,The Fields of Athenry, Limerick Your’e a Lady, Dublin Saunter		
Adiemus	Contemporary	Choral
Speed Your Journey	Classical	

2013		
Singing in the Rain	Musical	
O Waly Waly	Classical	Folk
Cantate Domino! Alleluia!	Choral	Contemporary
Ceol A' Mhála	Irish Trad	
Pilgrims' Chorus	Classical	
Maidinim Béarra		
Colours of the Wind	Musical	Film
Can You Hear Me?	choral	Contemporary
The Heavenly Aeroplane	Classical	choral
Spiritual Medley	Spiritual/Gospel	
Éist a Stór	Irish Trad	
Mo Ghrá Thú	Irish Trad	
Ombra Mai Fu	Classical	
Barcarolle		
Níl Sé 'n Lá	Irish Trad	
What a Wonderful World	Pop/Rock	
2015		
Dún do Shúile	Irish Trad	
The Lord is my Shepherd	Sacred	
World in Union	Classical	
The Rhythm of Life	Musical	Film
Mairseáil Uí Néill	Irish Trad	
Battle Hymn of the Republic	Folk	
Siúil a Rún	Irish Trad	
The Holy City	Sacred	
Shepherd Song		
Gloria!		
Lift Thine Eyes	Classical	
Bealtine na Maighdine		
Seventy Six Trombones	Musical	Film
Soldiers 'Chorus	Classical	Opera
'Sí do Mhaimeó Í'		

The Poet Sings	Choral	Contemporary
The Fair, Fair Land	Folk	
The Journey of Hope	Choral	Contemporary
2017		
Moon River (Henry Mancini)	Film	Pop
Óró 'Sé Do Bheatha Abhaile (Cóirithe ag Proinsias Ó Ceallaigh)	Irish Trad	
Hallelujah Chorus (George Frederic Handel)	Classical	
Lightning! (Greg Gilpin)	Classical	Contemporary
Fill A Rún (Cóirithe ag Proinsias Ó Ceallaigh)	Irish Trad	
Mornin' Glory (Traditional Spirituals)	Spiritual/Gospel	
May We Never Have To Say Goodbye (Shaun Davey)	Folk	Irish Trad
Panis Angelicus (César Franck)	Classical	
From A Distance (Julie Gold)	Pop/Rock	
Eatnemen Vuelie (Frode Fjellheim)	Contemporary	
Don't Stop Me Now (Freddie Mercury)	Pop/Rock	
Fionnghuala (Traidisiúnta)	Irish Trad	
Nella Fantasia (Ennio Morricone)	Classical	
When I Grow Up (Brendan Graham)	Contemporary	
My Sunshine – 'O Sole Mio! (Neapolitan Serenade, Eduardo di Capua)	Classical	
2019		
Tír na nÓg	Irish Trad	
Starman	Pop/Rock	
Crandaí Bogadaí	Irish Trad	
Gloria	Classical	Baroque
Somewhere Only We Know'	Pop/Rock	
Ave Maria	Classical	Romantic
Precious Lord	Classical	
Kusimama	Spiritual/Gospel	
O Fortuna	Classical	Contemporary
Bheir Mé Ó	Folk	Irish Trad
Listen to the Rain	Contemporary	Choral
When I am Silent	Classical	Contemporary

59th Street Bridge Song	Folk	
Medley from The Sound OF Music	Musical	
When You Believe	Musical	

Appendix F: Ethical Approval Documents

Plain Language Statements and Consent Forms: Phase 1

Plain Language Statement – Musical Directors

My name is Richard Coady and I am currently studying for a PhD at the Institute of Education at Dublin City University. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project entitled "A case study of the experiences of schools participating in the National Children's Choir programme". This research is funded by a bursary from the DCU Institute of Education and is recognised by the National Children's Choir committee.

This research aims to describe the perceptions and experiences of teachers and children who take part in the National Children's Choir (NCC) programme, alongside the experiences of parents and school management. Participants will be asked to describe what taking part in the initiative means to them, including how it affects their knowledge and teaching of music, to describe any benefits, challenges and the perceived impact of the programme, and also to comment on how the NCC fits into the wider Irish context regarding music education at primary level.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in one interview, prior to the main data collection in case schools. This interview will be no longer than 40 minutes, and you will be asked questions relating to the aims and vision for the NCC, the main benefits and challenges that you see as the musical directors of the choir, how you work with teachers and schools to ensure the success of the programme, and finally any memorable anecdotes or experiences you can recall from working with the teachers, children and schools in the past.

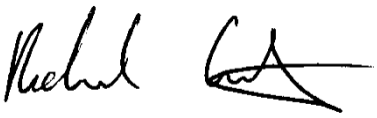
It is hoped that with your participation, we can learn more about how the NCC operates and what effect it has on the children and adults involved. This will help us to better understand what teachers, children and the wider school community experience along the journey from repertoire learning to regional performances and beyond, with the constant aim of improving the music education of the children in our schools.

As the Musical Directors of the programme your identities may become known by readers of the final research, however your names will not be included in the study. Also, any participant who discloses information relating to illicit activity, may limit the confidentiality of the data and be reported to the relevant authorities as appropriate. Participants have the option to withdraw from the study at any time, and participation is completely voluntary. The interview recordings will only be used for the purpose of this research and will not be used in any other research or broadcast in a public forum. A written record of the interview will be sent to participants to verify the accuracy of the transcript. Data will be securely stored on a password protected computer and destroyed following three years of publication.

If you have any concerns or questions about this research, please feel free to contact me by email or phone. If participants wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000

Kind Regards,



Richard Coady
richard.coady6@mail.dcu.ie
[redacted]

Plain Language Statements and Consent Forms: Phase 2

Plain Language Statement - Teachers

My name is Richard Coady and I am currently studying for a PhD at the Institute of Education at Dublin City University. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project entitled "A case study of the experiences of schools participating in the National Children's Choir programme". This research is funded by a bursary from the DCU Institute of Education and is recognised by the National Children's Choir committee.

This research aims to describe the perceptions and experiences of teachers and children who take part in the National Children Choir (NCC) programme, alongside the experiences of parents and school management. Participants will be asked to describe what the programme means to them, including how the initiative affects their knowledge and teaching of music, to describe any benefits, challenges and the perceived impact of the programme, and also to comment on how the NCC fits into the wider Irish context regarding music education at primary level.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in two semi-structured interviews over the coming academic year, one before the regional concerts in March/April 2019, and one following the programme in May/June 2019. These interviews will be no longer than 30 minutes, and you will be asked questions relating to the teaching of the repertoire, the rehearsal process and cluster rehearsals, the feedback from the children, and the opportunities and challenges encountered during the process.

It is hoped that with your participation, we can learn more about how the NCC operates and what effects it has on the children and adults involved. This will help us to better understand what teachers, children and the wider school community experience along the journey from repertoire learning to regional performances and beyond, with the constant aim of improving the music education of the children in our schools.

Participant's names and personal information will not be included in the study to help ensure anonymity and confidentiality, however as this research involves a small number of schools there is a possibility of schools becoming identified due to their context and description. Also, any participant who discloses information during an interview that suggests a child protection concern or being involved in illicit activity, may limit the confidentiality of the data and be reported to the relevant authorities as appropriate.

The research is primarily descriptive and there is no risk to participation in this study. Any participant has the option to withdraw from the study at any time, and participation is completely voluntary. There is no link to participation in this study and participation in the National Children's Choir programme. The interview recordings will only be used for the purpose of this research and will not be used in any other research or broadcast in a public forum. A written record of the interviews will be sent to participants to verify the accuracy of the transcripts. The data will be securely stored on a password protected computer and destroyed following three years of publication. Participating schools will be given a final copy of the study upon publication.

If you have any concerns or questions about this research, please feel free to contact me by email or phone.
If participants wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000

Kind Regards,

Richard Coady
richard.coady6@mail.dcu.ie
[redacted]

Plain Language Statement – Boards of Management

My name is Richard Coady and I am currently studying for a PhD at the Institute of Education at Dublin City University. I am writing to invite your school to participate in a research project entitled "A case study of the experiences of schools participating in the National Children's Choir programme". This research is funded by a bursary from the DCU Institute of Education and is recognised by the National Children's Choir committee.

This research aims to describe the perceptions and experiences of teachers and children, who take part in the National Children Choir (NCC) programme, alongside the experiences of parents and school management. Approximately eight case study schools will be included, and participants will be asked what taking part in the initiative means to them and to describe their experiences of the programme. This will include how it affects their knowledge and teaching of music, to consider any benefits, challenges or the impact of the programme, and also to comment on how the NCC fits into the wider Irish context regarding music education at primary level.

If your school agrees to be part of the study, teachers teaching the choir will be invited to participate in two semi-structured interviews over the coming academic year, while a small focus group of between 6-8 children will also be consulted twice over the year. The first of these data collection points will be before the regional concerts, and finally following the programme in May/June 2019. Each of these interviews will be between 30-40 minutes long. Finally the school principal/music post-holder will be consulted following the final concerts. From a management point of view, questions will relate to the place of music in the school, how the NCC contributes to the music education of the children, and what effects (if any) participation in the choir has on the development of the children and the wider school community.

Participant's names and personal information will not be included in the study to help ensure anonymity and confidentiality, however as this research involves a small number of schools there is a possibility of schools becoming identified due to their context and description. Also, any participant who discloses information during an interview that suggests a child protection concern or being involved in illicit activity, may limit the confidentiality of the data and be reported to the relevant authorities as appropriate.

The research is primarily descriptive and there is no risk to participation in this study. Any participant has the option to withdraw from the study at any time, and participation is completely voluntary. There is no link to participation in this study and participation in the National Children's Choir programme. The interview recordings will only be used for the purpose of this research and will not be used in any other research or broadcast in a public forum. A written record of the interview will be sent to participants to verify the accuracy of the transcript. The data will be securely stored on a password protected computer and destroyed following three years of publication. Participating schools will be given a final copy of the study upon publication.

If you have any concerns or questions about this research, please feel free to contact me by email or phone. If participants wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000

Kind Regards,

Richard Coady
richard.coady6@mail.dcu.ie
[redacted]

Informed Consent Form – Teachers/Musical Directors

I. Research Study Title

The study in which you are being requested to participate is entitled 'A case study of the experiences of schools participating in the National Children's Choir programme'. It is being conducted by Richard Coady, a PhD student in the School of Arts Education and Movement at the Institute of Education, in DCU.

II. Clarification of the purpose of the research

This research aims to investigate the perceptions and experiences of teachers and children who take part in the National Children Choir (NCC) programme, alongside the experiences of parents and school management. Participants will be asked to describe any benefits and challenges they encountered in learning or teaching the repertoire, and to discuss their reasons for participation in, and perceived impact of, the programme.

III. Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

As stated in the Plain Language Statement, participants in this research will be requested to participate in three face-to-face interviews over the coming year, which the researcher will request to record (audio only).

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me).	*Yes / No*
I understand the information provided.	*Yes / No*
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study.	*Yes / No*
I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions.	*Yes / No*
I am aware that my interview will be recorded.	*Yes / No*

Participant's involvement in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the research at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the project have been completed. Participant's names and personal information will not be included in the study to help ensure anonymity. However, if any participant discloses information that suggests a child protection concern or illicit activity, this may limit the confidentiality of the data. The data gathered will be securely stored and destroyed following three years of publication.

IV. Signature

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Participant's Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Informed Consent Form – School Management

I. Research Study Title

The study in which you are being requested to participate is entitled 'A case study of the experiences of schools participating in the National Children's Choir programme'. It is being conducted by Richard Coady, a PhD student in the School of Arts Education and Movement at the Institute of Education, in DCU.

II. Clarification of the purpose of the research

This research aims to investigate the perceptions and experiences of teachers and children who take part in the National Children Choir (NCC) programme, alongside the experiences of parents and school management. Participants will be asked about the wider benefits and challenges for the teachers and children taking part, and to discuss their own perceived value and impact of the programme.

III. Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

As stated in the Plain Language Statement, participants in this research will be requested to participate in one face-to-face interview following the Regional Concerts, which the researcher will request to record (audio only).

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)	
I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)	*Yes / No*
I understand the information provided	*Yes / No*
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study	*Yes / No*
I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions	*Yes / No*
I am aware that my interview will be recorded.	*Yes / No*

Participant's involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the project have been completed. Participant's names and personal information will not be included in the study to help ensure anonymity. However, if any participant discloses information that suggests a child protection concern or illicit activity, this may limit the confidentiality of the data. The data gathered will be securely stored and destroyed following three years of publication.

IV. Signature

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Participant's Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Phase 3: Plain Language Statement and Email Invitation

Plain Language Statement

My name is Richard Coady and I am currently studying for a PhD at the Institute of Education at Dublin City University. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project entitled "The experiences of teachers participating in the National Children's Choir programme". This is the second phase of data collection, first started in 2019. This research is funded by a bursary from the DCU Institute of Education and is recognised by the National Children's Choir committee.

This research aims to describe the experiences of teachers who take part in the National Children Choir (NCC) programme. Participants will be asked how taking part in the initiative affects their knowledge and teaching of music, and to describe any benefits, challenges, and the perceived impact of the programme. The research seeks to be explorative and not evaluative.

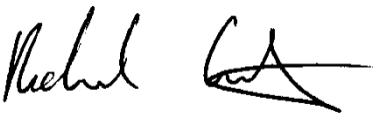
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in one semi-structured interview (approximately 45 mins) asking about your own background, your experiences and understanding of the NCC programme and the wider meaning and significance of the programme for teachers. It is hoped that with your participation, we can learn more about what the NCC is, how it operates, and understand what teachers experience along the journey from signing up to participation and beyond.

Participants will be given a pseudonym to help preserve anonymity and confidentiality. Any participant has the option to withdraw from the study at any time, and participation is completely voluntary. There is no link to participation in this study and participation in the National Children's Choir. Data that is gathered will be securely stored on a password protected computer and destroyed following three years of publication.

If you have any concerns or questions about this research, please feel free to contact me by email or phone. If participants wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000

Kind Regards,



Richard Coady

richard.coady6@mail.dcu.ie

[redacted]

Email Invitation

Dear [Participant]

Thank you again for taking my call today. Your participation in the research would be very helpful and hopefully point the way for future developments in music education and the choir itself, while also capturing just what it is like to be part of the NCC from a teacher's perspective.

I've attached the formal Information Sheet which explains the aims of the research in more detail. If you have any questions, please let me know.

I'm wondering how you are fixed next week to do the interview? As I said it should take around 40-45 minutes, and we can do it over Zoom if that works for you. It is designed to be an informal chat and there's no preparation/wrong answers - I'm just interested to understand how a programme like this works and why teachers take part.

I'm suggesting _____ morning perhaps - but feel free to suggest afternoons or evenings. Whatever works for you.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Richard Coady

richard.coady6@mail.dcu.ie

Ethical Approval Letter from DCU Research Ethics Committee

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Mr. Richard Coady,

School of Arts, Education and Movement

3rd December 2018

REC Reference: **DCUREC/2018/200**

Proposal Title: A case study of the experiences of schools participating in the National Children's Choir Programme

Applicant(s): Mr. Richard Coady, Professor Regina Murphy, Professor Francis Ward.

Dear Colleagues ,

Further to full committee review, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this research proposal.

Materials used to recruit participants should note that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further amendment submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

Donal O' Gorman

Dr Dónal O'Gorman
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee

DCU
Research & Innovation

Taighde & Nuálaíocht Tacaíocht
Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath,
Baile Átha Cliath, Éire

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Dublin 9, Ireland

T +353 1 700 8000
F +353 1 700 8002
E research@dcu.ie
www.dcu.ie

Appendix G: Interview Schedules

Phase 2 Interviews and Focus Groups

Interview Questions - *Teachers*

Pre-Concert

- Tell me about your own musical background and how you became involved in the National Children's Choir programme.
- Why have you signed up to the programme – Why choral music?
- What do you think the aim of the programme is?
- Describe how you teach the repertoire/organise a rehearsal?
- What do you think about the choice of repertoire in the programme?
- What role do the Musical Directors and/or NCC committee have in supporting teachers? Summer course?
- How confident do you think you were to teach the repertoire? Has this changed over the course of the rehearsals?
- Describe the journey from rehearsing in your own school, to the regional rehearsals to the concert. Challenges
- Describe how your practice has changed/how you have learned during the rehearsal process?
- What feedback do the children give you during the rehearsals? How do they interact with each other during the rehearsals?

Post-Concert Interview

- What is the value of the final concert, in your opinion? How did you feel before it/after it?
- Tell me about a major milestones/highlights you can think of, having been part of the programme
- Describe some of the challenges of participating in the programme. How did you overcome them
- Having been part of the programme, what are the benefits of participating in the NCC programme for (a) you, the teacher? (b) the children and (c) the wider school community. Extra-Musical/Musical
- What input have (a) school management and (b) parents had in the NCC programme?
- What effect (if any) do you think the NCC programme has had on the children in your school?
- What role do you think the NCC programme has on future musical engagement for the children?
- What effect (if any) has your involvement in the NCC programme had on your teaching of music? What link does it have to the music curriculum?
- What is your next step following the NCC programme/this interview?

Interview Questions - *School Management*

- Why do you as a school participate in the National Children's Choir programme?
- What do you think the aim of the programme is?
- Describe how your school teaches the repertoire/organises a rehearsal?
- What do you think about the choice of repertoire in the programme?
- Can you recall any major milestones/highlights you can think of, having been part of the programme.
- Describe some of the challenges of participating in the programme. How did you overcome them?
- Having been part of the programme, what are the benefits of participating in the NCC programme for (a) you, the teacher? (b) the children and (c) the wider school community?
- How important are school management and parental involvement in a school's participation in the NCC programme?
- What role do you think the NCC programme has on future musical engagement for the children involved?
- How have you as a principal facilitated the NCC programme?
- What is the next step for your school regarding music education/singing?

Phase 1: Interview Questions

Musical Directors

- What brought you to the National Children's Choir?
- What is/are the aim(s) of the programme, in your opinion?
- What do you see as your role in the NCC programme?
- Describe the teacher you think would be interested in the programme?
- What determines your choir of repertoire/how important is the repertoire?
- What are the benefits of the programme for (a) teachers (b) children (c) wider school community? Musical/Extra-musical benefits?
- What are the main challenges of the programme? How are these addressed by yourselves and the committee?
- What role does the CPD courses play in ensuring the success of the programme?
- Are there any especially memorable moments/anecdotes you have in your time working with the choir?
- What feedback do you receive from schools following the NCC cycle

Phase 3: Phenomenological Interviews

Pre-Phenomenon (Hermeneutic Lifeworld)

- How has your past influenced your experience of the NCC? **Values/Beliefs**
- How do you compare the NCC to other musical projects?

In-Phenomenon (Nature/Essence of this experience)

- Describe what the NCC is?
- Tell me about your experience as a teacher in the NCC.
  Personal/Professional/Learning/Identity: Musician – Teacher
- Describe what it is like to take part for a non-participant. **Nature**
- What was the nature of this experience? **Defining characteristics -**
- What is the most important part of the NCC in your opinion? **Essence**

Post-Phenomenon (Meaning/Significance)

- Having taken part, why do you take part in the NCC?
- What is the **significance (meaning)** of taking part in the NCC?
- Thinking of music education and curricula in your school, where does the NCC fit within that?
- How do you feel about the absence of the NCC in this school year?

Appendix H: Excerpt from Interview Transcript

Excerpt from Susan's Interview
First Phase: Keywords based on literature
Second Phase: Thematic Coding (Coloured Keys)
Third Phase: Interpretation using Conceptual Framework

Temporal - Reflective	Socio-cultural Level
Pre-Phenomenon	Micro – Teacher/Personal Level
(In-) Phenomenon	Meso – Local/School Level
Post-Phenomenon	Macro – NCC/Music Ed. Level

Susan 01:55 And then we got another girl on our staff who was big into music, the following cycle. And she was with us for about 10 years or so. And she was hugely into music. She played she, the two of us. We were a good team, and we were very enthusiastic about it and very passionate about it. And we used to, we did the capacity. We did the as many classes as we could do. We were allowed to do… we did the all of 5th and all of 6th. And yeah, we really enjoyed it and she turns out to be the girl who's our assistant musical director in our area. And even though she moved on from our school, she still… she does it in her own school. And she still has been our assistant musical director, and she's always taught it as well. And then we got within that 10 years, … one of the outlying schools came along shall we say, em, the principal there, took it on. And he's actually… he was our accompanist. And all those years, we've had the same accompanist and same assistant musical director, and even within the other schools that have taken part, we're nearly of an age… more or less and we're all very passionate about it. We all do it every year and we've been lovely little group, and now then there were a few newcomers in the last four or five years. [NCC member] asked me would I take in that an odd school here and there that had nowhere to go but I know... and actually, it turned out to be a super experience because they were so enthusiastic. Like, it just reminded me How, we were in the beginning of it, we kind of take it for granted now that it just we know exactly how it happens and how what it entails. But there were so enthusiastic and their parents couldn't wait for the concert. And, it's just it was it was really it was good for both sides, you know? … **Researcher** 05:29 Okay. You just sound so enthusiastic. **Susan** 05:35 Yeah, no, I still love it Richard, I really, really, I think it's, I think it's wonderful. I think… the best part of it is, for me, I think the whole ethos is, that it's for every child. And that, to me, I think means everything, because whether you can sing, or whether you can't, [laugh] you're going to get up at the end of the year and perform. And in your head, you might, think you're the best singer in the country, but maybe haven't a note, which is still you are going to be there. And it's just wonderful to see the children enjoy that experience, you know? **Researcher** 06:11 Fabulous, I'm going to take you back even a little bit further. If you think of your own past, then, how has that influenced you with your experience with the NCC through your own, background… school? Yes,	Expansion in School Hierarchy Community (AMD) Learning / Experience Access Aims of NCC

Susan 06:25 Yes I would actually attribute a lot of that my interest in music and my passion for music, I suppose, to my secondary school education. And the secondary school that I went to, had a huge tradition from music. And it was run by nuns. And we had a fantastic time because we did, we were entered for choir exams…like for a country school, it was, they had a really fabulous tradition. And they also used to do musicals every year. And we loved that… absolutely all of us loved it. And still, when we get together even for reunions or within your own group of friends, like you very often recollect, they're the memories that you have of your secondary education. It's not your English Irish maths… it's but that's maybe just because I've an interest in it to know what I mean, it mightn't have been for everybody, but it certainly for me. And, and I would always even now in my role with National Children's Choir for the last, since I took over as organizer we'll say, in this area, I would always make sure to send invites to my teachers from my own secondary school…I would always make sure that they would be invited to our concert, and they would be in my eyes, they would be distinguished guests like…nobody else would know them. But they would appreciate and have appreciated being asked. And in fact, many of the songs were chosen down through the years on the different repertoires, we would have done them for choir exams, I just think it must be lovely for those nuns, I mean, they're elderly now, but to see, the fruits of their, what they have taught us, and then we're carrying it on.	Lifeworld Identity/ Community Hierarchy Community/Local Repertoire Lifeworld
Researcher 08:09 Absolutely, absolutely. And I suppose even then past secondary school in your own life now, outside the NCC, where would music sit…	
Susan 08:18 Now, outside. I suppose maybe life took over. And I didn't, hugely, I always have this hankering after that I must join a choir. And…[laughs] Now, I suppose down the country, it's not just maybe I would have made more if I was from...like I live in a rural area. And I suppose when I was bringing up my children that took up that time there, and I would still, I would make sure that I would go to different musical events and all that type of thing, but I didn't make a strong commitment, I suppose as to joining a choir. Now in my retirement, that's definitely probably number one on the list.	Personal Level
Researcher 09:02 Yeah, absolutely. And I suppose then it really is the NCC in school, then is kind of what keeps that music going, is it?.	
Susan 09:13 But… I will say that we're lucky in our school that we have huge musical tradition in our school. Now, it's not all down to me. I mean, those 10 years that that the other girl that I talked about, that is now the assistant director in our area. The two of us, I suppose, really pushed the music end in our school and I will say we got huge goodwill in the school, I mean, for all the sacraments and even over and above the, as all the music that's done for communion and confirmation. That we always made sure to have a choir slot in our overall school timetable. No matter what class we were teaching, if I was teaching second, and we were doing choir with fifth and sixth … we always had an arrangement within the staff and everybody was so happy about this, that maybe I will do,,, take their music slot, and they will take my PE slot, or whatever, you know. And so in that way we, certainly I mean, we would be nearly noted in our town. I mean, we say… the priests often mention it. Yeah, that's our singing at our sacraments and we just generally know what we're thought of as that music is a big thing in our school.	School Level Advocacy Capital **Valued - TT Capital RE/Local Pride

Appendix I: Curriculum Aims and Objectives

In these tables, examples from the data and the curriculum aims/content objectives from 5th/6th class (NCCA, 1999, p.12; 66-79) are cross referenced.

- Participant excerpts that are coded in Purple are affirmative, revealing how participants view the NCC as supporting the corresponding curricular aim or content objective.
- Participant excerpts in Blue reveal how the NCC does not support the corresponding curricular aim or content objective.

Curriculum Content Objectives are coded in Green, Amber and Red. From reflection on the data:

- Objectives in Green are explored well through participation in the NCC.
- Objectives in Amber are sometimes explored through participation in the NCC. (dependent on factors such as the repertoire type, expertise of school personnel, whether the children have access to music scores, etc.)
- Objectives in Red are rarely explored through participation in the NCC.

Examples from Data	Curriculum Content Objectives
Curriculum Aims	
experience of singing with a mass amount of people (Charlotte)	to enable the child to enjoy and understand music and to appreciate it critically
the amount of opportunities for numeracy and literacy are just quite significant (MD3)	to develop the child's openness to, awareness of and response to a wide range of musical genres, including Irish music •
confidence and…this huge sense of pride (MD2)	to develop the child's capacity to express ideas, feelings and experiences through music as an individual and in collaboration with others
'I couldn't sing…I couldn't sing before I joined the choir. Now I can sing. I sing all around (MD2)	to enable the child to develop his/her musical potential and to experience the excitement and satisfaction of being actively engaged in musical creativity
foster a love of choral music (NCC Aims)	to nurture the child's self-esteem and self-confidence through participation in musical performance
"It's for all kids. It's not just for, the best singers or whatever (Carol)	to foster higher-order thinking and lifelong learning through the acquisition of musical knowledge, skills, concepts and values
To give children the unique opportunity to learn and to grow as people by exposing them to as wide a range of choral music as possible. (MD3)	to enhance the quality of the child's life through aesthetic musical experience.

Examples from Data	Curriculum Content Objectives
Composing: Talking about and recording compositions	
	-- record compositions on electronic media
	-- devise and use graphic symbols and/or use standard notation to record different lines of musical patterns and inventions
	-- reflect upon and evaluate his/her work and the work of other children
Composing: Improvising and Creating	
• I think we as teachers can certainly stand over it and say it definitely outweighs it, if they don't get to the composing this year. I think. Look at what they're getting (MD1) • they really enjoy, let's say, the opportunities to compose their own pieces (Paul) • I know, that's a big criticism of the NCC, that, you know, it takes the time from composition work, and (Carol)	-- recall, answer and invent melodic and rhythmic patterns, using voices, body percussion and instruments
	-- invent and perform pieces that show an increasing awareness and control of musical elements
	-- select from a wide variety of sound sources (voice, body percussion, untuned and tuned percussion, melodic instruments and technology) for a range of musical purposes
Listening and Responding: Listening and Responding to Music	
• good choral songs (MD2) • they're listening to such a broad range of musical styles and body percussion, they're exposed to orchestras at local concerts (Susan • You're doing your listening and responding (Carol) • some children would, you know, perhaps prefer the listening and composing strands (Paul)	-- experience dotted rhythms or syncopation (emphasis on normally weak beats) in familiar tunes through gestures and movement
	-- determine simple form and represent through gestures
	-- identify six-eight time in moving to music
	-- identify two-beat or three-beat time in moving to music
	-- recognise strong and weak-beat patterns, illustrating them through gestures
	-- recognise and understand how tempo and dynamic choices contribute to an expressive musical performance
	-- distinguish the main instrument heard in a piece of music
	-- examine the effects produced by different instruments
	-- identify families of instruments
	-- respond imaginatively to music in a variety of ways
	-- listen to his/her own compositions and the compositions of others (recordings or live performances) and evaluate in terms of personal response, choice of instruments and expressive qualities
	-- listen to and describe a broad range of musical styles and traditions, including familiar excerpts, recognising where appropriate its function and historical context

Listening and Responding to Music: Exploring Sounds	
	-- explore how the tone colours of suitable instruments can suggest various sounds and sound pictures
	-- explore ways of making sounds using manufactured and home-made instruments
	-- identify a variety of ways of making sounds using body percussion in pairs and in small and large groups
	-- distinguish and describe vocal ranges and tone colours heard in a piece of music
	-- explore a range of sounds that the singing voice and the speaking voice can make
	-- listen to sounds in the environment with an increased understanding of how sounds are produced and organised
Performing: Playing Instruments	
• [missing out] using the percussion instruments and things like that (Paul)	-- identify and perform familiar tunes from memory or from notation independently
	-- use percussion instruments with increasing confidence and skill to accompany tunes, songs and chants
	-- perform a range of playing techniques on a wide selection of percussion and melodic instruments
Performing: Literacy	
• the rudiments of music in a really active, enjoyable way (MD3) • it's not that the [NCC] are setting out to teach musical literacy, but it's very hard not to while you're doing it (MD1) • there are things that you can point out to them and time signatures and strong beats and, dotted rhythms and whatever it is (Susan) • you can, you know, tie it in with the literacy (MD1) • it takes the time from, you know, literacy work and stuff like that (Carol)	-- understand the function of major key signatures as indicating the position of doh
	-- read, sing and play simple tunes from sight with C doh, G doh or F doh
	-- recognise that melodies can be read, sung or played in different keys
	-- use standard symbols with increasing fluency and accuracy to notate simple rhythm and pitch
	-- use standard symbols to read, sing and play simple melodies from sight
	-- recognise the shape (contour) of a melody and movement by steps or by leaps, from a graphic score or from notation
	-- recognise and sing familiar tunes in an increasing variety of ways
	-- recognise, name and use some standard symbols to notate metre (time) and rhythm
	-- recognise longer and more complex rhythm patterns of familiar songs and chants

Performing: Song Singing	
• improve their singing and singing ability (MD1) • good choral songs (MD2) • good quality choral singing (Susan) • you can go in to the rhythm, dynamics, the melody, etc, in the song, so it kind of has that - it's like, the song acts as your base, and you can go out then to all the different concepts (Hannah) • I do still think you're touching on a lot of the musical concepts while covering the NCC. (Hannah) • The aim of the National Children's Choir is so that children get this… broad genre of songs… (MD2)	-- identify unison parts (playing or singing the same line) and harmony parts (two or more independent parts together) visually (from notation) and aurally
	-- perform, as part of a group, arrangements of songs that include simple countermelodies or harmony parts
	-- perform, as part of a group, two songs sung individually and as partner songs
	-- performing a round in several different textures
	-- distinguish individual parts in a round by singing, listening, moving, or by observing notational cues
	-- perform a rhythmic or melodic ostinato (a pattern that is repeated over and over) or drone (long, held notes) in accompanying a song
	-- explore structural elements within familiar songs
	-- notice the differences created between the sections of songs in different forms
	-- relate words and mood of a song to style of performance
	-- perform familiar songs with increased control of dynamics, phrasing and expression
	-- sing independently, with increasing awareness and control of pulse, tempo, pitch, diction and posture
	-- recognise and sing from memory a more demanding repertoire of songs with an awareness of the music's social, historical and cultural contexts