

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Overview of the Research**

Little is known about the structure of musicians' careers in terms of the activities in which they engage and the skills and attributes used to sustain their professional practice, and there is also widespread lack of understanding about the music industry and the wider cultural industries. The purpose of this study was to extend understanding of the careers of classical instrumental musicians within the cultural industries, and to ascertain the extent to which professional practice is reflected within current classical performance-based music education and training.

Worldwide, classical music performance students graduate with significant skill in their discipline, and yet many of the courses from which they emerge hold limited relevance to current trends within the music and wider cultural sectors (Aguilar, 1998; Jang, 1996; Smith, 1994). Numerous musicians graduate without the necessary broad base of attributes upon which to build and maintain a sustainable and flexible career within a diverse community (Drummond, 1996; Jang, 1996): whereas higher education seeks to provide graduates with a detailed theoretical understanding of a field of study, a focus upon the achievement of an elite practical standard can result in a mechanistic approach and an experience that is removed from the realities of working life. The progress of music students is largely nurtured within the confines of universities and conservatories without sufficient opportunities for students to experience and to understand the realities of the profession whilst still having access to peer and lecturer support: "opportunities and encouragement to explore, experiment, and take risks within a safe environment are important for optimal growth" (Weller, 2004, p. 252).

In addressing issues pertaining to the education and practice of the professional musician, it is important to first identify factors that characterise musicians' careers. Macrae (2004) suggested that although it is an integral goal of musicians' training to train performers of the highest standard, in conjunction with this "is the expectation that ... the skills of students intending to enter the music profession will have been identified, developed and enhanced" (p. 117). There has been a general call for

classical, performance-based music education and training to become more relevant to the employment situation of artists (Aguilar, 1998; Johnson, 2002; McCarthy, Brooks, Lowell, & Zakaras, 2001; Rogers, 2002). However, the call has not been formally stated or investigated by the music sector due to the sector's fragmented nature and the resulting lack of a representative voice. Neither has the need for reform been addressed conclusively by many music conservatories (Johansson, 1996; Lancaster, 2004d).

The study has the potential to challenge the philosophies underpinning the training of classical musicians. It is hoped that the results will contribute to a better understanding of the content and structure required within tertiary, classical performance-based music courses to ensure that graduates are able to demonstrate the requisite capabilities to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex and competitive cultural environment. In short, the research asked, "What is a musician?"

## **1.2 Significance and Objectives**

The research has significance within the three key areas of classical instrumental musicians, the music and cultural industries, and performance-based education and training, within which it sought to:

1. extend understanding of the performance and non-performance skills and attributes required by classical instrumental musicians to achieve sustainable professional practice;
2. investigate the potential for musicians to extend their roles within the cultural industries;
3. determine the extent to which philosophical frameworks underpinning the curricula of university level, classical performance-based music courses reflect the requirements of sustainable professional practice within the music sector, and
4. identify ways in which music practitioners and educators can work together to establish and maintain curricula that will ensure a broad range of skills and attributes reflective of the requirements for sustainable professional practice.

Specifically, individual and group interviews and a survey were used to address the research questions:

### **1.2.1 Major Research Question**

What are the characteristics of careers in classical music, and how can instrumental musicians achieve sustainable professional practice?

### **1.2.2 Minor Research Questions**

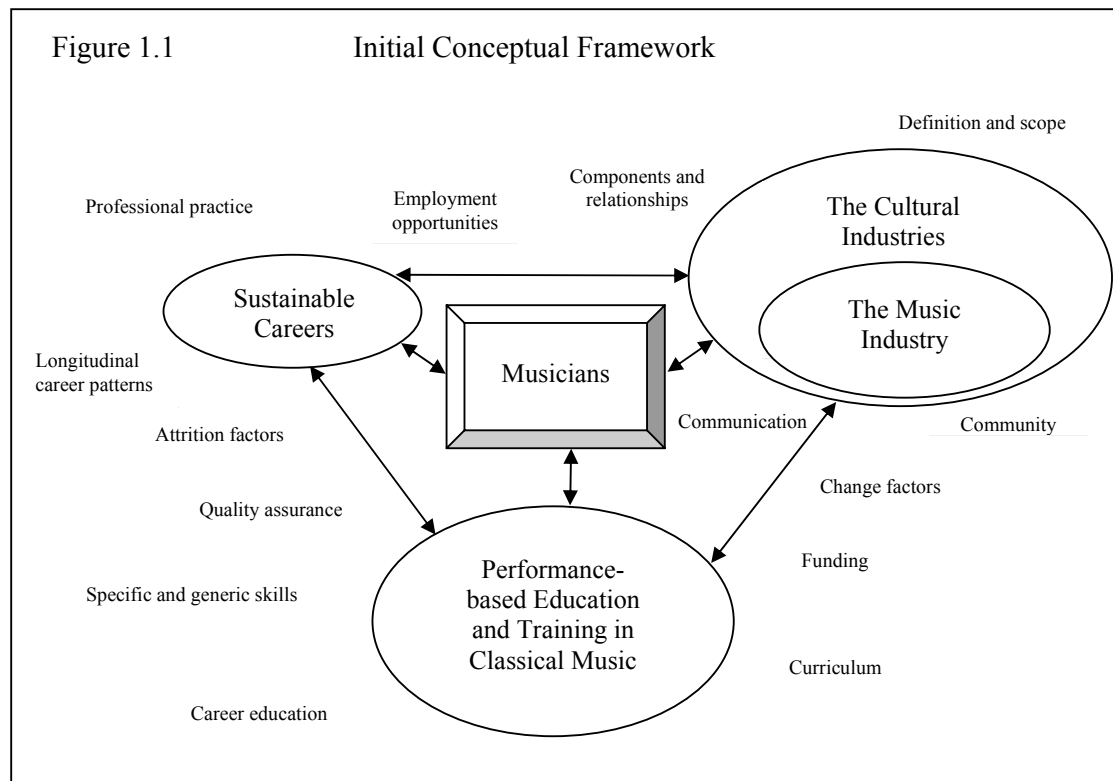
1. What performance and non-performance skills and attributes are required by classical instrumental musicians to sustain professional practice?
2. What is the potential for instrumental musicians to extend their roles within the cultural industries?
3. To what extent do the philosophical frameworks that underpin the curricula of university level, classical performance-based music courses reflect the requirements for sustainable professional practice?
4. How can music practitioners and educators establish and maintain curricula reflective of the skills and attributes required to sustain professional practice?

## **1.3 Introduction to the Research Design**

### **1.3.1 Conceptual Framework**

Development of the initial conceptual framework considered the work of Miles and Huberman (1994) and Ticehurst and Veal (2000) in the identification of key concepts, which were described by Miles and Huberman as “general representations of the phenomena to be studied” (p. 32). Key concepts of the study were identified as the musician, the cultural industries and performance-based education and training.

Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) description of theory development was particularly helpful when considering the comparison and classification of concepts and their relationships against data without necessarily relating the concepts to each other. Even though multiple factors were included in the initial conceptual framework, they were not aligned with a single key concept in order for relationships to emerge from the initial data rather than being pre-supposed. The initial conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.1.

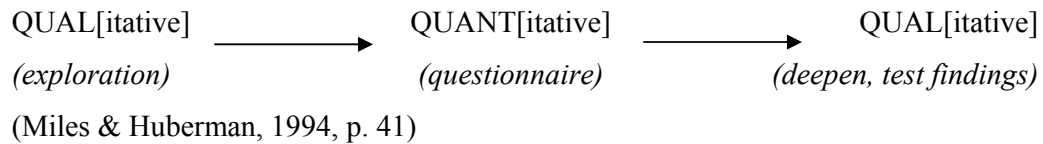


### 1.3.2 Overview

The research approach for the study bridged both the interpretive and normative paradigms. Interpretive, or qualitative design is “a commitment to some version of the naturalistic, interpretive approach to its subject matter and an ongoing critique of the politics and methods” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8). Qualitative research is based on the notion that reality is subjectively created rather than objectively defined. Ticehurst and Veal (2000) described how researchers strive “to uncover meanings and understanding of the issues they are researching. ... This enables qualitative researchers to match their methods to the research problem, thus providing a flexible approach that contrasts with the structured approaches found in many positivist studies” (p. 94).

Normative (quantitative) research assumes that the social domain is an absolute reality, nevertheless “qualitative and quantitative research can complement each other by playing the respective roles of discovery and confirmation” (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 31). Strauss and Corbin (1998) advocated the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods within research: “[t]he qualitative should direct the quantitative and the quantitative feedback into the qualitative in a circular, but at the same time evolving, process with each method contributing to the theory in ways that only each

can” (p. 34). In this case the two paradigms were combined in an integrative approach, using different methods for different aspects of the study to provide increased opportunities for analysis and, as a result, a richer detail of data (Rossman & Wilson, 1984). The normative and interpretive paradigms interacted as illustrated by Miles and Huberman:



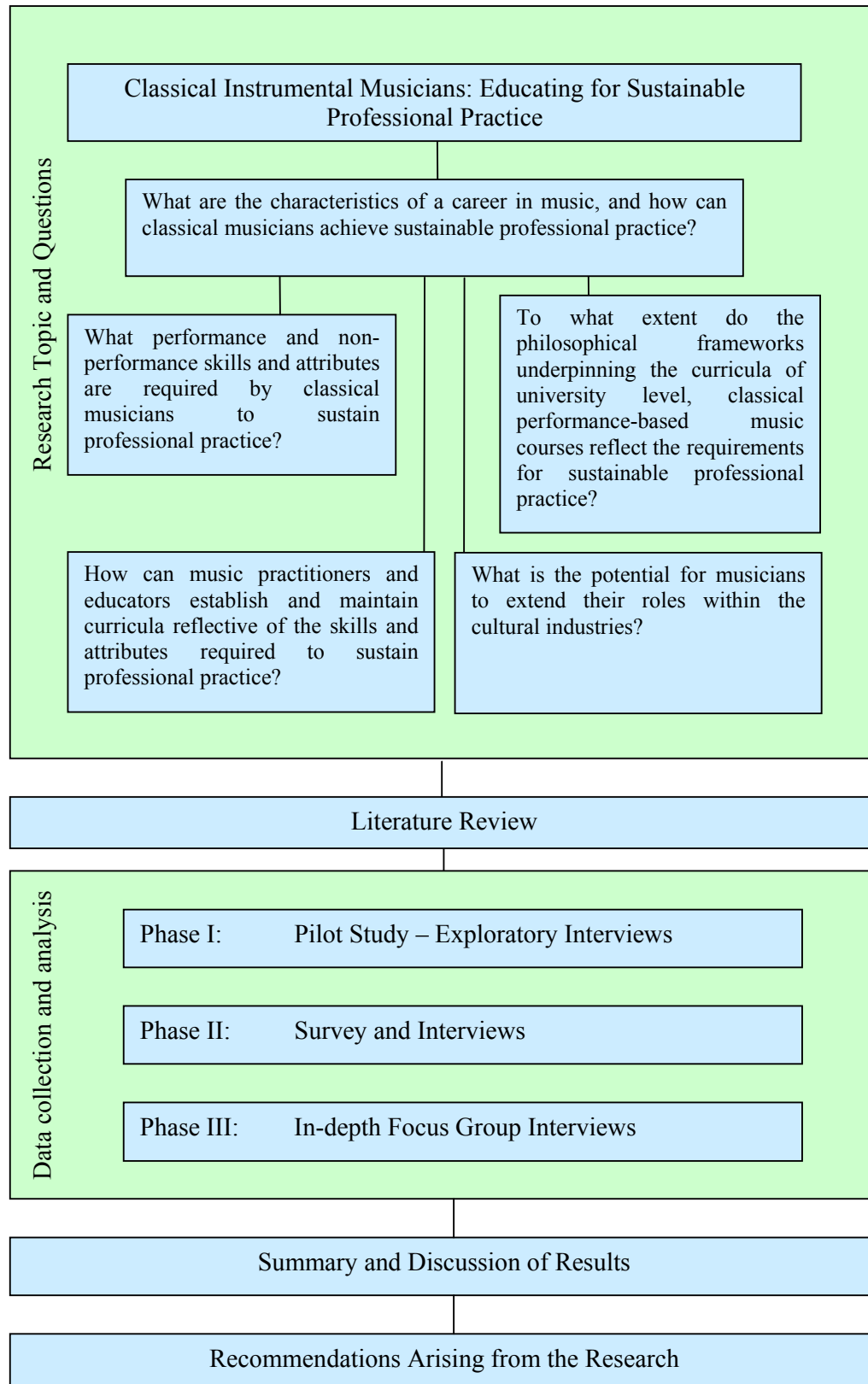
Qualitative methodologies assisted with the identification of a representative sample by providing background data in the design stage, and were utilised throughout the study. Survey methodology enabled the researcher to combine the normative and interpretive paradigms as considered appropriate for the three phases of the study: for example, a survey included questions that would yield both quantitative and qualitative data. In addition, quantification acted as a means of summarising qualitative data into categories reflective of emergent themes.

The study utilised three distinct, but interrelated data collections within three sequential research phases. Identification of the key concepts as illustrated in the initial conceptual framework led to a pilot study comprising thirty interviews, the data from which resulted in a revised conceptual framework and informed the development and implementation of a survey. Finally, data from the pilot study, the survey and a subsequent set of interviews provided the basis for two in-depth focus group interviews within which significant evolving themes were further pursued.

### 1.3.3 Structure of the Thesis

The initial conceptual framework formed the basis of an extensive literature review pertaining to the three key concepts, which are explored in Chapters Two, Three and Four of the thesis. Chapters Five, Six and Seven describe the three data collection phases of the study: each chapter identifies the sample selection and procedures for the relevant phase, and discusses the development, trial and implementation of each instrument within the context of the overall research design. The methods and approaches for data collection and analysis are also described and include in each case timing, transcription, coding and initial results. Chapter Eight consists of a summary, discussion of results and recommendations. The research design and methodology is illustrated in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 Research Design and Methodology



## **1.4 Reliability and Validity**

Ticehurst and Veal (2000) described reliability as “the extent to which research findings would be the same if the research were to be repeated at a later date, or with a different sample of subjects”; and validity as “the extent to which the data truly reflect the phenomenon being studied” (pp. 23-24). Considering the relationship between the two, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) suggested that “reliability is a necessary but insufficient condition for validity in research; reliability is a necessary precondition of validity” (p. 105).

Aspects of internal and external validity relating to the study included interpretive validity, self-report, generalisability and sample selection. These aspects were overtly considered and addressed: for example, the study included three separate but mutually supporting data collections. As concepts and categories of data emerged, further crosschecks of the literature were undertaken in order to confirm or to suggest additional review of the emerging categories. Crosschecks occurred also within and between each instrument as they were developed as part of the global research design.

The study was designed with a focus on Australian classically trained instrumental musicians; however in consideration of the need for generalisability, a number of surveys were distributed at overseas locations. Each respondent’s location was included as a variable in an SPSS database (1997), which facilitated comparison of data from different Australian States and Territories and from overseas locations. In addition, interviews were held with participants from Europe, the United States, and Australia.

The researcher attended and presented at Australian, European and United States conferences and seminars relating to the research topic, and made visits to institutions in the process of curricula change. Specific issues of reliability and validity as they relate to sample, instrumentation, procedure, data collection and analysis are addressed within the methodology sections of Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

### **1.4.1 Self-Report**

Self-report carries with it the uncertainty of the honesty and accuracy of responses, and self-report was a consideration in each of the three research phases as participants reflected upon their careers and related education and training. In considering the use of self-report in research, Schmitt (1994) suggested that motivational sets could influence respondents. One such set was anonymity, which was crucial to the current study: for

instance, the musicians' representative from one organisation that participated in the second phase of the study stipulated that the data must not be traceable back to either the respondent or to the institution itself. It was explained that clusters of responses traced back to the organisation could highlight employee trends such as substantial secondary income streams, which could in turn be perceived as counter-productive to the institution's objectives, and which could threaten the organisation's external sources of funding.

Schmitt (1994) stated the benefits of the use of self-report for attitudinal or perceptual reasons. Howard (1994) also advocated the use of self-report, having found that "in almost all cases, the construct validity coefficients of self-reports were superior to the validity coefficients of other measurement approaches" (p. 2). Howard concluded that when "employed within a sensible design, self-reports often represent a valuable and valid measurement strategy" (ibid, p. 5). The researcher accepted that self-report has its critics, and designed each of the data collection instruments to include a balance of closed and open-ended questions with a limited number of reflective questions, and comprehensive crosschecks both within and between research instruments.

### **1.5 Population and Samples**

The target population for the study was instrumental musicians who had trained or worked predominantly in the Western classical tradition. Criteria for selection included people who, at the time of the study:

- were undertaking work as a musician;
- had previously undertaken work as a musician;
- had undertaken formal training as a musician.

With the purpose of gathering two comparative data sets, the pilot study incorporated a broad representation from within the cultural industries, which were defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as being comprised of creative and expressive cultural activities such as music composition and performance, and support services such as venue management and set design (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001a).

## **1.6 Instrumentation**

A literature search enabled the researcher to identify the most appropriate instrument for each phase of the study, and to consider ways in which to overcome potential difficulties. Data collection comprised three discrete, interdependent procedures, during which the researcher confirmed or queried emerging response patterns by means of cross-reference with the literature. All three research phases included interviews, hence a wide range of interview technique literature was considered including Whyte's hierarchy of interviewer responses, which lists intervention strategies from the least intrusive (a non-verbal response that indicates the interviewee's attentiveness), to the most intrusive (the initiation of a new topic), (in Ticehurst & Veal, 2000).

## **1.7 Coding and Analysis**

The methods of coding and analysis differed for each of the three instruments due to the diversity of approaches employed, and incorporated the use of a database within SPSS Version 11.5 (1997), colour coding, note taking, and fully transcribed interviews. Coding and analysis is described within the methodology sections of Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

## **1.8 Ethical Issues**

Written permission was sought from the institutions through which employees were contacted with requests to participate, and from all participants and respondents. Written documentation included an outline of the purpose of the study and an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were advised of the arrangements to securely store data and were invited to review draft material prior to publication in the form of a doctoral thesis. Organisations were offered a report including a summary of the major findings and recommendations arising from the study.

Research data remained confidential and anonymous, and coding was used to ensure the anonymity of participants. Research documents were kept secure, and computer data were secured through the use of passwords. Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time, and documentation relevant to each research phase was made available for verification of the data collected.

## 1.9 Key Terms and Definitions

- **Business Practices**

The term *business practices* arose from the post-survey interviews. Reflecting participants' comments, the term refers to administrative tasks such as marketing, funding applications, financial management, interpersonal skills, professional ethics, arts law, human resource management, time management, public relations, negotiation, and information communications technology (ICT).

- **Career Education and Experience**

Career education and experience refers to career preparation through a range of activities such as real and simulated experience, mentoring, individual career planning and industry studies.

- **Classical Music**

Classical music is used to describe traditions of European art music evolving from medieval sacred and secular musical practices.

- **Composite Careers**

Composite careers are defined as careers in which multiple roles are undertaken. Composite careers are also commonly described as 'portfolio' or 'multiple' careers.

- **Conservatorium**

Traditionally, a music conservatorium was defined as a music school that is not affiliated with a college or university, and which provides specialised training in classical music performance. In the 21st century, conservatories are usually affiliated with colleges or universities. An increasingly diverse range of degree and non-degree courses includes music performance in multiple genres, musicology, composition, conducting, and music education; sometimes in combination with each other or with non-musical disciplines. Conservatorium students may be exposed to many different musical genres and performing arts. The European term for conservatorium is 'conservatoire', and in the United States the term 'conservatory' is often used. An overview of the history and philosophy of music conservatories together with an analysis of selected programs is included in Chapter Four.

- **Core Studies**

Core studies are non-elective units of study within a formal course, and typically include non-performance units such as history and harmony, keyboard, aural, sight-singing, improvisation, and theory of music.

- **Cultural Industries**

Cultural Industries include the traditional cultural activities of creation and expression: for example, music composition and dance, and support services such as venue management and sound editing. Also included are related occupations including arts education and music retailing, and activities with some cultural content such as newspapers, multimedia and publishing.
- **Globalisation**

“The concept of globalisation has been used since the 1970s to refer to an acceleration of international integration based on rapid changes in political and economic relations, technology and communications” (Create Australia, 2001, p. 6).
- **Instrumental Pedagogy**

Instrumental pedagogy refers to the principles and practice of teaching an instrument.
- **Multiple careers**

Please see composite careers.
- **Music Technologies**

Music technologies refer to technological software and hardware relating to music performance, composition, teaching and learning, and recording.
- **Musical Genre**

A musical genre is a category or style of musical work such as classical or jazz.
- **Musician**

For the purposes of the study, the term musician refers to an individual directly or indirectly involved in the performance of music. Taking into account the portfolio nature of musicians’ careers, this includes performers, instructors, directors, composers, and those whose supporting role is integral to the performance itself. A classical musician is defined as a musician who has trained or practised predominantly in classical music.
- **Performance**

Performance is defined as the use of practical skills to realise a musical work.
- **Performance Psychology**

Primarily practised in the field of elite athletics, performance psychology pertains to psychological factors that affect the acquisition, execution and retention of

performance skills. Associated with this is the development of effective practice methods that enhance skill development.

- **Portfolio careers**

Please see composite careers.

- **Technical and Further Education (TAFE)**

The term Technical and Further Education (TAFE) has been used in Australia since the 1970s and arise from the Kangan report (Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education, 1974). TAFE providers deliver industry-based programs in a wide variety of industry sectors.

- **Tertiary**

The tertiary education sector in Australia refers to post-compulsory education and training such as that undertaken at university.

- **Vocational Education and Training (VET)**

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is education and training designed with a vocational focus; to provide the skills and knowledge required to do a specific job.

### **1.10 Introduction to the Literature Review**

The extent to which classical, performance-based music education and training reflects the careers of its graduates has gained heightened exposure at the same time as higher education institutions become increasingly accountable for the employability of graduates, and yet much of the available literature has only tangential relevance, and there remains a shortage of literature relating to the complex area of music: “existing literature provides little guidance for analysis of this multifaceted situation, as previous research in this area, especially in relation to gender differences, is practically non-existent” (Crouch & Lovric, 1990, p. 1).

A wide-ranging review of the existing literature resulted in the identification of a number of principal issues related to this research including: (1) the professional musician (Loebel, 1982; McCarthy et al., 2001; Rieger, 1985/1976; Rosen, 1982); (2) employment (Alper, Wassall, & Jeffri, 1996; Menger, 1999; Metier, 2000; Throsby & Hollister, 2003); (3) the music and cultural industries (Costantoura, 2000; O'Brien & Feist, 1997; Smith, 1992); (4) changes to pre-tertiary music education and training in Australia (Arts, Sport and Recreation Industry Training Council, 2001; Marcellino & Cunningham, 2002); and (5) the effectiveness of current university level, classical performance-based music programs (Aguilar, 1998; Boardman, 2002; Featherstone-Witty, 2001; Grogan, 1995; de Haan, 2004; Mills & Smith, in press; Pautz, 2002).

The review included academic journals, industry-generated literature, Australian and overseas reports, published and unpublished Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data, documents pertaining to music curriculum and related philosophical frameworks, and media articles. The literature review enabled collection of ideas relevant to the challenges of sustainable professional practice in the cultural industries.