

# OPENING THE DOORS OF LEARNING: INCREASING ACCESS TO MUSIC DEGREES

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## ABSTRACT

This article is contextualized for Music and is a response to the CHE (2013) Report that proposes a flexible curriculum structure for undergraduate degrees in South Africa, to address student under preparedness. Research states that music graduates need well developed identities in music, as well as generic, transferable skills to ensure lifelong employment and that a bachelor of music degree is best suited for this. However, in the South African context, the bachelor of music degree qualification is not accessible to the majority of prospective students as they are under prepared to study music at tertiary level. Only a minority of learners receive quality music education at school, while the majority of learners, including those from low socio-economic communities, do not receive formal music education. Under preparedness to study music, has traditionally been addressed through certificates and diploma qualifications in music. A discussion, and interpretation of the literature, has led to the researcher to develop an alternate framework to both improve student access to music degrees and manage under preparedness. The proposed approach advocates that music departments at universities adopt the framework of the national certificate vocation as an alternative to certificates and diplomas. The alternative curriculum structure for music, would be a more cost effective way to address under preparedness, improve academic success and lead to high skill levels.

The study is situated in a constructivist, interpretive worldview, with a qualitative research design. Purposive sampling in the form of the choice of literature for the theoretical framework was adopted. While this theoretical study is contextualized for music, it is applicable to other fields.

**Keywords:** music qualifications, under preparedness, protean careers, flexible curriculum, NCV

## INTRODUCTION

This article presents a belated response to the CHE Discussion Document (2013) that is entitled, *A proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa: the case for a flexible curriculum structure*. The study is situated in a constructivist, interpretive worldview. A qualitative research design was used, employing purposive sampling in the form of the choice of literature (Creswell 2009; Leedy and Ormrod 2001). The literature review presents a discussion on under prepared students; career counselling; the protean career in the field of

music, and a document analysis of curricula. Finally, the researcher draws together the analyses and discussions and puts forward an alternate approach, a flexible curriculum structure to increase access to degree qualifications in Music and to address under preparedness.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Accessing Music studies at universities

In South Africa a minority of Grade 12 learners are enrolled for Music, as reflected in the 2020 National Senior Certificate Report, presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Learners enrolled for Music in Grade 12

Year	Total number of Grade 12 learners	Total number of Grade 12 learners enrolled for Music	% Of Grade 12 Music learners in relation to Grade 12 class	Pass rate for Music in Grade 12
2016	610 178	1845	0.30	96.9%
2017	534 484	1699	0.31	98.5%
2018	504 303	1718	0.34	97%
2019	409 906	1884	0.45	97.6%
2020	578 468	1933	0.33	97.6%

(National Senior Certificate Examination Report, 2020).

This report shows that very few learners enrol for Music in Grade 12. Research indicates that Music is taught at very few government schools, and even fewer rural or schools in the townships, and only by qualified teachers at better resourced, fee-paying schools (Jansen van Vuuren 2010, 48; Vermeulen 2009). The government also sets criteria for who can teach music. The criteria for teacher qualifications for Music teachers state that they need to have at least a BMus, BA music degrees or licentiate diplomas from Unisa, Trinity College London or Associated Board of Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) (DoE 2011, 11). Moreover, instrumental Music at Grade 12 level is pitched at external examining bodies, Grade 5 (DoE 2011, 58). Some universities have additional admission requirements for the Bachelor of Music degree, which exceeds the Grade 12 Music curriculum. For example, the University of Free State [UFS], Stellenbosch University [SU] and the University of Cape Town [UCT] all require Grade 7 of external examining bodies for the instrument, and Grade 5 in Music Theory, while Nelson Mandela University [NMU]<sup>1</sup> requires Grade 6 level in performance and Grade 5 in Music Theory. The universities do make a concession and state that candidates need to demonstrate competence at the required level and that an external graded music certificate is not essential. These admission requirements are based on the international benchmarking of degrees as well as the high level of skill that is needed to be a musician. In order to meet the

admission requirements, candidates need to invest many years to master the instrument, which can be costly. However, some tertiary institutions, notably UFS, SU and North West University [NWU]<sup>2</sup> have community music engagement projects which provide opportunities for learners including those from low socio-economic backgrounds to access quality music education. It is apparent that unlike other school subjects such as Physical Science or Mathematics, which enable access to university, accessing a Music degree is much more challenging.

In addition to bachelor degree programmes, three universities also present three year diplomas in music that allow for articulation to the Bachelor of Music degree, for those students that did not meet the entry requirements for the degree programme. At UFS the admission criteria for the diploma are Grade 4 in the instrument and Grade 3 in Music Theory. At SU the admission requirement is Grade 7 in the instrument and Grade 3 or 4 in Music Theory. In contrast, at Nelson Mandela University, the admission requirement for the three year diploma, is musical aptitude demonstrated in an audition.<sup>3</sup> The requirements at SU far exceed matric music, while the requirements at UFS are almost on par with matric music. These options would be suitable for candidates who did not have a degree pass or who fell short of other admission requirements. On the other hand, the admission requirements at NMU, provides universal access to anyone with an aptitude for music. However, by lowering admission criteria and ensuring more universal access, NMU would need to adopt pedagogical approaches to compensate for its lower entry requirements, ensure that students met the exit level requirements and also ensure that students who wished to articulate to the degree, met the admission requirements for instrument performance level and music theory. The latter diploma is designed to provide students, within three years, with a basic, formally recognised competence level in music, including musical theory and performance on an instrument.<sup>4</sup>

On completion of the diploma, students who articulate to the Bachelor of Music degree, which could enable them to develop higher levels of skills and knowledge in the field of music. Students would spend at least seven years at university to complete both the three-year diploma followed by a four-year degree. If a student fails at any time, the journey from diploma to degree will take longer.

### **Analysis of music certificates and diplomas**

Several other music certificates and diplomas are registered on the SAQA website, some of which are current, while the registration has ended for others. These qualifications range from NQF Level 2 through to NQF Level 7, are of varying lengths, ranging from one semester to three years, and require diverse admission requirements. Music proficiency on an instrument and music theory is not a requirement for most of these qualifications. Each certificate and

diploma is specific and refers to a particular specialisation, such as music education, sound technology, studio work, performance and music section leadership, which are all comparable to and benchmarked against international equivalents. Additionally, some of these qualifications can be achieved entirely through RPL (<http://www.allqs.sqa.org.za>).

Qualifications that are geared towards technical skills such as sound technology are very specific. In addition, they require considerably fewer performance skills, and they focus more on the graduate being employable in the music industry. These qualifications also provide a means for students to access to tertiary education, as they also require the lowest access points. Upon graduation, a student could potentially enrol for degree programmes.

Additionally, the difference between international equivalents and South African qualifications is that international certificates/diplomas are aimed at lifelong learning and continued professional development that enable individuals to have multiple career-related transitions. Conversely, South African qualifications are aimed at providing access to tertiary education and providing a graduate with skills to enter the job market. None of these qualifications is designed for multiple skill development in music. Each qualification prepares the individual with a specific skill set, for a specific job or occupation, instead of a career in which there will most likely be multiple transitions owing to the context of changing workplace conditions, which necessitate the individual to reskill and adapt. If the holder of the certificate or diploma intended to transition into a different career path, additional learning would be required in the form of another qualification. Moreover, the holder of the certificate or diploma would have to meet the enrolment criteria of the additional qualification and would face incumbent financial costs.

### **The Council on Higher Education (CHE) Report: a proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa**

The CHE Report (2013) presents data, which correlate with findings from international studies that state that student under preparedness is linked to poverty and poor schooling (CHE 2013, 55–59; Mulvey 2009, 32–36; Engstrom 2008, 6). In order to address the gap between the schooling system and tertiary education, the authors of the document propose a more flexible curriculum structure to address the challenge of improving graduate success in South Africa. The CHE (2013) document also acknowledges foundational programmes and supplementary education in the form of tutorials, for example, and it motivates and proposes extended curricula for selected subject areas (CHE 2013, 71; 108; Mulvey 2009, 30; Engstrom 2008, 6).

In order to make their case they discuss completion and dropout rates for various qualifications. The CHE report discusses and measures the general lack of student graduation

success in diploma programmes (CHE 2013, 42). Furthermore, they state that research on graduate completion rates in South Africa shows that in general, for students enrolled for a three-year diploma, only 42 per cent graduate within five years and 50 per cent of students never graduate (CHE 2013, 45). The CHE report also states that the students most negatively affected are Black, Coloured and Indian students, who would most likely have attended quintiles one to three schools (CHE 2013, 51). According to the CHE report, by the end of the time allocated to an academic programme, regulation time, there is a decrease in student numbers owing to failure and dropout, with the majority of those students being Black and having enrolled for a diploma. In fact, the qualification with the poorest performance is the diploma. However, the completion rate is consistently better in professional bachelor degrees (CHE 2013, 43). The CHE Report is limited to bachelor's degrees in the humanities, the social sciences, science, engineering and commerce, as well as diplomas in science and engineering. Although it does not refer to Music, music qualifications are situated in the South African tertiary landscape and inferences can be made.

In the context of Music, under preparedness to pursue degree studies in Music can be attributed to so few schools offering Music, and the constraints government places on who can teach Music. The response of some tertiary institutions to address under preparedness and increase access to Music studies has been to develop certificates and diplomas and also to provide access to quality music education through community music engagement programmes. Universities also present tutorials to first year students in all qualifications.

The CHE Report (2013) does not adequately address the underlying issues which result in student under preparedness. While the CHE Report (2013) alerts us to challenges and suggest ways to address them, the researcher has highlighted that the field of music has its own challenges. According to the CHE (2013) there has been an increase in accessibility to other degree programmes, but the Bachelor of Music degree programmes are excluded from this report. One could argue that Bachelor of Music degrees have not become more accessible due to relatively small numbers of learners enrolled for Music in Grade 12 nationally, and also due to additional admission requirements. Students who do not meet the admission requirements for degree programmes, and are interested in studying music, could enrol for certificates or diplomas in music. These qualifications provide access to tertiary studies in music, and on completion, students may attain the admission requirements for music degree programmes.

The student who usually enrolls for a Bachelor of Music degree is one who has a bachelor pass and who has also met all the additional admission criteria for Music studies as well. The student who attended a privileged, quintile four or five school, where music is offered, experienced school conditions conducive to learning/teaching, where a culture of learning has

developed and enter university with a considerable academic advantage and is not under prepared for the field of Music. However, a music student from quintile one to three schools, could meet the additional music requirements through participation in community music projects, and then find that due to poor schooling, they fall short of the academic requirements to enrol for a degree. Based on the findings from the CHE Report (2013), students from quintile one to three schools are also more likely to be under prepared for the academic demands of university as well.

### **NSFAS funding**

A further challenge that students face is funding. Most students in South Africa rely on bursaries, such as those provided by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme [NSFAS], to fund their studies. NSFAS only pays for a maximum of five years of study and only for one qualification.<sup>5</sup> Students who complete certificates and diplomas, and who choose to articulate to the Bachelor of Music degree may find it challenging to fund their studies. Funding issues prohibits a student from enrolling for a series of certificates that would enable articulation to a degree. There is no social justice in such a situation. Economically disadvantaged students enter higher education with the best of intentions, but bureaucracy and lack of access to quality music education, cause them to be in a worse financial situation than they were when they started. The path to being qualified with high skill levels, even without financial obstacles, is long, arduous and fraught with complications. When competing in the job market, the degree graduate is more likely to be employed over the graduate with a certificate or diploma. To enter the job market, the graduate may be employed outside of music, their original field of expertise.

### **Career counselling and career guidance**

Researchers tend to report on under prepared students agree that they need to be supported in making the transition from school to university. It is the researcher's opinion, this is not only essential for under prepared students but also for all students. Music students need to be made aware of the possibilities for employment within the creative industries.

In a study conducted in the UK, researchers concluded that there needs to be more communication around expectations between academic staff and students (Hassel and Ridout 2018; Sotardi and Friesen 2017). Mulvey (2009, 38–39) cites several studies that advocate student counselling for self-development and the development of self-monitoring behaviours. Mulvey (2009) describes a strategy whereby researchers integrated personal counselling and career counselling in a study with young adults in high school. Mulvey (2009) also describes the counselling of a young person who was attempting to transition from school to university.

Maree and Di Fabbrio (2018), provide a narrative of the young person's reflections on events in his life. His reflections and the counselling led him to find solutions by identifying how he could have behaved differently and how he could adapt his behavior for future scenarios. Through counselling, the young man learnt to understand himself as part of his identity development, after which career counselling would follow. The researchers describe this process as the participant's construction, deconstruction, reconstruction and co-construction of his own life story. In the description of their research, it is stated that the counsellors did not provide the answers; they created the environment in which the participant was enabled to be responsible for drawing on his own experiences to find solutions and alternative ways of behaving. He had to demonstrate agency for change.

Counselling at different levels of education can help with identity formation in a particular field of study. Career guidance at schools could help learners to choose areas of possible future study. Moreover, it could help them to examine and possibly develop the required dispositions together with the subject choices they need to make to pursue tertiary education. Learners who participate in music activities such as choral singing or playing an instrument whether formally or informally, or who have an interest in any aspect of music should be encouraged. They need to be made aware of areas of study and career opportunities.

Career counselling at universities might serve another purpose, which could be to help orientate the student to tertiary education and to the world of work. Savickas (2012, 14) defines this as career construction theory, where the person thinks of themselves in relation to social roles. Over time, individuals "assemble and articulate a comprehensible identity narrative", which leads to "self-understanding in the form of an interpretation of self that orients one to a social world". Savickas (2012, 15) also states that identity formation is dependent on community involvement, which the researcher will interpret as developing an identity within communities of practice (in the field of music). Another aspect of identity development, which Savickas (2012, 15) and Schediwy, Bhansing, and Loots, (2018, 177) highlight, is that the individual may have multiple identities and that these identities can be continuously revised and adapted over a lifetime. The development of multiple identities and the adaptability of the individual could enable an individual to follow a protean career. In other words, be able to work in different areas within a field. Referring specifically to artists' career identities, Schediwy et al. (2018, 177) state that an individual's career identity will most likely determine which careers they will follow, which emphasises the importance of developing multiple identities. Thus, counselling could focus on the individual and his or her dispositions while also orienting them to their roles in communities of practice.

Research findings from various studies recommend that counselling and career guidance

should be a partnership between universities and industry (Hennekam and Bennett 2017, 73-74; Wyszomirski and Chang 2017, 15; Donald, Baruch, and Ashleigh 2017, 601–602). When this is applied to the South African context, it would mean that universities could draw on the communities of practice in the different fields where students could find employment, such as those that are formalised as professional bodies. Examples of such communities of practice are the Performing Arts Network of South Africa, [PANSA]; the South African Society of Music Teachers [SASMT]; the ABC Motsepe South African Schools Choral Eisteddfod [SASCE]; and those communities of practice that are more informal.

Savickas (2012, 13–14, 15–17) states that mobility in the workforce necessitates changes in career guidance to focus more on the individual. He is referring to the individual who has successfully taken up his or her place in the workplace after graduation. He also maintains that the process should be ongoing throughout an individual's working life, with the person being on a lifelong journey of constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing their identity with the career counsellor assisting with co-constructing a new identity to enable career transitioning.

### **Making the case for the Bachelor of Music degree: The protean career**

The concept of the protean career, or multiple career-related transitions, is a phenomenon of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Protean careers occur because of rapidly changing technologies that alter workplace conditions. Changes in the workplace can result in job losses, changes in the types of jobs and the creation of new kinds of jobs that were not possibilities previously. The responsibility for continued employability in a changing work environment then rests with the individual and not the organisation. The individual who wishes to remain employed would have to follow the path of a career-related transition or a protean career and would need to adapt through reskilling, to ensure continued employability, when conditions in the workplace change (Hall 1996, 8–10; Hall 2004, 4–5). Therefore, it is not sufficient for institutions to ensure access; they have to ensure success too, and then have to explore different means of making sure that all graduates have better prospects.

Research in the field of the protean career forefronts the individual who is in control of his or her destiny (Hall 1996; Hall 2004; Canham 2016; Wyszomirski and Chang 2017; Bennett and Hennekam 2018; Goodwin 2019). What these studies also reveal is that the participants were qualified in their fields; had established identities in a core area; and were able to follow multiple career paths in their fields. Multiple career transitioning is complex and entails the dynamic interplay of the personality of individuals and their education, so that identity or identities in a field and related fields are developed.

It is not within the ambit of this article to determine whether individuals can make a living

in any one field or whether they may need to follow multiple options of employment simultaneously, as market forces may dictate their ability to earn a living wage from any one form of employment. Moreover, the researcher is aware that, for instance, in some communities, the music director at a church may enable full-time employment, while in other communities this may not be possible.

### **The field of music and the protean career**

The phenomenon of protean careers is widely acknowledged, and the vocabulary associated with it, such as lifelong learning, continued professional development, generic skills, and transferable skills, is commonly used in curriculum and other education policy documents. Nonetheless, not all qualifications make provision for transferable skills, nor do they prepare students for multiple career-related transitions. The qualifications that do not prepare the individual for multiple career transitions are usually diplomas and certificates, which only prepare graduates for a single occupation and not a career. The possibility, therefore, exists that a graduate with a diploma or certificate could become unemployed when conditions in the workplace change. He/she is unable to adapt to change owing to a limited skill set and knowledge base, and the possibility of reskilling may be challenging.

The development of diverse and transferable skills, as well as multi-skilling, are advocated by several scholars whose niche/area of research is protean careers for music graduates (Lebler, Burt-Perkins, and Carey 2009; Bridgstock 2005; 2009; 2011; Lebler 2007; Bartleet et al. 2012; Canham 2016; Hennekam and Bennett 2017; Goodwin 2019). International research on protean careers has focused on either respondents who have followed degree programmes or those with university degrees and/or a high level of skills in the field. High skill levels and/or a university degree in the researcher's opinion would foster a more comprehensive identity formation in the areas in which a music graduate would work. Writing elsewhere, the researcher discussed music qualifications in South Africa. However, for this article, the researcher will concede that although there is scope for some revision of the Bachelor of Music degree programmes so that they are more responsive to the trend of protean careers, the Bachelor of Music degree programmes whose admission requirements is Music at NQF Level 4 develop generic as well as specific skills. The ability to follow a protean career is enabled through specialisations in music technology, education, performance, with generic skills developed through electives in ensemble playing, conducting, musicology, arrangement and composition.<sup>6</sup>

However, the interpretation of the South African Qualifications Authority [SAQA] framework by universities has resulted in several of these music degree programmes not including entrepreneurial studies, which is an important skill needed for multiple career-related

transitions. The development of an entrepreneurial identity is highlighted by several researchers in the field of protean career for creatives (Hennekam and Bennett 2017; Wyszomirski and Chang 2017; Schediwy et al. 2018; Carruthers 2012, 82). Hennekam and Bennett (2017, 76), reporting on the findings from a multi-country study, highlighted the need for skills in marketing, publicity, networking, financial management and business skills.

In practice, musicians move across multiple fields, which intersect with each other and overlap (Burnard 2012). In any of these areas, skills could be further developed and refined. Burnard identifies five fields in which music graduates could be active, and these are technology, industries, commerce, cultural production and social spaces (Burnard 2012). Wyszomirski and Chang (2017, 13) corroborate this and provide examples from their study, in which they list multiple identities of musicians through the music-related careers that they pursue. According to them, the careers of a music professional can include educator, small art business owner, creative artist, non-profit arts organisation administrator and arts intermediary.

For example, a trumpeter can perform in a brass band, military band, church band, orchestra, jazz ensemble or contemporary music ensemble can also, at other times, develop and use his competences in arranging, composing, conducting, sound engineering and teaching. Multiple identities in the field of music can also be developed through work-integrated learning [WIL], which provides students with opportunities to work in communities of practice and to become part of networks. In the absence of official WIL programmes, academics could fulfil the role by introducing students to the different communities of practice of which they are members.

What distinguishes the Bachelor of Music degree student from a student enrolled for a certificate or a diploma is that the degree student enters tertiary education with well-established multiple identities in the field of music. This also sets him/her apart from students enrolled in law, business, architecture or accounting degrees, who develop their identity at university through WIL, various student societies and professional bodies. Music students' identities are further refined through tertiary education so that the graduate can successfully work in different fields, albeit at different levels, including those of composer, arranger, performer, conductor or teacher.

Donald et al. (2019, 600–601) cite Useem and Karabel (1986) who contextualised human capital theory in tertiary education. According to them, an educational institution could bestow three types of human capital on its students, namely social capital, cultural capital and scholastic capital. Social capital includes networks, while cultural capital is inclusive of university reputation, and scholastic capital is the perceived value of school education and university education. In other words, employability is determined by not only the value the graduate places

on education, but also the networks and connections they make while at university, as well as society's perception of their education. The theory of human capital therefore adds credence to the value of well-established identities in music, coupled with education and the connections that are made.

## **DISCUSSION**

An analysis and interpretation of the literature, has led the researcher to arrive at insights as to how one could imagine a different approach to manage under preparedness of music students. The author has looked at using existing policies to develop a framework for how tertiary institutions can provide more learners with high-level music skills, prepare them for the rigour of university education, and by so doing, ensure that all music graduates have a broader skillset that will enable them to follow protean careers. A peripheral outcome of the framework provided in the discussion section of this article is the potential for music departments to earn full-time equivalents [FTEs], based on student success. The Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET] currently funds the visual and performing arts, which falls into group 4, the highest level for FTE funding,<sup>7</sup> because the Department of Labour regards proficiency in the creative industries as a scarce skill. Despite this, music departments have not been creative in developing strategies for attracting large numbers of students, developing curricula that provide broad-based skills, and nor have they been proactive in forging alternate pathways for under prepared students.

In this section, the researcher presents a composite profile of the typical student enrolled for the degree, on the one hand and the diploma, on the other. The profiles presented in this article present polar opposite examples and are adapted from anecdotal evidence, the CHE report and the academic literature cited earlier. The researcher is aware that in reality, many students have characteristics of both profiles and that one cannot stereotype. Nevertheless, the researcher purposefully chose these composites of extreme identities to present her thesis, which recommends a different approach to current practices at tertiary institutions. This discussion is intended to open the dialogue around qualifications that impinge on the individual's ability to pursue multiple career transitions. Moreover, this discussion, while focused on music, has applicability for other fields, such as the sciences and commerce.

Successful multiple career-related transitioning or protean careers require a well-established identity in a field that is developed in graduate education. Additionally, the case has been made that degree programmes are more comprehensive, and therefore better equip graduates to pursue multiple career-related transitions. Research on the experiences of diploma graduates and their navigation of multiple career transitions is lacking, but conclusions were

made in this study as to their efficacy based on the literature, the CHE (2013) report, anecdotal evidence as well as the limitations of the curricula available on the SAQA website.

In South Africa, the career trajectory of the average diploma graduate is of particular concern, given the state of basic education and socio-economic factors that result in the different schooling and life experiences of our students. Students who enrol for a degree in music, enter university with an established identity as a musician, developed over about nine years of instrumental lessons and various music activities, such as playing in ensembles, singing in choirs, participating in music competitions, taking part in practical music examinations and writing music theory examinations. Added to this, these students would typically be middle class and have attended quintiles four and five schools, which are the only schools that offer Music as a subject in Grades 10 to 12. At these schools, learners also participate in numerous extra-curricular activities such as debating, ballroom dancing, Toastmasters, ballet and various sporting activities. Many of these students are also able to pursue hobbies, which further enhances their supplementary education. The degree qualification provides specialised education that together with electives further develops their competencies and knowledge. Music degree graduates can therefore be members of numerous communities of practice in the field of music. For these students, tertiary education builds on an already established identity within the broad field of expertise, which will facilitate future transitions within related careers as well as lifelong learning. Furthermore, their basic education, supplementary education and tertiary education lead to them being multi-skilled with the agility to transition outside of their primary area of expertise. It may well be that it is the intersection of these three types of education that enable multiple career-related transitions.

However, it is possible that a student enrolled for a diploma in music where no formal music education is required, could in all likelihood have attended an underperforming school in a disadvantaged community and experienced inequality in education and schooling where Music as a subject was not offered. The schools in these low socio-economic communities would be quintiles one to three, where learners would experience inequality of educational opportunity across their entire schooling (Spaull 2013). The student's musical identity may have been developed through participation in choral activities, cultural and religious activities or community music programmes. Due to these activities, the student might have been accepted for registration for either a certificate or diploma, and entry to tertiary study would be achieved based on the outcome of an audition. The role of these qualifications as a means for school leavers to gain access to tertiary education needs to be revisited. Some of these qualifications with minimum music requirements exist in part to provide universal access to students without an adequate background in music. Some of these qualifications, with varying admission

requirements, were developed primarily to increase access to music qualifications and serve to prepare students for future access to degree programmes. The qualifications also exist because students from impoverished backgrounds may enter higher education without knowing what their career goals are and because tertiary education is viewed as a means out of poverty (Pillay 2020, 3).

The certificates and diplomas for which these students typically enrol, some of which are of a short duration, could instead fulfil the role of continued professional development and equip individuals in the workforce with the skills that might enable them to transition into multiple careers. For example, music technology and studio work were not part of the package for music students in the 1970s and 1980s. These courses are now offered, and a qualification in studio work or music technology could fill the gap left by previous qualifications and ensure that musicians without those skills are better equipped for changes in the workplace. Similarly, these certificates, diplomas and short courses could improve the skill set of individuals who chose different specialisations at the undergraduate level.

It has been stated that the degree graduate is better equipped to pursue a protean career compared with diploma/certificate students. However, how do we ensure that the student who would typically register for a diploma or a post-matric certificate would be able to manage multiple career transitions? Based on the scenarios presented above, the researcher is therefore proposing a radical shift in thinking about how the university could accommodate the learner from a poor socio-economic background. This approach is completely different from current practice. The proposal, described below, places the student at the heart of the solution – the student who is likely to enrol for a certificate or diploma in music and who has, statistically, a very low chance of success.

Currently, institutions enrol students who, in exceptional circumstances, receive funding and various university bursaries. These students aim to complete a qualification that enables them to do a job but not have a career. The institution receives subsidies, with no realisation of the impact of their actions and the consequences to society. If the goal of education is to prepare for democratic citizenship with the individual making a meaningful contribution to society, this implies that the individual should be employable, can transition to multiple careers, remain in employment and create employment opportunities for others. Higher education institutions can make this a reality, provided they adopt a profound shift in their thinking. In the ideal world, the government would fund an art school in each education district to develop the arts, especially in low socio-economic communities. The researcher will assume that this is unlikely, hence her thesis.

## **A new framework for entry to the Bachelor of Music degree**

Prospective art/music students could be identified through career counselling and guidance, as discussed previously. On completion of Grade 9, students could enrol at a university and complete a National Certificate Vocational [NCV], at NQF Level four, over three years, in place of Grades 10 to 12. Currently, students can complete an NCV at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training [TVET] College in fields other than music. They can be funded through NSFAS, then proceed to enrol for a certificate, diploma or degree programme. The researcher proposes that a NCV for Music be funded by the Department of Basic Education [DBE] instead of the DHET and that this NCV at NQF Level 4 for Music involve a collaboration between the Department of Education and university music departments. The NCV for Music would address the challenge of under prepared students and the potential cost of student attrition before graduation. There is also the cost of students striving to meet criteria for degree programmes through enrolment of several certificates and then dropping out.

The researcher is not proposing that TVET Colleges be abolished, but rather that music be offered at universities, as they are much better suited to offer qualifications in this field and have the infrastructure, resources and suitably qualified staff to manage and implement this proposed programme. The possibilities for face-to-face classes and online learning and teaching are also available. In this proposed new system, universities would partially adopt some of the roles currently occupied by TVET colleges and be music academies within music departments. The certificate at NQF Level 4 would be tailored to suit future enrolment in a degree programme, and focus inter alia on the following: music knowledge and skills in the areas of performance and music literacy; language; and mathematics or mathematics literacy. Such an arrangement would be more cost-effective, as it would not be reliant on NSFAS funding and would not require multiple post-matric certificates or a diploma, where articulation to a degree may not be guaranteed and where there may be high attrition rates. Furthermore, all students would develop competencies to pursue multiple career transitions and not only be workers dependent on one entry-level job, as is the case with holders of diplomas and certificates. This proposal would also be more equitable and provide a larger number of students, who would otherwise not have the opportunity, to access bachelor's degree programmes.

It is the policy that the NCV at NQF Level 4 enables students to gain access to various diplomas, certificates and a bachelor's degree. The legislative minimum admission requirements for entry to the bachelor degree through the NCV are that students should have graduated with three fundamental subjects with an achievement level of between 60–69 per cent, including English, if it is the language of learning and teaching, and three or four vocational modules with an achievement level of between 70 and 79 per cent.<sup>8</sup>

### **NCV at NQF Level 4 for Music**

A possible curriculum for this three-year NCV for Music, using existing industry-related NCV's as a model, could look as follows:

- Entry requirements: Grade 9 and an aptitude for Music.
- Duration: three years.
- Defining the NCV Certificate in Music: The Certificate in Music programme covers music competencies, integrating theory and practice and includes instrumental playing, ensemble work, arranging skills, aural competences, sight-reading, sight-singing, keyboard skills, music technology and music theory.
- Subjects/Modules: The NCV consists of fundamental subjects and vocational subjects at NQF levels 2, 3, and 4.
- Fundamental subjects: Language (the language of learning and teaching); Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy; Life Orientation.
- Specialist Subjects: Music in Socio-cultural contexts; Music Performance; Music Literacy; Music Technology – Students could complete the NCV for all specialist subjects following a genre-specific specialism, such as African Music, Jazz, Western Art Music, or Contemporary Music.

Therefore, the NCV for Music would build on an existing model but for a different field and would position the qualification differently to current practice. This certificate programme would ensure that learners develop multiple identities as musicians in different communities of practice. On successful completion of the three years of the programme, prospective students would be able to enrol for either the Bachelor of Music degree or a Bachelor of Arts, such as an interdisciplinary degree in musical theatre with future specialisations at postgraduate level in performance, administration, health sciences, media, music technology or education. Access to degree programmes would then be either through the established, traditional pathway of matric, with Music as a subject, external music graded exams, or the alternative route utilising the NCV certificate programme. Students embarking on the NCV, with no formal music education could enrol for music instruments with which they can make rapid progress, such as contemporary voice, woodwind instruments, selected brass instruments, and steelpan. Other instruments such as string instruments, piano and organ could be pursued, provided candidates demonstrated competence on enrolment for the NCV so that they could meet the degree

admission requirements.

## CONCLUSION

This article presented a theoretical study that was limited to, and contextualised for music, the findings of which led to the development of a framework on how tertiary institutions can provide an alternate pathway to students who may be under prepared for degree studies in music. This framework differs from the traditional approach of supplementary education and/or additional study time, as proposed in the CHE (2013) Report, which can be costly for both students and the government.

Although, the framework of the NCV already exists, it has not been contextualised for the arts or music. Thus, this article intended to add to the discussion of the role universities can play in creating opportunities for access and success. The researcher also presented a way to repurpose and reposition music departments so that they become spaces where students can be developed to ensure that they have access to quality music education and can complete their graduate studies successfully, thereby enabling them to follow diverse careers in music. Furthermore, research suggests that students need counselling and networking opportunities to develop social and cultural capital. While we cannot change personalities and dispositions, we can provide students with an education that opens up possibilities.

## NOTES

1. <https://www.ufs.ac.za/humanities/departments-and-divisions/odeion-school-of-music-home/prospective-students/auditions-for-admission>;  
[https://performingarts.mandela.ac.za/Undergrad-Programmes/Bachelor-of-Music-\(BMus\)](https://performingarts.mandela.ac.za/Undergrad-Programmes/Bachelor-of-Music-(BMus));  
<https://www0.sun.ac.za/music/undergraduate-programmes/degrees/bachelor-of-music-bmus/>;  
[http://www.students.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image\\_tool/images/434/study/handbooks/2021/2021\\_HUM\\_UG\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.students.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/434/study/handbooks/2021/2021_HUM_UG_Handbook.pdf).
2. <http://humanities.nwu.ac.za/music/musikhane>; <https://www.musicinafrica.net/directory/mangaung-string-programme>; <https://www0.sun.ac.za/music/activities/unit-for-community-music/>.
3. <https://www.ufs.ac.za/humanities/departments-and-divisions/odeion-school-of-music-home/prospective-students/auditions-for-admission>;  
[https://performingarts.mandela.ac.za/Foundation-Programmes/Diploma-in-Music-\(DipMus\)](https://performingarts.mandela.ac.za/Foundation-Programmes/Diploma-in-Music-(DipMus));  
<https://www0.sun.ac.za/music/undergraduate-programmes/diploma/diploma-in-practical-music/>.
4. [https://performingarts.mandela.ac.za/Foundation-Programmes/Diploma-in-Music-\(DipMus\)](https://performingarts.mandela.ac.za/Foundation-Programmes/Diploma-in-Music-(DipMus)).
5. [www.nsfas.org.za](http://www.nsfas.org.za).
6. <http://www.allqs.saqqa.org.za>.
7. Ministerial statement on university funding: 2020/21, [www.dhet.gov.za](http://www.dhet.gov.za).
8. <https://www.wits.ac.za/undergraduate/entry-requirements/national-certificate-vocational-ncv-guidelines/>; <http://www.bolandcollege.com/study-here/>; <http://www.bolandcollege.com/faculties-programmes/hospitality-tourism-sport/>;

<https://www.mandela.ac.za/www/media/Store/documents/apply/admission/NCV/National-Certificate-Brochure-.pdf>; National Certificate, Vocational NQF level 4,  
<https://regqs.saqa.org.za/viewQualification.php?id=50441>.

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