

# **Exploring relationships between teacher identities and disciplinarity**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The relationships between discipline specialisation, teacher identity and pedagogy can be seen as the crux of practice in the music classroom – impacting on all the actions of the teacher, both within and outside the classroom. Crucially, the impact of music teacher identity on the nature of music teaching and learning, is one that has the potential to illuminate influences underlying the professional practices of teachers. This project explores how experienced, well regarded teachers define their own identities, and implications of such identities to their practice. The primary mode of data collection was through extended semi-structured interviews, although observations of the classroom were also undertaken. Grounded theory analysis techniques were utilised, involving inductive and deductive coding to develop themes and sub-themes. The structured data set was then used to theorise the central topics of the study, while always returning to the empirical data for verification and exemplification. Findings suggest that music teachers identify firstly as performing musicians, and this impacts greatly on the way they perceive themselves in their teaching practice. The analysis raises questions about useful ways for music educators to conceive of their professional identities. Findings have the potential to provide insights into improving classroom practice.

Keywords

Please add keywords in alphabetical order

## Introduction

‘Teacher identity’ as a construct has been used to represent multiple things, from teacher perceptions of what they do in the classroom, to enacted pedagogies in the classroom, to observed teacher dispositions. Teacher identity has also been associated with the discipline being taught – for example the ‘musical identities’ of music teachers and the ‘mathematical identities’ of mathematics teachers – this is quite different to thinking about teacher identity in relation to discipline preferences and teacher skills. The idea that disciplinarity, pedagogy and teacher identity are intertwined is certainly not new, and disciplinarity has long been associated with pedagogy – teachers’ approaches necessarily differ depending on the discipline being taught and the ages of their students (Martinez, 1994; Shulman, 1987; Shulman & Sparks, 1992). What has not been established is *how* disciplinarity, pedagogy and teacher identity relate - particularly how ‘identity’ in relation to the discipline might be central to the nature of pedagogy employed by teachers. Research that explores issues surrounding professional identity, disciplinarity and pedagogy has the potential to illuminate the influences underlying the professional practices of teachers, and therefore, has the potential to provide insights into improving classroom practice – within, and across discipline areas.

The term ‘identity’ has been variously defined and there is continuing debate about whether an individual has one identity with many aspects, or if they have multiple identities (Author, Non-author & Non-author, 2006). While finding clarity and theoretical rigour concerning the phenomenon of identity is important, it is not the focus of this article. We as authors are mostly interested in how teachers see and define their own identities, and the implications of such identities for their practice. In this way, our definition draws upon the understanding of teacher professional identity identified by Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) – that personal defining of professional identity is an *ongoing process*, implies *both*

*person and context*, consists of *sub-identities*, and relies on *teacher agency*. This conceptualisation of ‘teacher identity’ is very useful in providing a structure to investigate large amounts of qualitative data (Author, non-author and non-author, in press). In this article we will address the question: How are teachers’ perceptions of their professional identity, their abilities as discipline specialists and their pedagogy interrelated?

## **The Study**

The data reported on here is part of a larger study conducted in 2009 and 2010 that focussed on mathematics and music teachers. The project was conceptualised as a series of related case studies (Stake, 1995) and employed qualitative methods to explore the professional and disciplined-based aspects of the school teachers’ identities, and the relationship between these aspects of their identities and their teaching practice. The data collection process yielded a large data set that included 32 interview transcripts with the participating teachers and 8 group interview transcripts with students.

### *The Participants<sup>1</sup>*

Thirteen teachers (7 music and 6 mathematics teachers) from Primary and Secondary schools in South-East Queensland, Australia, participated in the broader project. There was an equal balance of male and female participants and all were experienced teachers (7 to 35 years experience). Participants were selected and invited to participate because they were acknowledged as being good teachers by the educational community (for example, one of the participating teachers has received a national teaching award, another was recommended by multiple teachers who were within the same discipline). In this article we report only on the data from the specialist music teachers, and they were all from metropolitan schools in

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Pseudonyms are used throughout this article.

Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The music teacher participant group was made up of 6 secondary school music teachers and 2 primary/middle school teachers. A program of data collection was negotiated with each participant, and each included an initial in-depth interview and a classroom observation and follow-up interview. All participants were still (years on from university music degrees) teaching music, and were considered to be successful in this field.

### *Data Collection*

Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews (Minichiello, Aroni & Hays, 2008), classroom observations (Zevenbergen, 2005) and document analysis (Creswell, 2008). Semi-structured interviews were the primary mode of data collection, and all the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and were structured around questions relating to the teachers' professional identities, how these interact and are outworked in the classroom. An initial semi-structured interview was undertaken with each participant that focused on aspects of their professional identity including their personal philosophies, beliefs, values and knowledge about teaching and music, and how these are enacted in the classrooms. These conversational interviews were designed so that participants could experience them as professional discussions about the nature and meaning of teachers' work and allowing exploration of their convictions about the pedagogy of music (Kvale, 1996) [reference?](#). The questions that framed the initial interviews were:

1. Do you see yourself as a musician? Do you do musical things for pleasure? Can you tell us about your relationship with music itself?
2. How would you describe your personal beliefs about music and teaching music?
3. What are the challenges for you personally when you try to enact your beliefs?
4. To what extent do you think your beliefs align with the policies and programs that guide and influence your teaching practice?
5. What qualities do you possess that impact on your ability to be an effective music teacher?

6. In what ways (and to what extent) do you think about your teaching of music?
7. How would you describe your professional identity?
8. How has your education experience influenced your perception of yourself professionally (generally, and as a teacher of music)?
9. Can you talk about the moral dimension of your role as a music teacher?

After the initial interview, arrangements were made for a lesson observation and follow-up interview. Each participating teacher was invited to select a lesson with a class that they wanted us to observe, and after this observation a stimulated recall interview was undertaken. During the observed lesson, detailed field notes were taken by the researchers. The observations were enhanced by photographs of the participant as they were engaged in the teaching process. The photographs and observations were used to stimulate recall to prompt discussion about the practices captured, but they were then deleted and not retained as part of the data set. To gain a student perspective of the teachers' actions and philosophies, in some cases additional informal group interviews were undertaken with a few students (selected by the teacher) who had been in the observed lesson. Follow-up interviews were undertaken to explore aspects of the participant's practice after a lesson had been observed and photographed (Lyle, 2003) [reference?](#). During the reflective discussions/semi-structured interviews, the researchers and the participant viewed and examined the photographs together, stopping as required to discuss and question aspects of the teacher's practice as they emerged. The use of photographs was seen as preferable to video-taping because the still pictures require the participating teacher to discuss and 'fill-in the gaps', whereas a video can be seen as somewhat 'self-explanatory' (Zevenbergen, 2005) [reference?](#).

The initial interview and observation interview data were taken to represent each teacher's pedagogical practices, beliefs and philosophies, and provided a perspective of their professional and discipline identities.

### *Data Analysis*

The researchers were able to draw on their varying discipline experiences (Author – music education, Author – mathematics education) when analysing the entire data set, enabling varying insights and perspectives to emerge. This resulted in all data being analysed by both a recognised research expert in the field and an educational researcher, who didn't possess preconceptions from within the discipline.

Once the transcripts were lightly edited for grammar and clarity of expression, all the interviews transcripts were read and re-read by the research team in order to gain a general feel and understanding of the data. Following this, a more rigorous analysis was undertaken. First, the researchers each analysed the data independently, and then worked collaboratively to debate and negotiate interpretations. Grounded theory techniques were utilised to analyse the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) using the NVivo8 software. The data were initially divided into conceptual units and coded both inductively and deductively (Schwandt, 1997). Once this initial coding was complete, we began to impose some structure upon the data by developing themes and sub-themes. To ensure the integrity of findings, key themes and understandings were developed only by consensus. The structured data set was then used to theorise the central topics of the study, while always returning to the empirical data for verification and exemplification. Pseudonyms are used in this paper to protect the identities of the participants.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The findings clustered around three broad themes: (1) the teachers' professional identity as an educator; (2) their discipline identity as musicians; and (3) the interaction of these two 'identity aspects' in their role as music teachers (through their pedagogy). These themes will be discussed with most discussion taking place in relation to the *interaction of the identities*

as musicians and educators (as this is where we believe the most interesting findings were found). We will use the participating teachers' own words as much as possible to express their views and ideas.

It is important to note one striking feature that emerged during the data collection process - each of these seven teachers had different styles and approaches to teaching. Whilst some had strict, highly structured classes, others had quite informal and open lessons; some were very flexible in their delivery, whilst others were less so. Despite the great diversity across the teachers and the lessons, all the participating teachers have been acknowledged as effective music teachers by their peers. This indicated to us that there is indeed more to effective music teaching practice than pedagogical approach and the classroom management style.

#### *The Teachers' Professional Identity as an Educator*

Each of the participating music teachers noted and discussed their role as an educator. At these times, the music teachers would express, in a range of ways, aspects of their identities related to their role as educators. While quite a few dimensions of their professional identities were noted, the most prominent aspect discussed were the relationships between students and teacher - mentioned to some degree by all the participants (both mathematics and music teachers). Interestingly, the students who were interviewed also considered the relational aspect of their teachers' pedagogy to be significant and prominent. Many of the teachers noted their commitment to a relational teaching identity in a variety of ways, but to illustrate, Suzanne stated; "I was always drawn to this saying 'you don't teach music, you teach people'", indicating a student-centred and relational pedagogical ideology. There was a sense throughout all the data collection events that the participating teachers cared deeply about their students, that they knew their pupils well, and they had mutual respect for one another.

While the participating teachers did note and discuss their role and identity as an educator, without exception, all the music teachers, to a greater or lesser extent, saw this in relation to their identity as ‘musicians’.

### *The Teachers’ Discipline Identity as Musicians*

We found that *all* of the teachers interviewed reported that they felt that they were ‘musicians’. However, it seems that beyond this agreement that they were, to some extent ‘musicians’, their conceptions of what being a ‘musician’ is, differed greatly. Some of the teachers viewed being a ‘musician’ as being a professional performer, whilst others viewed the definition of ‘musician’ as someone who participates in music making outside the classroom, and others viewed their personal music-making within the classroom as evidence that they are ‘musicians’, and many of the participants ~~ts~~ also identified with more than one of these conceptions of ‘musician’.

While the participants often noted aspects of the different conceptions of musician, four of the music teachers predominately viewed themselves as practising performers/composers.

For example:

*Simon: Yes, absolutely I think most of our staff see themselves as musicians and most of us have a professional life outside the school. So I'm a choral conductor as well as a pianist and organist; I run the music program at my local church, which is a paid job, David, who is just walking past, plays in the State orchestra for example and in jazz groups, ... I've conducted festivals and workshops, that sort of thing, I've done the Mackay Choral Festival for 3 years ... so yes definitely I see myself as a musician.*

*Graham: I started as a musician ... my background was very similar to the bigger percentage of the kids with contemporary guitar and ear musician and singing ... I am a musician but compared to a violin player who studied at the conservatorium [I am a ] different sort of musician, as I see it.*

These teachers were all happy to label themselves as a ‘musician’, and could articulate how this was legitimated by their participation in music forums located outside the classroom. It was also evident that these four participants also saw their musicianship as an essential prerequisite for their role as a music teacher, as exemplified below:



*Peter: [I'm a] musician first... the ability to teach is the ability to convey ideas ... you can't teach music unless you are first and foremost a music specialist ... I am a composer. I studied my music degree in piano. As a performer I also play jazz grooves. So I play jazz piano I also play saxophone. But recently I've spent most of my time in composing.*

*John: I think excellent musicianship skills is what you need to have to be an effective music teacher ... we had the choral concert last Friday night and the kids were asking us, "will you perform?", and so we [the music teachers] put something together and they were just so pleased to see that, yep, we are still practising musicians, we still get involved in it and I think that's something for them to look up to as well.*

Three of the participants also viewed themselves as musicians, but this was largely to do with their musical work within the music classroom (their sub-identities):

*Suzanne: It's about 50/50 and I also distinguish between my classroom teaching and my instrumental teaching as well so there's that whole other side of me in that respect also. When I'm in the classroom as a classroom teacher, I do think of myself more as a teacher than a musician, when I'm working with my instrumental kids or conducting I think of myself as 50 percent teacher, 50 percent musician.*

*Carmela: Okay do I see myself as a musician? That's a hard one now. I probably did 25 years ago when I started teaching but I don't think my skills are where they were then because this gradual attrition when you're not constantly playing ... I see myself as a musician but not as a performer because teaching has kind of taken over more of my time and attention.*

It is evident in the quotations above that their identity as a musician was evident, but perhaps a little less certain than the participants whose identity was grounded in their musical activity outside of the classroom. Also, these teachers were more willing to finesse the conception of 'musician', and were able to appreciate the complexity of their musical identity.

Finally, Hilary expressed her identity as a musician

*Hilary: So when I say musician ... a musician is anybody who feels and wants to get to others that feeling of the love of music so.. That's a musician... so yes I'm a musician.*

As seen in the quotes above, most of the participating teachers seemed to equate being a 'musician' with making or performing music. It was equally interesting to note that these experienced teachers tended to view the role of music in their profession in various ways. It

was also clear that their professional identity as an educator and their discipline-based identity as a musician were both evident in their views and practices of ‘music teaching’. In the next section we focus on the negotiation and interaction of the professional and discipline aspects of their identities.

### *Relationship between musician, music teacher and teacher*

The issue of teacher identity is one that has recently gained traction in music education literature (Mark, 1998; Pellegrino, 2009; Roberts, 1991; 2010; Scheib, 2006) and general education literature (Beijaard, et al., 2004; Cohen, 2010; Flores & Day, 2006; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010). In international studies in the field of music education, the tensions/connections between ‘musician’ or ‘performer’ and ‘teacher’ ~~an~~ identity has been considered (Author, non-author and non-author, in press; Mark, 1998; Pellegrino, 2009; Scheib, 2006), particularly in studies focussing on *pre-service* (rather than *in-service*) teachers’ developing identities, and on the transition between *pre-service* teaching and the profession (Pellegrino, 2009; Hargreaves et al., 2007). Bouij ~~check author or year~~ (2004) argued that the tensions between teacher and musician were heavily influenced by the socialisation both prior and during university study, and that this often resulted in the valuing of music-specific identities over pupil-centred teacher identities by both pre-service and early-career teachers. Pellegrino’s literature review confirmed these findings, and highlighted the dearth of literature on experienced music teachers’ views on their professional identity - hence the importance of this aspect of our research.

When describing their professional identity, most of the participating teachers could see themselves fitting across the categorisations of ‘musician’, ‘teacher of music’ and ‘teacher’. Their discussions revealed much in terms of the struggles that they personally experienced in their professional practice as they defined their identities, engaging in what Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) referred to as the “*ongoing process* of interpretation and re-interpretation

of experiences” (p. 122). Some felt that their own musicianship and identity as a ‘musician’ was crucial to their success as music teachers, (and the consequential success of their students in music).

*Peter: Just making a difference in their life. Influencing them. ... I wouldn't be a teacher if I didn't teach music. So some people are born to be teachers and can teach anything. I'm not that person. I teach music because I love it. But if I didn't teach music, that's it. [If I was told I had to] teach maths or something, I'd resign. Tomorrow ... So it's really that I love music and I love creating music, and I love seeing kids and facilitating students in creating music.*

*Simon: So I suppose the answer to that would be my personal beliefs about music are that because I expect myself to be a musician, I expect to graduate children who have some competence in music, so even if you've just been in our classroom program, ... you will certainly be able to sing in tune with a range of about an octave and a fifth and be able to read basic music in parts*

For these two teachers it seems apparent that they were not teachers who happen to teach music, but they were musicians who have chosen to share their musicianship, at least partly, through teaching. However, there were others who seemed to have a different perspective, commenting that their musicianship was less important than their ability to *communicate* and *teach* music. They did not feel the need to justify their musicianship in order to feel that they were good teachers, although they acknowledged that many music teachers did, perhaps due to their different teaching contexts. Suzanne (below) suggests that a good music teacher is not necessarily one who is involved in outside performing activities, but acknowledges in her dialogue that this perception is still held by many in the school and music communities:

*Suzanne: there's a bit of internal conflict I imagine with a lot of music teachers because with any other type of teacher if you're a classroom teacher that's what you intend to be, you go out and teach whereas we often have dreams of being musicians and then realize how futile that can be and decide on the way "oh maybe I'll be a music teacher" and there's a bit of negativity about that. I remember at uni a performing group coming along and doing a lunch time concert and asking us and how many of you want to be musicians and hope to make a career out of that and how many of you **just** want to be music teachers and it was like "oh there's something wrong with that"? But for me that is what I want to do, I mean when I was a lot younger I wanted to be a professional musician and then a music therapist and then came across a really fantastic conductor who made me see oh wow instrumental teaching and teaching*

*music can be something that is very special if you're good at it and it's a real talent to be able to do it well, so for me being a music teacher is a great thing. I'm getting over that feeling of inferiority and on the other hand I see professional musicians who try and teach and I think "oh you're just crap [sic], you shouldn't be doing this" so there is definite skill to it.*

Much of the discussion seemed to indicate that these teachers were engaging in a struggle to see themselves as 'proper' musicians. Perhaps as a result, some took a deficit approach – the fact that they felt they were not as good (musically) as they used to be or as they felt others were, meant that their identity 'defaulted' to being a 'teacher'.

Carmela: I've never seen myself as someone who had that natural talent and you see it in your colleagues ... I think a lot of innate musicians are not good teachers because they've never had to actually do the amount of work to actually attain the goals that others do, they don't know the pain as much ... [Although] I do see myself as a musician, I perhaps don't see myself as a performer.

The perception of being a musician-teacher seems to be tied to the idea that being “*musical* refer[s] to being able to perform music skilfully” (Ruddock & Leong, 2005, p. 18). As Ruddock and Leong's (2005) study demonstrated, the situation whereby someone feels that ~~they are(s)he is~~ 'unmusical' is usually associated with the adverse experiences of formal music learning in an individual's past. The work of Hargreaves et. al (2007) certainly confirms that “the perceptions of informal and formal music making, the nature of music in and out of school, pupil or teacher control, and expertise in different genres, shape the musical identities of teachers as well as of pupils” (p. 667).

This notion of what it means to be musical seemed to align with some of the experienced teachers' experiences articulated in this study, particularly as they talked about influences on their own perceptions and enjoyment of music. Below are two short interview excerpts that illustrate the ways these teachers they negotiated their musicianship as music teachers, particularly within their community of practice:

*Suzanne: sometimes teaching just sucks the fun and the enjoyment out of it (laughter) but you still love it, just sometimes the teaching side of it can be a little bit stressful, just takes the fun out of it... I think with classroom teaching because it's a lot of 'ta's' and*

*'ti-ti's' and sort of basic stuff and you don't tend to get too much into interpretation or expression or those kinds of things and also because there's so much more behaviour management involved and just general classroom management. I think sometimes the music gets left.... I wish it wasn't that way, I wish my classroom teaching did feel a little bit more creative and spontaneous but I think when you're managing a full class of 26 odd boys you have to... (laughter)*

*Interviewer: So do you just listen to music just for fun or does it move you in certain ways or affect you or is it ....?*

*Carmela: Sometimes you can get too analytical about what you're listening to and it's really good when you don't know something about things because then you can actually experience it for the first time and just let it all wash over you but when you know things you start analysing "why does this work"? And on my little ABBA [the band] thing as well, there's this guy in Brisbane who's written this whole book on analyzing ABBA songs and I'm about two thirds of the way through that at the moment and now I listen to ABBA CDs you now start listening to the multi tracking behind the melody and you're thinking I really shouldn't have read this book because now I'm actually thinking about it too deep.*

*Interviewer: You can lose the pure pleasure of music.*

*Carmela: Yeah you can, you sometimes can. That's why it would be really good to be involved in performing more if you had the time to do that because then you can actually be just totally into the music.*

Some of the teachers interviewed seemed to idealise and privilege the notion of 'musician identity' – indeed often seeing themselves as lesser musicians (indicating that they feel that they might not actually 'match up' with the 'true' reality of being a 'musician' – whatever that might be). Jorgensen (2010) suggests that music teachers may begin teaching with a "sense of inadequacy", largely brought on by a lack of participation in the scholarship of music education in pre-service teacher education, and reinforced by the isolation and 'busyness' of the early years in the music classroom. Given that the teachers in this study were seen as exemplary, we wondered about teachers who do not feel sufficiently 'musical', and the implications for their practice.

### *Challenging the 'assumed'*

The privileged status of the musician identity amongst music teachers in this study and also noted in previous studies in music education (see Pellegrino, 2009) raised for us many questions about the ways that this might reflect associated assumptions from within the

profession. We found our questions echoing issues raised by others before us in related fields in music education including arguments by Bowman (2010), Jorgensen (2010), and Benedict (2009). Analysis of our discussions with these seven well respected and experienced teachers made us realise that the idea that the best music teachers are musicians (or musical), first and foremost (often meaning that the best teachers are those who perform professionally outside of their teaching lives) is likely so entrenched in the understanding of the profession that it has become one of those unquestioned ‘truths’ that are difficult to see – a ‘Narrativization’ that provides a context for understanding the profession (Benedict, 2009).

Although not claiming to be generalisable, our study raises questions relating to why the identity of these experienced music teachers is so heavily caught up in the identity of being a practicing musician and why the perception of success as a music teacher in these cases seems to be so unquestioningly tied to perceived success as a performer. The pathways to becoming a music teacher in Australia and other Western countries (typically through conservatory-style study of music in the Western tradition) certainly offer clues as to the reasons why music teachers identify so strongly with their discipline (Bouij, 2007 [check year](#)). The point of interest for us was the sharp contrast provided between the articulated identities of the mathematics teachers in this project, and the music teachers (not reported here, see [Author & Author, 2010](#)), where we found the discipline skills of the teacher did not equate with the self-perceived competence of the teacher in the same way. Clearly there are associations between discipline and pedagogical expertise. This study does not attempt to judge the relative merits of various articulated professional identities; however, it was certainly interesting to find evidence of music teachers valuing musical identities over teaching identities, consistent with other research in the area (Bouij, 2007, Pellegrino, 2009). This identity issue is not new to the profession of music education, as Brian Roberts wrote in 1991:

*It is clear that the first obvious anomaly is that music teachers may be typically much more concerned about 'being a musician' than perhaps a science or history teacher may be concerned about 'being a scientist or historian'. Thus it is apparent that science or history teaching may perhaps be viewed more appropriately as informed by science or history studies but that music teaching may often be viewed as a function of a musician. (p.32)*

Recently, this issue has been discussed by Bowman (2010), who wrote that “the tendency to equate musical praxis with educational praxis, [is] a tendency that neglects the distinctive concerns of the latter. Musicianship, even highly refined musicianship, is not a sufficient basis for informed and reflective educational praxis” (p. 12).

In a previous study by Author (2005), early-career music teachers’ “perceived ability in the subject area seemed to determine how they viewed themselves professionally – the ‘better’ they felt they were at music, the more likely they were to see themselves as musicians. Conversely, if they reported little confidence in music skills and knowledge, they were more likely to see themselves as ‘teachers’” (p. 7). In the light of this study and the current findings, it appears that the relationship between music teacher’s discipline and pedagogical expertise requires further large-scale investigation.

The similarities found between the early-career teachers, and those in the current study are very interesting. The current study has focussed on experienced teachers who are widely regarded as successes in the profession, based on the criteria established by the profession over time - that is, they are good musicians with evidence of good musicianship (seen by their own and their students’ successes in the music world). Their abilities as ‘music teachers’ are also evidenced in the success of their students musically, and therefore themselves musically. The two are intimately intertwined, and we note that it is important that teacher’s *sub-identities* (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004) do not conflict and are well

balanced. Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) further note that as professional identities provide teachers with *agency*, they are essential in allowing teachers to make sense of themselves and their work. The continued privileging of the sub-identity of musician over music teacher (with all the musicianship that is required of music teachers) provides a context for music education that carries with it many assumptions about what is valued in the profession.

In reflecting on these interviews, we wondered what the impact of this may be for students and music education. The enacted identities of these teachers, and the replicating of a model where music education is seen to be less important than music performing, composing and conducting, results in school music functioning in a 'gate-keeping' role, for those who might enter music teaching. This does not mean that the musician identity should be subsumed by the teacher role, rather, it is important that both these aspects are explored and negotiated in university classrooms and beyond, as teachers struggle to establish identities that are helpful to their success as music educators in a changing world. It is possible that the notion of a 'good music teacher' may continue to be evidenced primarily by his/her ability to lead musical activities outside the classroom, and to perform with and without his/her students, as long as the role of music teacher is valued predominantly on the extra-classroom involvement of the teacher. As Bowman (2010) puts it: "Music educators' beliefs in redemptive truth and pursuit of the one true way suit neither the musical nor the educational needs of a diverse and changing society" (p. 12). There is a possibility that a potentially negative impact of the emphasis on teacher (musical) performance in the early years of teaching is impacting on the high levels of role stress and burnout amongst music teachers (Sheib [check spelling](#), 2006), particularly where their music is not supported by the environment in which they are teaching. Again, we believe that the findings we have outlined in this article give rise to



concern ? about this situation, and further research and philosophical consideration needs to be given to the perhaps unintended outcomes that seem to be emerging.

## Conclusions

In this paper we have considered how teachers' perceptions of their professional identity, their abilities as discipline specialists and their pedagogy are interrelated. While the sample size for this study was relatively small, the data set was quite large due to the intense data collection process. However, the findings are not necessarily generalisable across all contexts, as the data were collected in particular sites. Further research is warranted in this area to ascertain the impacts that various teaching contexts have on teachers' identities. In addition, the methodology used relies on teachers' perceived identities (and therefore their conceptualisation of what 'identity' is). This is both a strength and a weakness as it reveals through their words how they define themselves, and we do not colour this with another theoretical lens (as far as is possible).

Writers such as Benedict (2009), Bowman (2010), Jorgensen (2010) and Roberts (1991; 2010) have set the foundation for a reconceptualisation of the role of music teacher identity and its relationship to praxis. This study rests on their groundwork by providing a story suggesting that the privileged status of the musician identity amongst the experienced music teachers in this study reflects many assumptions that often go unquestioned in the music education profession. It seems that when teaching music, the teachers in this study tended to enact a pedagogy that unconsciously reflected their identities as somewhere on the continuum from discipline specialist to teacher, but skewed towards the 'discipline specialist' end. Teachers' perceptions of the discipline being taught (what the key tenets of the discipline are, what it means to be proficient in the discipline), their perceptions of what constitutes 'good' pedagogy, their perceptions of themselves as teachers and their perceptions of their abilities

within the discipline are all interrelated. If we want to improve pedagogy, we need to first address pre-service and in-service music teachers' professional identities.

Both teacher education and the profession at large have a role to play in negotiating the productive development of professional identities in music teachers. Initial recommendations for teacher education and professional development include building realistic and accurate understandings and experiences in the discipline, as well as developing pedagogical knowledge and skills that addresses discipline specificity. Reflection on abilities as discipline participators and as teachers is also seen as being crucial to developing a healthy and productive professional identity (Author, non, -author and non-author, in press).

This research raises questions relating to how music teachers' identities develop as they move from pre-service preparation, through to becoming experienced teachers. Future research which tracks teachers' perceptions of their identities, as they progress through all stages of their career would provide a more thorough insight into the relationships between identities, disciplinarity and pedagogies. Such research would be highly transferable to other professional disciplines, where 'identity' issues may be impacting on productivity and longevity in the profession. Future research into the longitudinal development of music teacher identities has the potential to enhance teacher practice, the quality of music education in schools, the relevance of pre- and in-service teacher education provisions and it will certainly provide a lens from which to address the retention of music teachers in the future.

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