

THE CONSTRUCTION OF SCHOOL CURRICULUM  
AND MUSIC EDUCATION

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**The Construction of School Curriculum  
and  
Music Education**

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## **Abstract**

The Newfoundland and Labrador Government is currently in the process of implementing a comprehensive plan for the restructuring of the province's educational system. This study is an investigation into the influences of educational reform policies on the construction of school curriculum in Newfoundland and Labrador. Specifically, it investigates the role of music education in the reorganized school system.

To examine and help further our understandings of the role of arts education in school curriculum, this study uses specific sites and examples from music education. It has attempted to achieve three things:

1. To create a sense of the reality of music education in terms of current policy and practice in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system
2. To create a sense of the intent and mind-set behind policies and practices associated with current educational reform
3. To create a sense of the reality of arts and music education as interpreted by various stakeholders within the educational system.

Critical theory has provided a method of analysis into the issue of curriculum construction and the role of music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. It has raised many questions regarding the complex issue of reform currently underway in the education system of this province. The use of critical theory in this investigation and analysis is important to the process of understanding the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. Specifically, it challenges accepted definitions and searches for new meanings into the issue of prioritizing curriculum.

This study uses seven elements drawn from Harvey (1990) as a basis for critical analysis. These elements include abstract generalization, totality, essence, praxis, ideology, structure, and history.

The research has revealed that as part of current educational reform, the shift in the province's educational paradigm to a focus on "returning to the basics" in the school system puts the future of music and arts education at risk. The need to consider very carefully the ideologies behind current policies and terms such as "basic" and "quality" education, to whom and for whom, has emerged from this investigation.

The future of music and arts courses in current educational reform is vague at best. After many years of significant progress in the area of music education programs in Newfoundland and Labrador, a decrease in value or importance represents a significant loss to the educational process. With the institution of more effective communication and consulting processes, better alignment between stated perceptions and values with practice, and the general support of all stakeholders in the education system, music and arts education can remain an integral component of school curriculum and continue to be a significant contributor to current educational reform.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

The education system in Newfoundland and Labrador is changing rapidly. The stated goal of Government reform and restructuring is to improve the education offered to our students (*Our Children Our Future, 1992*). One of the major areas at the center of current educational reform is the school curriculum. Through various reports and curriculum documents, the Department of Education's focus on curriculum has introduced a language to the educational world which appears to be escalating the importance of some subjects, while diminishing the importance of others. This is manifested with the use of such language as "primary core", "secondary core", and "non-core" when referring to the school curriculum.

In relation to current educational reform, some questions arise regarding policy formulation. What factors have influenced curriculum construction? What direction is the curriculum moving as a result of these influences? Is there a system of prioritizing in curriculum construction? Who defines the curriculum? How are various reform policies affecting curriculum construction? For the purposes of this study, curriculum construction refers to both the development and implementation of curriculum.

The effect of Government restructuring in curriculum offerings is evident in today's education system, especially in rural and small populated schools. "Effective September 1994, reductions in the program offerings of schools include such subject areas as music,

home economics, and industrial arts" (Cantwell, 1995, p.2). Government reform documents suggest that another focal point of restructuring and reform is the student. However, due to fiscal restraint, course offerings available to students in the school setting are often being mandated and limited due to course availability and teacher allocation. Specific concerns arise from this fact. Will this struggle for school time affect the continued development and delivery of arts education? Are some subject areas such as the arts, and specifically music education, likely to be superseded by other areas of study under the guise of educational reform?

One of the concerns for the future of arts education, and specifically music programs, is that it remains in the education system as a curricular component. However, one issue inherent in current curriculum design, as outlined in some of the province's reform documents, is the lack of any significant mention of the role of arts education.

Such terms as quality education, balanced curriculum, primary core, and secondary core subjects have been identified by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (*Our Children, Our Future*, 1992). Current Government reform documentation suggests that these terms imply the establishment of a curriculum whose subject areas are fundamental in the development of students as life-long learners and critical thinkers. However, there remain unanswered questions and assumptions regarding the place of music education as part of a quality education and balanced curriculum. This is a concern

for the province because historically music has held an important role in both the education system and the lives of Newfoundland people.

Due to a general lack of visibility of specific reference related to arts education in Government reform documents, we are left to ask whether the educational value of some courses such as music have been overlooked. As Cantwell (1995) states, "the matter of what constitutes such a curriculum is a complex issue, and a difficult one to resolve" (p.9). In order to help us understand current educational reform and the place of music education in the province's school system, we must begin with the issues that influence decision-making and policy formation.

## **Background of the Study**

In today's educational reform, there is a push to return to the basics of education. "The Commission therefore believes that a core curriculum must be established based on the disciplines of Language, Mathematics and Science, and that high standards of achievement in these studies must become a primary aim of the curriculum" (*Our Children, Our Future*, 1992, p. 300). Consequently, the perception has developed, through the use of such terms as primary core, secondary core, and non-core, that other programs such as social studies, art, theater arts, and music have become secondary in the curriculum offerings. As a result, it appears as though arts education, and specifically music programs, in this province are at risk. Two basic questions surface: should students

have the opportunity to study the arts? Do arts programs contribute to 'quality' education and a 'balanced' curriculum?

In relation to the inclusion of arts and music education in our provincial curriculum, we are encouraged to ask the following questions:

- ☐ Who are the curriculum decision-makers?
- ☐ Are they informed?
- ☐ Are they aware of the value of an arts program?
- ☐ On what basis are their decisions made?
- ☐ How will their decisions affect arts and music education?
- ☐ How will their decisions impact the education system and its future?
- ☐ How will their decisions affect the lives and future of our children?

## **Purpose of the Study**

It is the specific purpose of this study to investigate and provide some insight into why arts subjects, and specifically music education, appear to be placed low on the curriculum "totem pole" in today's education system. There has been significant research done on a general scale about the educational value of music education. However, there has been little examination and analysis of the role of music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. Therefore, through a critical analysis, this study attempts to do three things:

1. It provides an overview of the present status of music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system using statistics on the number of schools offering music courses, the number of students enrolled in them, and the number of certified music teachers teaching in the education system. This section also includes a brief overview and basic

orientation of school music education in terms of its philosophy and aims for the various programs offered in the Newfoundland and Labrador Education system.

2. Reviews selected provincial Government educational reform documents. A summary of the selected reform documents extracts and presents the most salient and pertinent points that are important and relate to the process of curriculum construction and the role of music education in school curriculum.
3. Personal interviews with selected stakeholders involved in the education process of Newfoundland and Labrador provide general perceptions on how current educational reform may be influencing and/or dictating curriculum construction. These perceptions are presented in Chapter IV.

In addressing the questions noted in the introduction, this study attempts to create the "whole" picture of curriculum construction. Specifically, this study attempts to shed light on the role music education is playing in our society today, and on the ways that current restructuring and decision-making in the educational system might be influencing the role of arts education. "Current educational reports designed to initiate and guide this process of restructuring, however, have left many questions unanswered as to the future role of the arts subjects in the curriculum" (Cantwell, 1995, p. 18). In this regard, this study investigates the role of music education in the curriculum by critically examining the historical, political, cultural, economic, and educational value factors which influence curriculum construction, development, and content.

## Significance of the Study

Educational change is at the forefront for the general schooling of the young people of Newfoundland and Labrador. *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) states, “. . . there must be serious efforts to address the quality and future of schooling in the province. We must and can work together to build an education system which our children and province need and deserve. Nothing else will do for our children, our future” (p.22). The significance of this study lies in its potential to shed light on the efforts being made by Government to improve the education system. Specifically, this study examines current educational reforms as they relate to curriculum construction and music education.

It appears as though subjects such as music, which are deeply rooted in our history and culture, are being overlooked. As quoted previously, *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) and *Adjusting the Course Part II* (1994) do not address arts and music education in any significant way. In fact, there is hardly any mention of arts subjects in the report. What messages are being sent to administrators, school personnel, students, parents, and the community at large regarding the value and significance of arts and music education in light of this lack of mention in current educational reform documents?

Questions and concerns such as these need to be examined as part of further understanding the process for construction of school curriculum. It is necessary to inquire to those persons in positions of decision-making regarding the education system for the province's children. As well, education reform policies and practice must be closely

examined to see how they might relate to why the construction of curriculum design are set as they are. It is the purpose of this study to look at the various influences of current educational reform policies as they have impacted upon the process of curriculum construction in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. More specifically, this study examines the potential impact such policies may have on the future of music education in our school system.

*Our Children, Our Future* (1992) and *Adjusting the Course Part II* (1994) focus on preparing our children for the workforce. Consequently, there is lengthy discussion of the business community and the economic status of our province and nation in these documents. However, the latest 1996 draft documents such *Learning For All: The Foundation Program Report*, *The Primary and Elementary Levels Handbook*, *The Intermediate Levels Handbook*, and the Course Descriptions for two high school music courses do point to the role the arts can play in a student's education. This is done through the presentation of the Essential Graduation Learnings in these documents. The Essential Graduation Learnings were developed by the Atlantic Provinces to identify the areas students must have experienced and developed skills in to graduate from high school. These seven areas are:

1. Aesthetic Expression
2. Citizenship
3. Communication
4. Personal Development
5. Problem Solving

6. Technological Competence
7. Spiritual and Moral Development [Note: this learning is specific to Newfoundland and Labrador]

Therefore, it is important to note that arts courses such as music or theatre arts can indeed address the outcomes for the Aesthetic Expression of the Essential Graduation Learnings.

In terms of the relationships between these documents, the following questions arise: how will the documents be reconciled when discussing issues such as school time, curriculum offerings, and teacher allocations? Specifically, how will the Essential Graduation Learning of 'Aesthetic Expression' be recognized or realized in the curriculum? This study attempts to shed light on these issues.

This study also attempts to contribute a thorough analysis to educational research on the role music education plays in the education of the students in this province. Finally, the study attempts to establish why there are different perceptions on the importance of various subject areas in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system in the process of curriculum construction.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of the Literature**

This chapter presents a review of the literature in two sections. The first section outlines the role of music and music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador school system. This review is organized around historical, political, cultural, economic, and educational value issues. For the purpose of this study, pertinent issues have been selected and extracted from the literature under each of these five areas of critical normative research.

The second section of the literature review is a basic overview of selected provincial Government documents which have influenced, or are influencing, curriculum construction and the role of music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador educational system.

#### **The Role of Music and Music Education**

##### ***Historical***

Since Confederation (1949) there has been massive reorganization of the educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador. During the early years of post confederation " . . . policy priorities were directed toward survival issues . . . funding into

school construction, staffing and facilities and to the physical and material constituents of education" (*Comin' to Our Senses, 1980, p. iv*). As a result, the Government's attention was focused toward building new schools and making the education system modern. Consequently, structures outside the formal education system were developed to accommodate the emerging arts community. These structures were, "... less formal and more flexible in their application. Based on perceived community development needs, they supported non credit courses in the arts, grants for professional development, promotion of local arts and the creation of an environment in which the professional artist could simply survive" (*Comin' to Our Senses, 1980, p. v*).

Arts education often appears to be viewed as a low priority in educational society despite the research which has been done substantiating the important role of it in formal education. For example, Cantwell (1995) states that out of the two hundred and eleven recommendations made in the document *Our Children, Our Future (1992)*, none mention the arts. It appears that with current educational reform strategies little has changed since 1976 when the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) concluded from their examination of the whole Canadian education system that arts education was one of the five most urgent problems to address. In fact, they characterized the Canadian policy toward the arts in education as one of benign neglect. (*Comin' to Our Senses, 1980*).

This current status of arts education might be somewhat difficult to believe in Newfoundland and Labrador since society has consistently validated the arts, and especially music, throughout its history. Music has played an important role in church, society, and education since the early 1800's.

Music education in Newfoundland and Labrador is deeply rooted in church history. Most teachers in Newfoundland schools during the eighteenth and mid nineteenth hundreds were priests, brothers, sisters, ministers, or employees of the church. Therefore, the denominational structure of our education system supported music in the schools primarily as part of religious or social functions. However, during the late 1800's music was primarily viewed as an addition to the existing studies. Therefore, even with the support of the religious sector, both sacred and secular music was still very much community based

The 1900's brought more support and advancement for the arts and music in education. For the first half of the century musicians and educators such as Charles Hutton and Ignatius Rumboldt staged many operas, operetta, and musical theater productions for the general public. The second half of the century saw music education accomplish many milestones. The following are examples of some of these milestones.

**Figure 2.1:** Time line for the development of significant events for the province in music education during the mid-1900's.

<b>1952</b>	The Kiwanis Music Festival began.
<b>1966</b>	The NTA (Newfoundland Teachers Association) Music Council formed and the first pilot programs for music were initiated in the school system.
<b>1967-1969</b>	The first music curriculum guides appeared in the schools.
<b>1970</b>	The first music consultant was appointed.
<b>1973</b>	Music was accepted as a matriculation subject at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN).
<b>1976</b>	The Department of Music was opened at MUN and the four year B/Mus degree and the five year B/Mus and B/MusEd conjoint degree programs were established.
<b>1979</b>	The first class of music graduates convoked from MUN.

With these advances, the education system saw music programs flourish in the late 1970's and early 1980's.

As a part of educational reform, *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) and *Adjusting the Course Part I and Part II* (1994) have suggested the elimination of our denominational system, the reorganization of school councils, and implementing site-based management. How the restructuring will affect music education, and other arts courses is an important question. Will external policy, i.e. Government, affect how instructional time is being allocated and utilized? Is the pendulum swinging back to the 1800's and early 1900's when music education was more community based? Is there really a place for the

arts in the proposed new education system? Who is making the decisions about curricular inclusions/exclusion's and instructional time?

With the major historical and cultural mark music education has made in our society and culture, what does the future hold for it as a result of educational reform policies? Cantwell (1995) points out that it appears " . . . from the outset of this inquiry [that] the arts subjects had already been marginalized, their place in a school curriculum already preassigned" (p.133).

### ***Political***

"The Government structure underpinning the decisions about the curriculum in Newfoundland and Labrador schools appears to be focusing on the responsibility that public education has to recreate . . . the knowledge, skills, and customs which are indigenous to its society" (*Our Children, Our Future*, 1992, p. 27). The report states, " . . . education is also tied directly to the labour force, being responsive to the needs of business and industry, and fostering economic self-reliance" (*Our Children, Our Future*, 1992, p. 27). Therefore, the education system must take these factors into consideration because " . . . businesses are demanding workers who are active learners. They no longer want those who learn skills and then set them aside, but those who have the ability to upgrade existing skills and learn new ones" (*Our Children, Our Future*, 1993, p. 34).

The Department of Education believes that a return to the basics, which includes math, science, and language arts subjects, is the best and most productive way to educate our students or human resource. This political agenda exhibits the Government's commitment to educate our students for the work force. In an effort to provide this education, the prevailing educational hegemony is placing a high priority on subjects such as mathematics, science, language arts, and technology. A focus such as this one is perhaps a foreshadowing of the role and value of arts subjects in the school curriculum. Consequently, if arts education appears to be diminishing in the education system, there is a need to examine the hegemonic structure of the Government's agenda regarding knowledge and curriculum construction. What are the internal and external factors influencing Government's decision making concerning the music curriculum?

The Newfoundland and Labrador Government has spent a significant amount of time, energy, and money on various research projects and commissions such as *Our Children Our Future* (1992) and *Adjusting the Course Part I and Part II* (1994). As a result of these documents, there has been an in-depth probing into our education system. However, there is very little mention of the arts in these documents.

The new draft documents *Learning For All* (1996), *Primary/Elementary Levels Handbook* (1996), and *The Intermediate Level Handbook* (1996) do recognize that the school curriculum does indeed need to be broad and eclectic in an effort to educate the

whole student. This is laid out in the Atlantic Framework's Essential Graduation Learnings, which are addressed in each of these documents.

The nature and intent of Government policy and educational reform, particularly as it pertains to the future of arts and music education in this province, needs to be closely examined. It is necessary to ask what the agenda of the Newfoundland and Labrador Government as it relates to education reform. How will the agenda affect curriculum construction?

## ***Culture***

Newfoundland people are very proud of their culture because of its uniqueness and diversity. Newfoundland culture is very much enhanced and manifested through the arts. In the proposed restructured school system questions arise relating to the value given to music as a validated component of our culture and heritage. In light of the ever-increasing importance placed on music as part of the province's cultural and tourism industry, many would argue music is very valuable. What will happen to our province's music as a result of proposed reform? Will there be a viable music or cultural industry with reduced music and arts education?

Educational inquiry reports such as *Our Children Our Future* (1992) and *Adjusting the Course Part II* (1994) talk about establishing an education system which meets the needs of the students in a constantly changing society. "There is no greater

challenge facing this province than ensuring that our children obtain the skills, knowledge and abilities essential to survival in a fast changing highly competitive world - the challenge is not insurmountable" (*Our Children, Our Future*, 1992, p.xix). In Newfoundland society, changes have placed new demands on virtually all of the province's social institutions. *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) states, "... it is impossible to derive a model for change that can satisfy everyone. Instead it must be founded on the real needs of our children, now and for the coming decades" (p. xvi). Therefore, the report focuses on the importance of courses such as mathematics, science, language arts, and technology as satisfying these needs and demands. Consequently, it is important to examine the role of arts education in this process. How might a further de-emphasis of arts courses in the curriculum affect the ongoing production of our culture?

Heller and Wilson (1982) give two definitions for music education. The first definition deals with the development of skills specific to music. The second definition states that the use of music is a part of the process in acquiring the skill and developing the character necessary for survival in a given culture (as cited in Rose, 1990). "Music is not simply a mirror reflecting cultural systems and networks of belief and tradition but can be a window opening out new possibilities" (as cited in Walker, 1993, p.28).

Rose (1990) suggests that the arts provide an opportunity for social and cultural interaction and an opportunity to produce culture. Moreover, arts education can foster

participation in "art and culture in-the-making." Reimer's (1989) perspective of music education's function in the school is to fulfill societal needs. He states that we are social creatures that need to celebrate rituals that are related to music to help mold us to society.

These aspects of social growth promote an awareness of our culture. In terms of music, Walker (1993) states, "... the culture we grow up in fixes ineluctably the basic rules of what we think music is for the rest of our lives" (p.30). To keep culture alive, productive, and future oriented, everyone must get involved. Culture is produced by the whole people. Everybody is a maker of culture, even the very young. The education system is a proven and viable site for the provision of opportunities and experiences to nurture and develop such cultural production.

### ***Economics***

"The Newfoundland and Labrador economy is clearly in a time of transition . . . an era of tremendous change" (Economic Recovery Commission, 1994, p.1). The old economy was resource based, education was basic, and literacy was desirable. The new economy is knowledge based, where advanced education and literacy are essential. To achieve the new economic transformation goals " . . . will require the concerted effort of everyone - Government, business, academia, communities and individuals to make it happen" (Economic Recovery Commission, 1994, p.33). If these are the constituents

involved in this process, the education system is greatly affected by the province's economic climate.

Economics also plays a significant role in relation to the value of school subjects. For example, the restructuring trend of returning to the basics in today's education system appears to have placed more value on science and technology and less importance on other subject areas such as the arts. *Our Children, Our Future (1992)* states that the commission "... believes that a core curriculum must be established based on the disciplines of language, mathematics, and science, and that high standards of achievement in these studies must become a primary aim of the curriculum" (p. 300). Consequently, it appears as though other programs are being reduced in the curriculum. Moreover, when arts programs are offered at the high school level, they are often competing with other courses, such as science and french, because they are placed in the same time slot. Coupled with this area of concern, there is a growing fear that with the administration of schools moving more toward site-based management, the support and resources for present and future programs will be reduced due to lack of finances. This concern overlaps with some political issues as well as personal value systems. For example, if a principal or vice-principal is supportive of an arts or music program, they will support music with the resources that they have. However, if the school administration is not supportive of the music program, there will be little support given.

The importance of the arts and music industry to our society is usually recognized through the role it plays in the provincial and national economy. In today's society, arts and music professions are major contributors to the very fabric of the province and country. It would be a serious mistake and injustice to the music industry to ignore the economic importance and impact it makes on the provincial and national economy. This impact is evidenced through direct expenditures by the industry for the purchased goods and services from other business sectors, and the creation of employment opportunities for society. In 1985 the arts and culture sector's contribution between 2% and 3% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) outnumbered other industries such as tobacco, clothing, and petroleum.

It is important to recognize the contribution the arts and music industry makes to society because a decrease in arts and music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador school system will lower the quality of potential employees for the industry if students do not receive a quality education in this area of study.

Newfoundland and Labrador is attempting to bring its finances in order through economic and educational reform. Therefore, it is necessary to stay informed on how monies are being allocated. Are any of the school subjects being favored? Music is clearly a major part of all of our lives. Like theater arts and visual art, it is an authorized program and course of study with the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education. "Until music is recognized - from Ministerial level down, as a demonstrated

educational discipline, there seems little likelihood of it gaining respectability as a course in schools" (Comin' to Our Senses, 1980, p.25).

### ***Educational Value***

" No discussion of education can be other than a discussion of values" (Warnock, 1978, p.8). It is important to state what the philosophy, goals, and aims are for a student's education. To investigate why and how the arts and music are valuable, it is necessary to define the rational and philosophies for these programs. In arts programs, such as music, there is much more going on than may meet the eye. There are experiences and opportunities for students to explore music and related subjects, and to express themselves as individual members of society.

As stated in the province's music curriculum guides for primary, elementary, intermediate, and senior high, music aids in the development of the student in many ways. For example, the kindergarten to level III curriculum guides discuss such factors as:

1. heightening the aesthetic experience of every child so that they can fully appreciate the significant contribution that music can make to the individual and ultimately the community
2. develop a desire of self-expression
3. reveal social significance of music in society
4. develop motor skills, accurate coordination, listening, moving, and singing
5. aid students in making decisions based on knowledge.

Cantwell (1995) states, " . . . the subject areas which presently compromise the curriculum will be revised and restructured based upon the perceived value of those

subject areas to the overall education of students" (p.132). The arts do indeed contribute to the overall education of students. It is well documented that if a school has a successful arts program " . . . the life of . . . children when they leave school would be immeasurably and most valuably enriched" (Warnock, 1978, p.17).

## **A Review of Selected Provincial Government Documents**

This section presents a basic overview of the relevant provincial Government documents which have influenced, or are currently influencing, the process of curriculum construction in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

### ***The Student at the Centre: Challenge for Excellence (1990)***

In June of 1988, the Department of Education appointed a School Improvement and Effectiveness Committee. The purpose of the Committee was to examine the issues involved in school improvement and effectiveness and provide guidance to local district personnel. *The Student at the Centre: Challenge for Excellence (1990)* report was " . . . written to develop a rationale for a school improvement initiative as described in the literature, and finally to propose how this information might be utilized to improve our schools and consequently the opportunities for young Newfoundlander's and Labradorians" (*The Student at the Centre: Challenge for Excellence, 1990, p.3*). Therefore, the major task presented to the Committee was to analyze and evaluate the

information described in the literature from the perspective of Newfoundland's and Labrador's own situation.

The report began with the premise that the discrepancy between what schools should be and what they are provides the rationale for continuing school improvement initiatives. The report states that the responsibility for recognizing and meeting educational goals rests with the province's educators. However, "... acknowledging that improvements are necessary does not ensure commitment to beginning an improvement initiative. The question for those who are interested in school improvement becomes one of encouraging or developing a school culture which inspires self examination and continuing concern for individual development and overall school improvement" (p. 8).

In a time of rising public expectations, conflicting attitudes, and changing societal norms the challenge for educators is to "... ensure the education of our youth in an era when the pace of change is accelerating and the need for problem solving skills is increasing" (p. 8). "Hardly a day passes, that we are not reminded of the problems facing the global village" (p. 9). Some of these problems include environmental concerns, health concerns, health issues, international relations, food shortages, and economic disparity. In addition to these problems there are also those at a local level which must be considered and dealt with. We must strive to provide our youth with the educational resources necessary to manage problems on a global scale.

“On the national and provincial level we share the social changes common to western countries” (p. 9). Some examples of these social changes include declining birthrates, increasing divorce rates, and increasing numbers of both dual income and single parent families. These social changes present profound implications for the province’s school system. In light of these issues, the school system must ensure that it provides “. . . programs to meet the development needs of that wider spectrum of students whose educational rights are the school’s mandate” (p.9).

“In recent years Canada has begun to undergo the fundamental change from being primarily a resource-based economy to being an information and service-based economy” (p. 9). One trend which has emerged from labour market studies is the increased demand for highly educated skilled workers at the upper end of the pay scale and increased demand for lower skilled workers in the low pay service sectors. As a result, the middle class appears to be shrinking. Numerous studies in Newfoundland have outlined the importance of a well-educated work force in an expanded and diversified provincial economic who are “. . . capable of initiating necessary change rather than yielding to circumstances. It is increasingly obvious that individuals and nations desiring to compete and prosper in the twenty-first century will need the maximum educational advantage they can attain. This realization by the general public and politicians can lead only to increasing demands for educational excellence and accountability” (p. 10).

The demand for accountability in the education field has gained momentum in the 1980's and will continue to increase into the future. As a result, Governments have gained an interest in output measures such as retention rates, graduation rates, levels of student achievement and employability of graduates.

The report states that in recent decades our education programs have improved beyond expectation, but some of “ . . . our most significant indicators of educational effectiveness still point to the need for school improvement” (p. 11). Some of these indicators include student retention and graduation rates remaining below an acceptable level, the achievement level of students, as well as their rates of participation in post secondary education are less than satisfactory, and a continuing discrepancy between the achievement levels of urban and rural students in the province.

The report states that a school improvement initiative should not focus solely on enhancing academic achievement but should also focus on a continual transmission of personal, spiritual, and cultural values, values which have enriched the lives of Newfoundlanders for many years. Therefore, “ . . . the challenge before educators is to maintain these positive features while ensuring incremental improvements which meet changing circumstances and student needs” (p.12). However, we must remember that the fundamental responsibility of Newfoundland schools is,

. . . to provide students with the education which will ensure that they have personal options and the wisdom to make rational choices. Our changing society is such that Newfoundland students, more than ever, must assess their

progress relative to that of other Canadians and other nations of the world. An ongoing commitment to school improvement will help to ensure that our students can compete with the best (p. 12).

As responsible and committed educators the report states that we must be aware of social, economic and global problems and realize that change is within the grasp of our province's educators.

The report states that in order for programs to be successful they must be initiated, supported and monitored by the Department of Education, the Minister of Education, and school district administrative bodies. It must be recognized that change is a process which is carried out over a period of time. All initiatives cannot be effectively implemented at once.

. . . There is no single plan, model, scheme, or formula which will ensure that each and every school initiates and creates a successful school improvement program. Schools are unique in both their strengths and weaknesses. The solution to this problem of diversity is to ensure that schools are provided with a framework for improvement which is flexible enough to encourage the initiative cooperation of administrators and teachers and to also respond to the needs and aspirations of students (p. 48).

The philosophical base for school improvement presented in this report is based on the idea that education is a part of a society which is experiencing change at rapid speed. Schools have to live with and adjust to change while recognizing that in the midst of

change some constants still remain. Policies and procedures should be based on some fundamental principles, they include:

1. The school is a place of integral formation: physical, intellectual, social, moral, emotional, aesthetic, and spiritual;
2. The uniqueness, freedom, dignity, rights and worth of each individual person must be respected;
3. The ends-means question underlies educational theory and practice - the ends, that is, the purposes for which the school exists, or the aims of education, and the means to accomplish these ends.

(p. 48)

The report states, “. . . school improvement initiatives are not a top down, or bottom up exercise but form a shared responsibility which requires a shared response. School improvement results from the recognition, acceptance, and ongoing development of four essential characteristics” (p. 50). These characteristics include credibility, commitment, competence, and confidence.

“The school improvement process is not an instant solution for all the difficulties in schools. It does provide a mechanism which if used positively and effectively can lead to dramatic improvements in school programs, teacher morale and ultimately student achievement” (p. 61). The report states that the educational personnel involved with the school improvement process must receive adequate time, personal and technical support, and the encouragement to undertake the tasks required to improve conditions for students.

“The task of educators in Newfoundland and Labrador, as elsewhere, is the development of schools, which accomplish their aims more effectively. A systematic school improvement initiative can enhance this development” (p. 63). The report states

that the Committee is “. . . advocating the creation of schools which are more effective in meeting the needs of our students and fulfilling the fundamental Aims of Education of Newfoundland and Labrador” (p. 64).

The report discusses the belief that “. . . teachers and administrators share a desire to offer the best possible program for their students” (p. 83). The report states that the element which has been missing to make this endeavor a reality is the formal mechanism to address staff problems at the school level. In an attempt to deal with this problem, the Committee has suggested this cooperative initiative for school improvement. “The Challenge for Excellence School Improvement Program offers a methodology for facilitating change by building on strengths and minimizing weaknesses at the individual school level” (p. 83).

The Committee reports that the intention of the Challenge for Excellence School Improvement Program is,

. . . to provide school districts and individual schools with expertise and strategies to facilitate change and improve education services to their students. School districts have particular responsibilities with regard to continuing staff development and overall school improvement. This cooperative program will assist district personnel in meeting these responsibilities; but only if the participants involved understand their particular roles and commit themselves to the objectives (p. 65).

The Committee's report concludes stating that the objective of those involved in the delivery of education in Newfoundland and Labrador should be a desire for excellence in all aspects of the school program. "Our students deserve no less" (p. 84).

### ***Our Children, Our Future (1992)***

The Royal Commission on Education was appointed in August 1990 by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Commission was instructed to report by March of 1992 on the delivery of programs and services in Primary, Elementary, and Secondary Education. Many individuals contributed to the Commission through written submissions, public hearings, and research. The final result of the Commissions work was *Our Children, Our Future (1992)*.

The report is extensive and detailed in its investigation into the delivery of programs and services in our province's school system and the recommendations they suggest as part of the reform process. It discusses very important points concerning the development of the child and the education they deserve and need. Consequently, the school and its curriculum are at the center of this investigation.

The Commissions' report states that the school is "... expected to attend to the full development of the whole child - cognitively, physically, morally, spiritually, socially, and emotionally" (*Our Children, Our Future, 1992, p.215*). The Commission discusses that there are two objectives which must always be fundamental to schooling. First,

students must be taught the basic skills of numeracy and literacy which are required for citizenship as well as survival in a technological age. These skills are “ . . . the foundation of learning because they are required for an individual to function adequately in everyday life” (p. 216). The report states the skills of numeracy and literacy are the pre-requisites for disciplined thinking, appreciation of literature and culture, the understanding of science and mathematics, and the mastery of other languages.

The second objective is to initiate students into the major forms of human knowledge. The knowledge is important because “ . . . [it] is necessary for developing the mind, for understanding and for creativity. It emphasizes content and process, knowing both what and how” (p. 216). The forms are important because they show what has been created, what we have discovered about ourselves and the world, and how we have done so. *Our Children, Our Future (1992)* states that as well as focusing on these two objectives it is important that the school “ . . . also teach students how to interact with other students, help them think critically, expose them to a variety of viewpoints and instill in them a core of common values” (p. 216).

Given the required nature of these basic needs, the Commission holds four principles which they consider to be necessary to guiding schooling. These principles are:

1. All children are entitled to a curriculum rich and varied, challenging and inspiring, which enables them to reach the highest possible level of fulfillment, so that all, for the benefit of all, are able to shape their own destinies and create a better world;
2. All children, to the best of their ability, should be able to master the basic knowledge and skills necessary for independent living: literacy and numeracy, the development of

aesthetic sensibilities, and an understanding and appreciation of their cultural and religious heritage;

3. At the end of schooling, all children should be able to make rational choices, within the framework of accepted values and traditions of the culture, about the way they should live their lives;

4. At the end of schooling, all children should be prepared to assume personal responsibility, to become enterprising individuals, knowledge of their own strengths and confident of their abilities to participate in all the aspects of society which interest them.

(p. 216)

The Commission report states that many of the groups they have done research with “ . . . complain that schools are not producing the type of student who is prepared for the realities of modern life” (p. 273). Studies have revealed that the business sector would like to see education redirect its priorities to meet an economic agenda. “Economists suggest that the chief economic challenge facing Canada and other industrialized countries are to develop a value system which makes us better prepared for, and more competitive in, the workplace and global markets” (p. 273).

The Commission states that the focus should be on the development of effective learning processes which will enable the province’s students to adapt to the rapidly changing environments in society after they leave the school setting. Therefore, the new learning paradigm is shifting the focus “ . . . from the teacher to the learner, from the narrowly confined classroom walls to the world at large, higher order cognitive skills become increasingly important” (p. 274). The educational paradigms of the future are concentrating on a student’s ability to think critically, to uncover bias, to reason and question, and to remain intellectually flexible. Hence, the report recommends that the aim

for today's education system is to try and support a culture and environment more conducive to the promotion of student motivation, academic success, and the achievement of excellence.

Society is now placing an emphasis on economics, technology, and politics which are in turn placing an emphasis on subjects such as science, mathematics, and second language courses. It is imperative that the education system recognize these demands and re-evaluate the structure that is currently in place. Therefore, school curriculum is at the center of the Commission's reform efforts because "... of all the components, of the education system, the curriculum affects students most directly. The curriculum is fundamental to the knowledge they acquire to develop new skills" (p. 295). Curriculum content is vital to the education system because it is a means of reinforcing "...social values, stimulates new thinking, prepares students to become participants in society, and helps them gain a critical awareness of their heritage, traditions, and environment" (p.295). Moreover, the curriculum is a means for students to know about various disciplines, to become effective communicators, and to acquire the skills they may need to meet the challenges and to cope with today's society. Throughout the entire public consultation process the Commission found that the education system needs to put more emphasis and focus on attaining more acceptable skills in literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, and scientific thinking.

The Commission recommends that a relevant curriculum should accommodate all students regardless of their differences “ . . . even if they have significant differences in their needs and interests, aptitudes, learning styles, learning rates, attitudes toward different disciplines, personal goals and aspirations” (p. 295). Because of different opinions and demands for what a relevant curriculum should be, the Commission saw it necessary to set down its own conclusions in the form of assumptions about an acceptable curriculum. Each assumption helped to guide the inquiry and its final recommendations. The assumptions were the result of the information the Commission gathered during public hearings, extensive interviews, and researching the most recent literature on the subject. The four assumptions are:

***1. Curriculum must be responsive to all children.***

The curriculum must be prescribed in such a way that it can fit varying cognitive needs and abilities, and the cultural and social differences of all children.

***2. The curriculum must have an academic focus.***

While there are many groups in society which take on responsibilities associated with the welfare of children, only schools should have a mandate to provide academic instruction. Non academic courses have a role in the school system, such as maintaining student interest or providing essential life skills but all students should be able to obtain a high quality academic education which will enable them to pursue other educational and job-related interests after graduation.

***3. Some courses are more important than others.***

All courses in the curriculum have value, but those in certain areas such as language, mathematics, and science are essential to further advancement and therefore must take precedence over others. All students in the province should have access to these core courses, and more time should be allocated to these subject areas than to others.

***4. Responsibility for ensuring that curriculum goals are achieved must rest with the Department of Education.***

To ensure that a high standard of education is available in all areas of the province, the Department of Education must define core curriculum, set program and learning goals

and objectives, and be helpful, but not prescriptive, in proposing effective strategies for implementing the curriculum. To ensure the highest quality curriculum content, the best and most creative ideas, and the most effective use of scarce resources, quality control must be maintained at the provincial level. However, provision should be made for school boards to develop alternative programs. The provision of appropriate curriculum guides and resources is crucial to maintaining a high level of quality in this process.

(pp. 298-299)

The Commission believes that a core curriculum based on subject areas such as language, mathematics, and science must be established because the province's school system is designed for academic education. High standards of achievement must be the primary aim of this curriculum. The Commission feels that labeling these courses as core areas of discipline is to imply that they are fundamental to the success in other subject areas. As a result, these areas of study should receive the largest instructional time allocation, and evaluation in these areas should constitute an indicator of the student, the school, and the systems performance. The report states that other courses should remain mandatory but that instruction in these academic and core subject areas should not be compromised.

The challenge in this reform is to establish a workable balance between the structure of schooling and the needs of the students. In the workplace it is vital to know how to think abstractly, conceptualize and solve problems, analyze and utilize information, and think critically. Thus, the Commission concluded that "... now more than ever the emphasis of education must be on acquiring process skills ... in other words it is essential that children learn how to think and how to learn" (p.301).

The Commission identifies one problem with the curriculum in our school system as the lack of continuity within subjects and the lack of connection made between subjects. The Commission suggests that the solution to avoiding repetition and ensuring more effective teaching is to have a wider view of knowledge across all subjects.

The Commission suggests that the new model for the process of curriculum development, revision and implementation should be a “ . . . collaborative responsibility involving the Department of Education, school boards and schools, and where circumstances warrant, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers’ Association, the Faculty of Education and other faculties of Memorial University” (p.301). This model of shared responsibility is needed because the Commission states that the three stages are inherently connected. In this proposed model “ . . . the curriculum would focus on and respond to provincial goals and objectives yet be more flexible and responsive to local needs and opportunities” (p.302).

The report has three sections which are specific in delineating the responsibilities of the Department of Education, the school boards, and schools under the new model of curriculum development and implementation. The three sections are:

### **The role of the Department of Education**

- 1. Establish the Vision** - the Department should maintain close links with outside agencies to ensure relevancy and high quality curriculum.
- 2. Oversee the Development of New Curriculum** - After consultation with other levels of the school system the Department would oversee the development process which should include: (1) needs assessment, (2) consultation, (3) development, (4) validation, (5) field testing, (6) revision, if necessary, and (7) authorization.

- 3. Set General Level and Program Goals** - The Department of Education would set learning goals for each learning level and long-term program goals for each subject area.
- 4. Set Specific Grade and Subject Objectives and Achievement Standards** - the Department of Education would set specific learning objectives for each grade and subject area for each grade and also establish the appropriate achievement standards for the transition to the next grade or level.
- 5. Develop Evaluation Guidelines**
- 6. Recommend Multiple Learning Resources**
- 7. Publish the Curricula Guides**

(pp. 302-303)

### **The Role of the School Boards**

- 1. Develop District Learning Objectives** - School boards would review and interpret the provincial goals and learning objectives in collaboration with schools and school councils.
- 2. Implement Curricula** - In association with this, the school boards would also be responsible to develop appropriate in-service training for new and revised programs and provide ongoing staff development and support.
- 3. Monitor Curricula** - In collaboration with the schools, the review process would include (1) reviewing the provincial and district learning objectives, (2) reviewing curriculum content, (3) reviewing program strengths and weaknesses, and (4) should recommend changes. The Commission states that “. . . in most cases, no changes, or minor changes only, would be required” (p. 306).
- 4. Update Curricula** - Any changes would be communicated to teachers and the Department of Education as to ensure consistency with provincial objectives.

(p. 306)

### **The Role of the School**

The Commission does not have a detailed list for the role of the school as with the Department of Education or the School Boards, however, it does state that “. . . in addition to contributing to curriculum development at the provincial level, principals and teachers, in consultation with board personnel, have the responsibility for translating

provincial and district learning objectives into practical learning experiences in the classroom” (p.307).

The Commission reports that each of the stages of the curriculum have specific responsibilities to the student and their education. For the primary level education (kindergarten, grades one, two, and three), the Department of Education subscribes to a philosophy of a child centred, activity-based primary education. The Commission has seven specific recommendations for this level of education. Examples of these include:

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Recommendation 108</b> | that Kindergarten children be provided a full day of schooling.   |
| <b>Recommendation 109</b> | that a minimum of 50% of the instruction at the primary level be spent in the general areas of language, mathematics, and science, and that these times be carefully monitored and enforced by schools and school boards. |
| <b>Recommendation 110</b> | that school boards consider the employment of an instructional specialist for the primary level.  |

(p. 310)

Elementary level education has an expanded curriculum from the child-centred approach to one in which different teaching practices and strategies are required because the curriculum content begins to assume greater importance. The Commission states, “. . . elementary school children have wide interests, are eager for information, and enjoy learning. It is at this stage that they acquire a strong foundation in basic school subjects

and begin their initiation into the world of adult reasoning, concepts, communication, and symbolism; they start to master tasks requiring purpose and endeavor” (p.310).

The report suggests that children in the elementary grades need a broad curriculum to satisfy their interests and enthusiasm for learning. However, the emphasis of the curriculum must remain to be on building a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy skills. The general approach to the curriculum and learning should emphasize the elementary school child as a thinking, doing, and feeling learner.

The Commission Report made five specific recommendations for the elementary level education, examples of some of these include:

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Recommendation 114</b> | that all curriculum components and activities be structured in a way which provides opportunities to reinforce and enhance learning in the areas of language, mathematics, and science.   |
| <b>Recommendation 115</b> | that, at the elementary level, a minimum of 50% of the instructional time be spent in the general areas of language, mathematics, and science, and that these times be carefully monitored and enforced by schools and school boards. |
- (p. 311)

The junior high level education (grades seven, eight, and nine) is one of the most difficult and challenging times for the student. The Commission states that many problems, which have their roots from the primary and elementary level, tend to surface at the junior high level. One of these problems includes students falling too far behind in their work to be able to cope with the junior high curriculum. Consequently, “. . . it was

suggested to the Commission that many problems which appear in this age group could be addressed by a heavier concentration on academic material in earlier grades, detecting problems early, and providing effective remedial services which would involve parents wherever possible” (p. 312).

In 1986, the Department of Education set up a committee to clarify the role of the junior school program and to establish the educational needs of the junior high student. Their concluding report highlighted that when considering educational planning it is important to also consider the developmental characteristics of the adolescent. Moreover, the report stressed that it is necessary to provide a wide range of educational experiences which would help students select courses when they reached high school. However, the Commission states that,

... while opportunities to take optional courses are desirable, at the junior high level the emphasis must continue to be on language, mathematics and science. One of the goals at this level is to prepare students for success in senior high school, and the Commission believes this can best be achieved by increased attention to these core areas, as well as by recognizing the developmental characteristics of adolescents, and by encouraging students to explore personal interests and new categories of knowledge and skills (p.312).

The Commission makes seven specific recommendations for the junior high level of education. Examples of these include the following:

- Recommendation 119**                      that a core curriculum be identified that is based on the developmental needs of young adolescents and provides continuity with the curriculum of the elementary and senior high years.
- Recommendation 120**                      that school boards give consideration to the employment of an instructional specialist for junior high school level education.
- Recommendation 123**                      that school boards, in their hiring practices at this level, give preference to those who have undertaken programs and/or in-service training appropriate to junior high teaching.
- (pp. 313-314)

The senior high level education (grades 10, 11, and 12 or Levels I, II, III, and IV) was reorganized in 1981 and the third year of high school, grade 12 or Level III, was added. "The revised program was characterized by a broad scope of curriculum offerings, including a wider choice of non academic courses so that students with varying abilities could choose courses in which they might succeed" (p.314). This new program helped to keep students in school who would have normally dropped out of the old, more difficult, one. However, the Commission states, ". . . this increase in student retention has occurred at the expense of a rigorous and solid academic program" (p.314).

When the current reorganization began, there was a call to review the high school program. Examples of some of the criticisms which were brought to the attention of the Commission concerning the redesigned and reorganized high school program of 1981 include the following:

1. The content of the academic program was not increased, but merely redistributed over a three-year period instead of two.
2. High school courses do not adequately prepare students, even those who take the most difficult offerings, to succeed in post secondary institutions.
3. The curriculum is crowded. Students' schedules are filled with too many one-credit courses and non academic options in addition to academic core courses. As a result, students have difficulty focusing on what is most important.
4. Not enough class periods are mandated for academic courses.

(p. 314)

The Commission continues stating that a number of these criticisms and concerns have been taken into consideration and addressed in the graduation requirements. The Commission suggests that “. . . these recent changes should result in significant improvements in the core programs, recognize the link between education and business, reflect the significance of mathematics and science to a technological age, and make greater provision for students with special learning needs and those with exceptional talents and abilities” (p.314).

In addressing the reorganization of the senior high level education, the Commission also recognizes that programming between rural and urban high schools is quite pronounced. Consequently, “the Commission believes that the full range of implications of the prescribed program must be fully understood and addressed in order to maximize opportunities for all students” (p.315).

The Commission states that an evaluation of the high school program is beyond the scope of this Royal Commission but does, however, make two important recommendations. These recommendations include:

**Recommendation 124**

that the Department of Education in consultation with school boards and post secondary institutions, evaluate all aspects of the senior high program with a view to ensuring that program goals are clearly defined, courses are logically sequenced, and the program is rigorous and challenging in all years.

**Recommendation 125**

that, while some choice in course selection is beneficial, students are guided toward a program which is as academic and rigorous as they are capable of handling.

(p.315)

The Commission discovered that when students lack purpose to their studies they also lack commitment. If employment opportunities in the province continue to be low, than students may see this as a reason not to be committed to their school work. Consequently, the education system must continue to offer a broad curriculum to our students. Moreover, “. . .the broader curriculum during the last decade has had a very positive effect on reducing the number of dropouts” (p. 328). Society as a whole must take whatever measures it can to provide equal access to education for all students in our province. There are diverse needs from the different groups of students, therefore, it is important that all learners be served as equally as possible. “The education system must accept responsibility for educating all students to the limit of their capabilities, and if these exceptionalities are not recognized, acknowledged, and addressed, the risk of leaving a large group of students unserved is very high” (p. 349).

The Commission states that when recognizing that all children have an equal right to education, to enable them to participate fully in society, a means must be found to make this possible. The report concludes that, “. . . if we are serious about achieving excellence in our schools, the conditions necessary for success must be met. If they are not, we will not have an equitable responsive education system, but rather a continued high dropout rate contributing to unemployment, welfare dependency, and increased demands on service agencies” (p.336).

### ***Adjusting the Course Part I (1994) and Part II (1994)***

*Adjusting the Course Part I (1994) and Part II (1994)* are the first reports produced by the team established to implement the Royal Commissions recommendations from the inquiry report investigating the delivery of programs and services entitled *Our Children, Our Future (1992)*. “Together they were intended to set the agenda for action to improve the performance of the education system” (*Adjusting the Course Part I*, 1994, p. iii). The main objective of the reform efforts is to transform our society in Newfoundland and Labrador from one of underachievement to one whose achievement ranks with the best in Canada. *Adjusting the Course Part I (1994)* states that this main objective is centered around the belief that educational achievement is within our capacity as a society and province to change and that high levels of educational achievement are essential to the social and economic well-being of the province. The reports state that

both of these documents do not cover all the areas of reform and restructuring in which change is considered. The Royal Commission recommended further study in various areas which have more complex problems. Hence, the draft documents such as *Learning For All: A Foundation Report (1996)*; *The Primary/Elementary Levels Handbook (1996)*; and *The Intermediate Level Handbook (1996)* have evolved and more reports are to follow in the coming years to further address other issues which were raised from *Our Children, Our Future (1992)*.

### ***Adjusting the Course Part I (1994)***

*Adjusting the Course Part I* was first issued in November 1993. It was revised and re-issued in February of 1994. This report focuses on the Governments plans for changing the structure of education. The document states that structural change is not all that is necessary for reform but it is one necessary area which must be addressed. "The purpose of the restructuring is to streamline and refocus the system so as to better concentrate on the goal of higher achievement for our students" (*Adjusting the Course Part I, 1994*, p. iii).

The report states that the people of our province have always placed a high value on education because we have always believed in a better future for our children. The economic and social conditions of our province have been rapidly changing in recent years. This, in turn, has placed an emphasis on improved education in order to remain

competitive and self supporting in today's society. The report recognizes that the education system in the province has not been performing on par at a national level. Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest illiteracy rate in Canada, despite the many changes which have already been implemented in the province's education system.

Over the past years, society and the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador have developed on a denominational basis. Traditionally, the churches of our province have had the right to operate their own schools under denominational school boards with public funding. This right had been protected in the Constitution of Canada, a term of agreement which was part of the Newfoundland and Labrador confederation deal with Canada. Through research and public consultation, "... the people of the province wish to retain the teaching of religious values within the education system, and continue to support some form of Church involvement in the schools" (p.2). They have also clearly stated, however, that major changes have to be made in the way in which education is governed and organized.

As a result of this concern, many models have been developed and presented. *Adjusting the Course Part I (1994)* presented a model which emphasizes the organization of the education system at three levels. They are the province, the school district, and the school. This model has been designed with various principles in mind. Examples of some of these principles include providing a basis for higher expectations, standards and

achievement, to provide a greater accountability to the public, and to keep the number of decision-making and administrative entities to a minimum.

The model for governance of the Newfoundland and Labrador school system presented in this report has attempted to stay “ . . . consistent with the basic need for reform, while being sensitive to the wish of the people of the province to retain some Church involvement in the system. The model has incorporated elements of both the Royal Commission Model and a model recently presented by the Churches” (p.20). It is important to define this model because of the role our education system plays on the economic and social well-being of the province. “Attaining higher levels of educational achievement must be an essential part of any strategy for improving the quality of life in our society” (p. 20).

The document recognizes that not all the needed changes can be addressed through a governance model. It states that governance and structures only set the stage for substantive change. This report suggests that the first step in bringing about any of this change is to streamline the basic governing structures. “Making a new start at the highest levels of administration can help ensure that the system is invigorated and that new priorities can be conveyed and implemented” (p.20).

*Adjusting the Course Part I (1994)* states that those concerned with education, our children and parents, supported by teachers, school boards, churches, and Government are urged and must come together in a united and concerted effort to chart a new course for

education and achieve the stated goals of the reformed system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### ***Adjusting the Course Part II***

*Adjusting the Course, Part II* was issued in February 1994. The purpose of *Adjusting the Course Part II* was to outline the substantive changes which are intended to follow the restructuring. “The goal of all of these changes is to bring about a substantial improvement in the quality of education provided to students, and to increase our current low student achievement to a level which ranks with the best in Canada” (*Adjusting the Course, Part II, 1994*, p. I). This stated goal is based on the belief that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want to face the challenge of improving student performance because high levels of education are essential to economic and social well-being of our province.

*Adjusting the Course Part II (1994)* states that our public education system in Newfoundland and Labrador mainly exists “ . . . to prepare students for their future role as contributing members of society. This requires, in turn, preparation for further education, citizenship, and work. In today’s rapidly changing society, students must also be prepared for lifelong learning” (p.1). It is necessary to prepare our students because many young people today do not have stable careers. The average worker today may change jobs many times throughout their life. The report states that the focus of the reform is to concentrate on students’ basic intellectual capabilities which will allow them to adapt to

change. A clear statement is being made by schools as to what their goal is by emphasizing an improvement on achievement. "By emphasizing achievement a clear statement is being made that the primary function of the schools is intellectual development" (p. 2).

The report states that the most effective way to develop these attributes is through emphasizing the core areas of language, mathematics, and science. "These provide the foundations which make it possible to study society, values, and aesthetics which, in turn, give the breadth necessary for full intellectual development" (p. 2). The school's education program must also involve dealing with personal attributes and affective outcomes such as " . . . self esteem, ability to live and work independently and in cooperation with others, respect for those of different race, religion, gender, or ethnic origin, and development of ethical moral values" (p.2). In attaining these stated goals the effort must begin with the student, which in turn must be reinforced by teachers. "Schools must provide the necessary facilities, staff capabilities, and structures for learning. Government must establish the expectations and standards, see that these are met, develop curriculum, and provide the resources. Finally, the public at large, including business, service agencies, and individuals, must promote and reinforce the goals wherever possible" (p. 3).

Students come to school at different levels of readiness, therefore, the school must be an inclusive environment in which provisions are made for all students. "A major

challenge for schools is to provide for students who are exceptional in various ways and who, for whatever reasons, cannot function well under normal teaching conditions” (p. 3).

*Adjusting the Course Part II (1994)* has been based on many principles which are seen as ensuring the development of a more effective education system. There are twelve principles of reform. Samples of these include:

- High expectations and standards must be set for student achievement, and the means provided so that these can be met
- Students must become more active in their own learning through increased time, effort, and perseverance.
- The curriculum must become more highly focused on the essential intellectual skills and capabilities which form the foundation for all other educational outcomes.
- At least 50% of the school program must be devoted to the primary core areas of language, mathematics, and science technology.
- An accountability system must be established to permit monitoring of student and system performance.

(pp.8-9)

In the education process, the idea that children be educated to a specified set of standards arises. Consequently, the standard for a student's ability should be based around what is judged to be capable for a student to learn. *Adjusting the Course Part II (1994)* proposes two things. The first is that all children, except those with specific disabilities, be able to meet the set out standards. The second is that the school system should be designed, as far as possible, to compensate for differences in ability.

“The underlying assumption that educational achievement is closely linked to effort implies that time is an important element in achievement” (p. 12). Consequently, time has become one of the most important issues linked to achievement. “Time is also more easily

influenced than certain other variables by policy directions, professional judgements, and individual decisions. This makes time one of the most powerful tools at our disposal in attempting to improve student achievement” (p. 12).

Coupled with time allocations, effort also plays a key role in the learning process. Although it is difficult to define effort, *Adjusting the Course Part II (1994)* states that ultimately it is effort rather than just time that contributes to learning. Learning not only takes a physical presence but a mental one. The conceptions of time, effort, and perseverance combine to suggest that all students should be able to achieve high levels if sufficient time is available and the sufficient effort exerted. The report recognizes that not all problems of achievement can be solved through a time/effort model but it can establish high expectations and standards for achievement.

Another area of reform which goes hand in hand with achievement is the curriculum. The document states that curriculum is “. . . the vehicle through which the desired outcomes of schooling are conveyed. The curriculum represents the required body of knowledge, skill, and understanding which students are expected to acquire during their school years” (p. 15). There is a close relationship between standards and school curriculum. Consequently, the report states that it is important to look at the two origins of a curriculum.

The first origin of curriculum is political. Society has general expectations that are expressed in a variety of formal and informal ways. It is from these expectations that a curriculum is influenced. *Adjusting the Course Part II (1994)* sites the example that the

current emphasis on increasing standards in the school system is born out of many complaints and reports which suggest that the education system has not been doing an acceptable job of preparing today's students for the new economy present in society. The second origin of curriculum is that curriculum develops from a more professional source of research and policy documents. The report sites the example of the mathematics and science reform movement of the 1950's and the 1960's. This reform resulted in many specific curriculum documents which went on to influence the curriculum for more than two decades.

Curriculum is conceptualized based on universal knowledge, local economy, and culture. There is a problem with this idea. "The potential common core is so broad that any attempt to include all possible areas would place an impossible burden in the schools" (p.17). The report states that there is little dispute over the importance of language, mathematics, and science. There is, however, a less common agreement on subjects such as second language studies, social studies, music, religion, and a variety of others. Moreover, the document states that the ability of a school to offer and handle some of these areas varies. Consequently, *Adjusting the Course Part II (1994)* suggests that curriculum should be thought of as having three components. These three components are labeled primary core, secondary core, and non-core.

The report states, "... ultimately, the impact of any attempt to reform education must be measured by the effects on students. Unfortunately, there is a great distance from broad policy statements such as those presented here to the individual student in the

school” (p.33). With the appropriate climate, structure, and necessary invested time and effort, the school can become a successful source of accomplishment for students. The important factor is that a consistent message of the importance of time and effort from students be reinforced and emphasized to students from the very beginning of their school days.

### ***Learning for All: The Foundation Report (1996)***

*Learning For All: The Foundation Program Report* is a draft document which was published in April of 1996. It was developed through the contribution of many individuals which include the Director of Program Development with the Department of Education and Training, the Curriculum Projects Coordinator, Royal Commission Implementation Secretariat Department of Education and Training, The Associate Deputy Minister, Royal Commission Implementation Secretariat of Department of Education and Training, various Education Consultants with the Department of Education, the Dean of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Program Coordinators and Assistant Superintendents from various boards across the Province, a representative from Cabot College in St. John’s, and various teachers from across the province.

The Document is supported by the Department of Education and is intended to be used by the schools around the province in the delivery of the curriculum. The report outlines the beliefs and the programs that form the basis for the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador. This document is based on some of the actions,

recommendations, and philosophical positions of *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) and *Adjusting the Course Parts I and II* (1994). It states that, “. . . the mission of public education In Newfoundland and Labrador is to enable and encourage every individual to acquire, through lifelong learning, the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for personal growth and the development of society” (*Learning For All: The Foundation Program Report, 1996*, p.1).

The proposed program is one that is common for all students in the province and can be delivered regardless of the different educational settings in Newfoundland and Labrador. *Learning For All* (1996) states that the students of our province require an education that will enable them to become contributing members and participants in society. Expectations must be set to challenge students to a high level of performance. Consequently, these expectations must be clearly stated by all of the levels of authority and stakeholders in the education process.

*Learning For All* (1996) states that society dictates what the truly educated person is by the beliefs that are “. . . held about the human person, the goal of life, the nature of learning, and the relationship of the individual to society” (p.3). The document states that society believes:

- that learning is a lifelong process which involves developing values as well as knowledge and skills
- that learning is an active process that includes asking questions and making connections
- that education exists to enable the learner to attain the highest possible level of performance

(p.3)

Therefore, the role of the school is to respond to and develop the intellectual capacity of the learner. The document states that each discipline in the school system contributes to the intellectual development of all learners. The programs and learning outcomes provide a structure “ . . . to develop intellectual skills of inquiry, inference, reflection, critical and creative thinking, decision-making, analysis and evaluation” (p.3).

The appropriate context and setting to develop students intellectually is the curriculum. “A broad, balanced curriculum allows students to acquire and apply a range of knowledge, to develop and use practical and academic skills, and to value and demonstrate appreciation for the fundamental tenets, expressions and practices of society” (p.3). *Learning For All (1996)* suggests that coupled with the curriculum, the school must also ensure that it does two things. They are to promote a favorable climate for learning through their policies, procedures, and actions, and to address and nurture the physical, emotional, social, spiritual and moral dimensions of learners.

The report states that in order for the school to be successful it must engage in this integrated approach and secure the support of the community. The educated person is considered to be “ . . . one who is equipped to respond appropriately to the intellectual, social, aesthetic, emotional, moral, spiritual, and physical dimensions of life, such that he or she is enabled and motivated . . .” (p.4). The challenge for the province’s education system is to maintain a balance between competing emphasis which exists in the present school system.

“The Foundation Program is the set of planned school experiences in which all students participate to develop the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of a high school graduate in this province” (p.11). The program defines what policy makers expect the school system to impart on the province’s students. In order for the school system to be successful at this task, *Learning For All: The Foundation Report (1996)* identifies the importance of required monitoring, revision, and updating of school programs in today’s society. The document states that because of today’s information explosion and technological developments there must be an increased emphasis on accountability.

Time allocations are a key factor in the planning of curriculum delivery. They are important to curriculum delivery because firstly, student achievement will flow from a combination of discrete and connected teaching/learning experiences. Secondly, students need exposure to the multiple ways of seeing the world that a variety of disciplines can provide. As a result, it is essential that at the four levels of schooling, disciplines be dealt with in the following manner. The primary and elementary levels should be exposed to and have a full understanding of all disciplines in the school setting. At the intermediate level all subject areas should be made available with limited discretion. At the high school level opportunities should be offered to appeal to personal interests but more importantly to meet graduation requirements and post secondary entrance requirements.

As well as considering time allocations, the report states that it is essential to have a set of outcomes at all levels of schooling. These outcomes act as a set of goals and well

defined standards for student achievement. They also make the goals of a specific discipline absolutely clear. *Learning For All: The Foundation Program Report (1996)* states that the student should be able to demonstrate these outcomes at his or her level of schooling.

To ensure that the programs and courses offered in the province's education system are focused on their task, each curriculum area is analyzed in terms of " . . . the degree to which it contributes to the achievement of the Essential Graduation Learnings. Curriculum content found to not contribute to the Essential Graduation Learnings, will be eliminated" (p.19). The report goes on to state that any future curriculum development taking place will also occur within the guidelines of the Essential Graduation Learnings. The document states that the expectations for the students in Newfoundland and Labrador are defined using the following structure:

### ***1. Essential Graduation Learnings (EGL)***

The Essential Graduation Learnings are the highest and most general level of outcomes. They " . . . are the critical underpinnings for learning in all school subjects" (p. 20). The Learnings depend on diverse subject disciplines for their content and can be developed and assessed through many subject areas. It is important to note that the Essential Graduation Learnings are considered cross-curricular in nature so therefore teachers in all subject areas must be responsible.

(p. 20)

### ***2. General Curriculum Outcomes (GCO)***

The General Curriculum Outcomes are more detailed and appear in all curriculum documents. They " . . . articulate in broad terms what students are expected to know and be able to do in particular subject areas [and] they describe the contribution of a curriculum area to the Essential Graduation Learnings" (p. 28). The report states that through the General Curriculum Outcomes students will achieve the Essential Graduation Outcomes.

(p. 28)

### **3. *Key Stage Curriculum Outcomes***

These outcomes “ . . . identify what students are expected to know, value, and be able to do in a particular curriculum area . . . ” (p.28). Key Stage Curriculum Outcomes apply to the four key stages of schooling as identified as grades three, six, nine, and Level III.

(p. 28)

### **4. *Specific Curriculum Outcomes (SCO)***

These are the most precise level of outcomes. “They will be included in the curriculum guides for each course and each year of study” (p. 28).

For the purpose of this report, the Foundation Program Committee defines a curriculum as follows. “Curriculum consists of planned programs, resources, environments, and instructional and learning experiences necessary for the ultimate attainment of the graduation learnings” (p. 36). The report states that the curriculum is organized in such a fashion that the potential knowledge, skills and attitudes available will foster growth and development into the programs of study. Programs such as mathematics and music, for example, are organized on the basis of the kindergarten to grade 12 delivery model. The document suggests that the curriculum must:

1. Reflect the knowledge, skill’s attitudes, behaviors, and values of most importance to the individual and society;
2. Promote and support the intellectual, emotional, physical, aesthetic, social, ethical, and spiritual development of all students and contribute to society by providing experiences which enable students to prepare for future careers, participate as citizens, and pursue lifelong learning;
3. Must be adaptable to accommodate the strengths, needs, interests, learning styles, and backgrounds of individual students;
4. Enable students to make connections across disciplines, concepts, ideas, and processes.

(p.36)

The report states that the coherency of the curriculum is a very important factor to consider in the delivery of the kindergarten to grade 12 program of study. “An effective curriculum enables students to become lifelong learners capable of applying broad principles and processes to new challenges and ever-changing demands. A coherent curriculum demonstrates to students that all learning is connected, that the knowledge, skills and values acquired through the study of one discipline complement and/or resemble those in other subject areas” (p.37). *Learning For All: The Foundation Program Report (1996)* sets forth that if a curriculum is coherent it demonstrates to students that all learning is connected. In other words, knowledge and concepts attained from one area of study will influence and complement another discipline. The report suggests that the student who connects and experiences this relationship will have a more purposeful and meaningful experience in school.

The General Curriculum Outcomes are intended to state the knowledge, skills, and values that students must learn through the study of specific disciplines, while the curriculum guides are intended to provide the strategies and guidelines for teaching the desired outcomes. The report points out that the time allocations and required credits are not meant to be the sole consideration in preparing the timetable, but are to help indicate the depth of treatment that each subject area should receive. The Essential Graduation Learnings are intended to identify “ . . . the broad understandings and generic skills expected of students upon the completion of a combined study of many disciplines”(p.37).

The report stresses that, “educational decisions must never be made to maintain the status quo or to reify the system at the expense of the learner. Emphasis must be on meeting students’ needs and connecting what they learn in school with their own experiences and backgrounds” (p. 38).

In managing the curriculum the report states that the schools, school councils, school districts, the Department of Education and Training, the Professional Development Centre, the Denominational Education Councils, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teacher’s Association and Memorial University of Newfoundland all have an important role in the process. *Learning For All: The Foundation Program Report (1996)* sites that curriculum management is a key factor in development and implementation. It is important that this principle of continuous improvement be followed at all times.

In terms of curriculum evaluation, the report states that all partners share the responsibility to ensure that any implemented curriculum is effectively supporting student learning. Their continuous assessment should answer a number of fundamental questions, including whether the curriculum:

- ☐ continues to be relevant to the Essential Graduation Learnings;
- ☐ is accomplishing what it was designed to do;
- ☐ is doing so in an effective and efficient manner; and
- ☐ has specific components that are more or less effective than others.

(p. 40)

Curriculum evaluation can occur in many different ways and the Essential Graduation Learnings help to provide a basis, however, there should be continuous monitoring and regular reviewing of kindergarten to grade 12 programs at all times.

The report states to ensure that the school system will offer what it needs to students in order for them to be successful in current and future societies, the education system needs to be more accountable. Maintaining the chain of the Department of Education working with the school districts and schools in delivering the prescribed curriculums will help this area of concern.

### ***The Primary/Elementary Levels Handbook (1996)***

*Our Children Our Future (1992)* and *Adjusting the Course Part II (1994)* recommended that the kindergarten to grade 12 education system in the province be reviewed. This recommendation led to the formation of Primary and Elementary working groups in 1994. These groups were made up of Education Consultants from the Department of Education and Training, School Administrators, Teachers from Primary and Elementary schools, members of the Faculty of Education at MUN, and Parents. The two groups combined to collaborate on a kindergarten to grade six curriculum handbook. Both groups believed the Commission's conclusion that there was a need for a shared vision to reflect the interests of the students in the kindergarten to six grades. Moreover, both groups supported the Commission's "... belief in the need for greater focus on the continuity of educational experiences from one level of schooling to another. The need for more consistency and a shared vision for Primary and Elementary was acknowledged" (*Primary/Elementary Levels Handbook, 1996*, p. vii).

This Handbook is a foundation guide which is detailed in its explanation of the kindergarten to grade six education system. It is intended to be used by those persons involved in the education community, which include for example, teachers, administrators, and program developers. The Handbook should be used conjointly with the curriculum guides provided by the Department of Education.

The Handbook states that education for primary and elementary students lay the foundation for learning which will lead to achievement in the main areas of aesthetic expression, citizenship, personal development, problem solving, technological competence, and spiritual and moral development of the Essential Graduation Learnings. The Handbook suggests that education at the primary and elementary levels should achieve various standards and goals. Examples of these include:

- cultivate self-sufficiency in the pursuit of learning and foster a love of learning;
- nurture physical, emotional, aesthetic, cultural, and spiritual growth in collaboration with other agencies;
- promote active and engaged learning through the use of a variety of instructional approaches, learning strategies and resources;
- respect diversity and respond appropriately to different needs, learning styles, background experiences, strengths and interests of learners;
- encourage learners to construct meaning from their experiences and to apply previous knowledge, skills and ideas to new learning situations.

(p. ix)

The Committee believes that education should enhance and develop the whole child. Therefore, they state that it is important to recognize the following about the primary and elementary student:

- Each child is a unique individual
- The child has an intellectual dimension
- Each child has an aesthetic dimension

- Each child has an emotional and social dimension
- The child has a physical dimension
- Children have a spiritual and moral dimension

(pp. 1-3)

More specifically, the Committee states that, “. . . a primary child’s approach to learning is very much a hands-on, minds-on approach and therefore experiences which provide for this are critical to achievement” (p. 4). The primary grades of kindergarten to grade three are critical to learning because it is at this time that the basic curriculum concepts, values, and skills are developed. “It is during these years that a strong emphasis must be placed on literacy and numeracy skills to support learning across the curriculum” (p. 4). It is important at this time “. . . to create a seamless, more integrated approach to learning at the primary level it is necessary to relate and integrate concepts, values and skills of programs in language, science, mathematics, social studies, music, art, physical education, health, and religious education in a meaningful way” (p. 4).

Elementary education teaching strategies differ to some degree but are mainly the same as those at the primary level. The elementary curriculum “. . . expands to provide for the widening range of interests of elementary school children” (p. 5). It should emphasize the child as a thinking, doing, and feeling learner. During the elementary years students gain the foundation in school subjects to begin their journey into “. . . the world of adult reasoning, concepts, communication, and symbolism” (p. 5).

The Handbook states that learning time, or time on task, and time allocation are a major factor in the quality of education. Some examples of how the Committee feels learning time can be enhanced include the following:

- Consider and coordinate the functional cycles of the school when scheduling;
- Build in flexible scheduling to meet student needs and interests;
- Offer a broad curriculum which meets the breadth of student developmental needs;
- Scheduling should enable and facilitate making connections between and among subjects, grades, levels and years of schooling.

(pp. 7-8)

*The Primary and Elementary Levels Handbook (1996)* states that it is important to recognize that “ . . . all disciplines be understood as required for all children at this level” (p. 9). In addressing this consideration the Handbook points out that the time allocations set forth by this Committee “ . . . are intended to convey the relative weight of emphasis disciplines are expected to receive. They are not intended to provide guidance for structuring daily timetables, but to provide direction for overall planning of curriculum delivery” (p. 9).

Examples of the principles which the handbook states as considerations for curriculum delivery includes the following:

- All children need exposure to the multiple world-views that a variety of disciplines can provide;
- At least 50% of the curriculum is assigned to the areas of language arts, math, science and technology to be consistent with the recommendations of *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) and *Adjusting the Course Part II* (1994);
- The expressive nature of the child and the need for non-verbal symbolic communications systems are addressed when art and music are an integral part of their daily learning experiences;
- Physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs are addressed at this level through sensitive programs geared to the developmental level of the child;

- Children need a sense of place, cultural identity, cultural heritage and awareness of the heritage of others. This is achieved through the social studies program. In the presented time allocations, primary and elementary subject areas receive somewhat of the same percentage of instructional time with only minor differences. The allocated time for music at both levels is 6 %.

(pp.9-10)

“Education systems today are heavily focused on learning and the learner.

Developments in learning theory have changed how we understand the nature of learning and our perceptions of the learner” (p. 31). Therefore, it is important to define the learning environment. Examples of the assumptions about the learning environment include:

- Effective learning occurs in an environment where students believe in themselves, where cooperation and collaboration is encouraged, where risk-taking is commonplace and encouraged, where a sense of personal ownership is felt by students, where decision making is practiced, and problem solving is the order of the day;
- Instruction which focuses on making connections, while retaining discrete teaching where necessary, is an effective way to promote learning;
- Student learning should be seen in a broad instructional approach where there is a balance between teacher-directed instruction and learner-directed instruction. Teaching and learning involves a complex system of interactive processes.

(pp. 32-34)

The report discusses the idea that individuals learn differently. Therefore, it is important that their learning experience utilize the strengths of their learning style, while developing strengths in other areas. The Handbook states that ultimately the aim must be to develop the whole child. “Success is likely to occur when the outcomes each child is expected to achieve are connected to language, numeracy, logic, pictures, music, the body, social interaction, and/or personal experience” (p. 67).

The report discusses the issues concerned with taking the curriculum from an intended state to classroom practice. The Handbook states, “. . . at the classroom level, on a daily basis, the teacher engages in some level of adaptation of curriculum and resources in order to better meet the learning needs of students” (p. 87). Communication and collaboration are vital to any curriculum change. Therefore, change cannot be done in isolation, but rather in consultation with and support from the administration and parents.

### ***The Intermediate Levels Handbook (1996)***

The *Intermediate Level Handbook (1996)* evolved out of the recommendation of the Royal Commission’s *Our Children, Our Future (1992)* and *Adjusting the Course Part II (1994)* to review the Kindergarten to grade 12 education system in Newfoundland and Labrador. The document highlights “. . . the need to develop guidelines and a framework which would result in increased levels of achievement at the intermediate level” (*Intermediate Level Handbook, 1996*, p. ix).

This Handbook is a foundation guide which is intended to be used by those persons involved in the education community. These include, for example, teachers, administrators, and program developers. The Handbook should be used conjointly with the curriculum guides provided by the Department of Education.

For the purposes of this Handbook, intermediate refers to grades seven to nine. The Committee recognizes that students “. . . in these grades are passing through a period of significant and rapid change. Understanding the developmental changes that occur

during adolescence and taking them into consideration in planning and implementing programs, as well as in structuring the school and classroom for learning is the primary focus of this handbook” (p. x). The Handbook is intended to be a frame work for the learning and development of adolescents in the intermediate grades through the appropriate environments, policies, programs, and instructional and learning practices.

In order to offer the best school environment for grades seven to nine, the Committee and the Handbook were guided by many principles and assumptions. Some examples of these include:

- Since young adolescents demand relevancy on what they learn, and experiential approach which provides opportunities for hands-on, direct, active and personal involvement in learning is required;
- A minimum of 50% of instructional time is to be allocated to language arts, mathematics, science and technology;
- The program design will allow for access to a basic program for all students while providing flexibility to address individual and local needs;
- All subject areas are valued as important components of intermediate education and are considered in the overall program design;
- While there is a strong emphasis on math, language arts and science, students will be exposed to a wide range of subjects so that both depth and breadth in programming contribute to their developmental needs and interests;
- School Boards will employ an instructional specialist for intermediate education;
- The design and implementation of the program should allow for a wide range of learning styles and abilities.

A variety of disciplines make up the intermediate school curriculum. The curriculum is designed to expose students to a wide range of views and experiences which will prepare and aid them in their course selection for high school. The areas which specific blocks of time are allocated for include:

Art	Music	Locally Developed Courses
Career Guidance	Physical Education	Social Studies
Health/Family Life	Religion	Mathematics
Home Economics	Science	Technology Education
Language Arts	Second Language	

The Handbook discusses the grouping and rationale for offering these courses.

For example, language, mathematics, science and technology have been grouped together and given at least a 50% time allocation in the students' program design. The Committee states that the rationale and time allocation for this grouping is consistent with the recommendations of *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) and *Adjusting the Course Part II* (1994). The handbook states that an allocation such as this one "... provides the opportunity to build on skills attained at the primary and elementary level and adequately prepare for entry into high school" (pp. 11-12).

Music has been grouped with art and home economics. A block of time has been allocated in each of the three years for these courses. "Students are required to study two of these three subject areas over the intermediate grades with a minimum of 60 hours for each area offered" (p. 12). The courses have been designed so that they can be offered in any school setting across the province.

The Handbook gives sample schedule designs which include subject clusters for grades seven, eight, and nine. For grade seven the subject cluster containing music also includes locally developed courses, art, and home economics. Design A for grade seven suggests that music, combined with the previously listed courses, receive 79 hours of instructional time. Design B, also using the same subject cluster, suggests that music

receive 72 hours of instructional time. For grade eight, the subject cluster containing music also includes social studies, religion, art, and home economics. The timetable design for grade eight suggests that this subject cluster receive 130 hours of instructional time. For grade nine the subject cluster is the same as the one for grade seven and suggests that the instructional time for these subjects should be 60 hours.

## **Summary**

The issues highlighted from the literature presented in this chapter focus on and are representative of the most prominent and current issues which relate to the role music education plays in the province's education system and society. The literature review attempts to highlight those ideas which set the foundation for discussing the influence of educational reform documents on the process of curriculum construction in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. More specifically, the literature review attempts to present how the restructuring and decision-making process is influencing and impacting on the role of music programs in the province's schools.

## **Chapter III**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Introduction and Rationale**

This study looks at the influence of current educational reform on the process of curriculum construction. It examines the construction of school curriculum as a result of current educational reform policies. It investigates, specifically, the role of music education in the school system of Newfoundland and Labrador. To address these issues and the perceived educational value of music education, it was necessary to complete a critical ethnographic study. The aim of critical research is to explore conceptual frames to analyze social processes and reveal underlying practices.

Kincheloe (1991) states that critical theory challenges accepted definitions and searches for new meanings. It attempts “ . . . to dig beneath the surface of appearances [and] ask how social systems really work, how ideology or history conceals the processes which oppress and control people” (Harvey, 1990, p.6). Critical research is an evolving process which asks questions about existent social structures. Harvey (1990) and Carr & Kemmis (1986) state that it is a process of critique that attempts to raise consciousness about the interactions between individuals and society and how existing actions may be rationally justified. Consequently, in this study, the practical realities of constructing

curriculum cannot be divorced from its political, cultural, economical, and historical influences.

## **Data Collection**

This study will utilize a triangular research approach for its data collection. The three areas of data collection are as follows.

**Figure 3.1:** Plan For Data Collection.

**Stage One:** An overview of the present status of music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system.

**Stage Two:** A summary of the review of selected provincial Government educational reform documents.

**Stage Three:** Personal interviews with the stakeholders involved in the education process of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Stage one provides an overview of the present status of music education in Newfoundland and Labrador. Selected data includes, for example, statistics on the number of music courses offered in various schools, student enrollment, and the number of certified music teachers in the province. As well, the curriculum requirements and guidelines for various grade levels and course descriptions are also viewed in light of such factors as time allotments and teacher allocations to determine if the mandated criteria are being met for music programs in this province. The specific intent is to examine the particular issues arising in relation to the idea of offering a 'balanced curriculum' and

‘quality education’ to our students. For the purpose of this study, selected data up to and including August 1996 is used.

**Stage two** includes a critical review and summary of selected provincial Government reform documents . This section extracts and presents a summary of the most pertinent and salient points that are important to the analysis of the process of curriculum construction and music education. For the purpose of this study the analysis was limited to the following documents:

1. *The Student at the center: Challenge for Excellence (1990)*
2. *Our Children, Our Future (1992)*
3. *Adjusting the Course Part I (1994)*
4. *Adjusting the Course Part II (1994)*
5. *Learning For All: The Foundation Program Report (1996) [Draft]*
6. *The Primary/Elementary Levels Handbook (1996) [Draft]*
7. *The Intermediate Level Handbook (1996) [Draft]*

**Stage three** involved conducting personal interviews with selected stakeholders involved in the education process in Newfoundland and Labrador. The purpose of the interviews was to gather general perceptions from the major stakeholders on how current educational reform may be influencing and/or dictating curriculum construction and prioritizing. (See Appendix A for Letters of Consent).

The subjects which were chosen as interviewees are individuals in the St. John’s area who are, or have been, directly or indirectly involved in the current educational reform process. The prime objective for selecting participants was based on covering all areas of the relevant positions in the reform movement. The agenda was to solicit the

views of different members of the educational process. The cross section of educational personnel who participated in the interviews includes the following:

1. Department of Education Officials from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
2. University Professors
3. School Board Personnel
4. School Principals
5. School Teachers
6. One Parent
7. One Student

The interviews were conducted in an informal manner on a one-to-one basis in a private setting. They were scheduled at a time and place which were convenient for the participants and were approximately one hour in length. The views of the interviewees were not known to the researcher before the interview was conducted. Prior to the interview, the subjects knew that they would be discussing their perceptions on the influence of current educational reform policies on the process of curriculum construction in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. Specifically, how the restructuring and decision making process is influencing and impacting on the role of music education programs.

At the beginning of the interview all participants were given an opportunity to briefly peruse the interview questions. There were only two requests to clarify an interview question during the fourteen interviews. Responses to the questions ranged from lengthy and detailed to brief and specific. At the end of the interview all subjects were given an opportunity to make any final comments on the topics discussed, or any

other relevant issues, which they did not get an opportunity to address during the course of the interview session.

The interview sessions were audio-taped and transcribed at a later date. The tapes have now been destroyed to ensure complete confidentiality to the interviewees.

When conducting the interviews, the questions were open-ended and designed to elicit discussion-like responses. This format allowed responses to be thought out and enabled the participants free expression of personal ideals, attitudes and values. The interview questions were constructed, arranged, and organized under four categorical headings. The four categorical headings are:

- A. **General Information** - this category was designed to gather the interviewees perceptions on the labels of primary core, secondary core, and non core which are placed on various subject areas in the school system.
- B. **General Value and Support for Music Education** - this category explores the subject's perceptions on the role which music education can play in the studies of a student. It also inquires about the support which music education gets from the school system and the general community.
- C. **Decision Making and Curriculum** - this section investigates the interviewee's perceptions on who or what the curriculum decision makers are for the province's education system and if they are adequately informed to make these decisions.
- D. **Educational Reform** - This last section probes into the subject's thoughts on how current educational reform is affecting school curriculum. The final question of the interview process asks if the interviewees think there is a prioritizing of curriculum. It is this question which forms the basis for this research.

The following 19 questions, under the preceding four categorical headings, form the basis of research into the participants perceptions on the influence of current educational reform policies on the process of curriculum construction in the

Newfoundland and Labrador education system. Specifically, the questions investigate the participants' perceptions into how the restructuring and decision making process is influencing and impacting on the role of music education programs in the province.

Throughout the interview participants were asked to discuss the following:

- A.**
  - 1. There has been considerable research into the educational value of various subject areas. What drives such studies?
  - 2. When speaking of subject areas, are you familiar with such terms as 'primary core', 'secondary core', and 'non core'?
  - 3. What subjects are primary core, secondary core, and non core in the school system?
  - 4. How and why do subject areas get these labels?
  - 5. Why are some subject areas allotted more time in curriculum offerings than others?
  - 6. Do you agree with present allocations for the primary core, secondary core, and non core subjects? Why/Why not?
- B.**
  - 1. Is there a need for further study regarding the value and contribution of music education in the curriculum? Why/Why not?
  - 2. Do you feel there is value in having music education in the formal school system?
  - 3. Are arts and music subjects supported by the province's educational system?
  - 4. Is there support for these programs by the general community? Why? Or why not?
  - 5. Will there be any effects on our students and society if arts and music subjects were absent from our education system? Why/Why not?
- C.**
  - 1. Who are the decision makers regarding curriculum construction?
  - 2. Are these decision makers of our curriculum informed and capable of making these decisions?
  - 3. On what basis do you feel they make their decisions?
  - 4. What are some possible effects of their decisions for school offerings and for the student?
- D.**
  - 1. What factors have influenced current educational reform? Why?
  - 2. What direction is the curriculum moving as a result of these influences?
  - 3. How are reform policies affecting curriculum construction?
  - 4. Is there a prioritizing of curriculum?

## **Summary**

The three sets of data collected for the purpose of triangulation include the following:

1. An overview of the present status of music education in Newfoundland and Labrador
2. A summary of extracted salient and pertinent points from the selected provincial Government documents involved in curriculum construction
3. Personal interviews with selected stakeholders in the education process of Newfoundland and Labrador

The methods for data collection and analysis provide a solid foundation for examining the historical, political, cultural, economic, and educational value of curriculum construction. Moreover, this triangular research approach contributes to the trustworthiness of the study.

## **Plan for Data Analysis**

From the point of view of analysis, when asking the question how does a curriculum get constructed, it is necessary to ask, what is going on? Why is this the case? What structures reproduce this state of affairs? In order to probe into these questions, it is necessary to bring the specific and the societal, and the immediate and the historical together in a totalistic analysis. Critical research is about the “constant shuttling back and forth between concepts and data, structure and part, past and present, theory and practice, involving a continual process of re conceptualization” (Harvey, p.201).

According to Popkewitz (1989) and Harvey (1990), critical research deals with the context of existing issues. In other words, who and how are these issues being lived out in society. Therefore, there are a number of elements which are drawn together in the process of deconstruction and reconstruction when analyzing the data. Harvey (1990) identifies these elements of critical social research as:

1. Abstraction
2. Totality
3. Essence
4. Praxis
5. Ideology
6. Structure
7. History

The data collected for this study is analyzed for emerging themes that are based on these seven elements of critical categories. In order to develop trustworthy knowledge concerning the issue of the influence current educational reform policies have on the process of curriculum construction in the school system, it is essential to look at Harvey's seven building blocks as part of a critical social methodology.

### ***Abstract Generalization***

The first element of critical research involves abstract generalization. Through investigation the abstract moves to the more concrete. In this particular study the abstract generalization is curriculum. What is curriculum? Is it something which can be prioritized? Through investigation these questions were explored and examined. As well, a foundation was developed for further analysis of curricular issues.

### ***Totality***

The second element, totality, “. . . refers to the view that social phenomena are interrelated and form a total whole” (Harvey, 1990, p. 21). An attempt is made to relate the empirical details as a total structure. In relation to this study, the idea that curriculum is a part of a social phenomenon and does indeed get prioritized is examined. The notion that prioritizing of a curriculum does not happen in isolation is also examined through, for example, social and economical factors in relation to the data collection.

### ***Essence***

The third element, essence, “. . . refers to the fundamental element of an analytic process” (Harvey, 1990, p.22). In critical research, essence plays an important role in the deconstruction process. For example, during construction what does it mean to prioritize a curriculum? What is the significance of prioritizing? If there is an emphasis on prioritizing certain areas of knowledge, are other areas disadvantaged? The element of essence is important to the study because it also explores and examines the causal relationships which exist within this educational issue.

### ***Praxis***

The fourth element, praxis, refers to practical reflective activity or reflection on practice (Harvey, 1990). Critical social research must be aware that knowledge is changed based not only on reflection but also on activity (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

Consequently, based on reflection and practice, why and how has the prioritizing of curriculum emerged? For example, why have documents such as *Adjusting the Course Part I (1994) and Part II (1994)* come into existence? What is their significance? What will be the outcome of recommended reform? Knowledge informs actions and practice. Therefore, it is critical to analyze documents and general perceptions in relation to the current practice of music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system.

### *Ideology*

The fifth element, ideology, is important to critical research because it is an analytical and critical tool which can help in the deconstruction and reconstruction process. Ideology attempts to reach the essence of social relations and separate it from structural forms. The difficulty in dealing with the nature of ideology is that it cannot be disengaged from a material infrastructure. Consequently, there is a challenge of making something apparent, the ideology, when it has been transparent. In this study, the ideology surrounding the concept of prioritizing a curriculum is examined through educational policies, recommendations for reform, school timetables, the struggle for school time and a balanced curriculum, and specific requirements for high school graduation.

### ***Structure***

In critical social research structure is viewed as a complex set of interrelated elements which are interdependent, but can only be adequately received in terms of a complete structure. In other words, the prioritizing of curriculum fits into a larger, complex structure. For example, educational reform is intrinsically linked with both social and economic reform. Recognizing the educational issue of prioritizing a curriculum as a part of a broader whole is an essential component of data analysis for this study.

### ***History***

History “ . . . refers to both the reconstructed account of past events and the process by which this reconstruction is made . . . ” (Harvey, 1990, p.26). It involves not only researching facts, but also actively interpreting them. In critical social research there are two elements which must be considered. The first is the grounding of a generalized theory in material history. The second is the exposure of the essential nature of structural relations which manifest themselves historically. Therefore, in this study it is important to look at how our society has evolved to a position of prioritizing the curriculum and how current and prevailing structures are sustained through prioritizing the curriculum.

## Summary

In order to complete this type of dialectical analysis it is necessary to interrelate the building blocks of abstraction, totality, essence, praxis, ideology, structure, and history with data collected to get an approximate reflection of how the school curriculum gets constructed and the place of arts and music education in that construction. It is necessary to search for emerging themes from the music survey, the provincial Government documents, and the personal interviews, and sift them through the elements of abstraction, totality, essence, praxis, ideology, structure, and history. This was done through the process of construction and deconstruction.

Kincheloe (1991) states that research which is informed by critical theory seeks “. . . a system of meaning which grants a new angle, a unique insight into the social consequences of different ways of knowing, different forms of knowledge, and different approaches to research” (1991, p.36). Thus, placing the data in its historical, political, cultural, economic, and social context using these elements of methodology attempts to offer causal relationships and considerations regarding the educational issue of curriculum construction.

## **Limitations of the Study**

There are certain limitations which apply to this study. Firstly, only selected statistics as they relate to the general survey of the current status of music education in Newfoundland and Labrador are used. These statistics are limited to the 1995-1996 school year.

Secondly, the document analysis is limited to selected provincial Government documents which the researcher felt are the most relevant for this particular study.

Thirdly, the interview participants are confined to a select group of fourteen people who compromised a convenience sample of a cross-section of Government officials, School Board personnel, university professors, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students. It should also be noted that the interview participants are from the St. John's area only.

Although a variety of issues emerged from the data, this study limits itself to an examination of those issues relating to the contribution of curriculum construction and its effects on music education.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Data Presentation**

Changes in today's society have placed more demands on educational institutions to prepare our children for the future. In Newfoundland and Labrador and across Canada there have been far reaching changes into our industry, economy, and society as a whole because of the current thrust of technology in today's world. Consequently, there has been great inquiry into the effectiveness and efficiency of the province's education system in preparing students for employment. "... There is ... a widely-held and documented belief that educational standards are too low, and that too many graduates lack the basic and relevant skills required to function in our present society, let alone the modern, global marketplace that is quickly establishing itself as the economic arena of the future" (*Our Children, Our Future*, 1992, p. xv).

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has recognized that new demands are being placed on an old system which cannot accommodate them. It was established that fine-tuning the old system would not adequately address the problems facing the education system. It was also recognized that it would be impossible to create a model for change that would satisfy everyone involved. Therefore, in August of 1990 the Government began an extensive inquiry into the delivery of our education system.

In this chapter, the data is organized and presented using the following three sections:

1. An overview of the present status of music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system
2. A summary of the review of selected provincial Government documents involved in curriculum construction in the province's education system
3. Personal interviews with selected stakeholders involved the education process of Newfoundland and Labrador

## **Current Status of Music Education in Newfoundland and Labrador**

The educational reform currently underway is based on the model which has been presented in the documents *Adjusting the Course Part I (1994)* and *Adjusting the Course Part II (1994)*. The reorganization focuses on streamlining governing structures which includes moving from a denominational to interdenominational education system. The province's twenty-seven Schools Boards have been reduced to ten districts and the number of employed education personnel has also been reducing with the consolidation of School Boards.

These issues are important to our understanding of the place of music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador Education system because of the historical significance of the involvement of the church and its contribution to and influence on music education.

Music has been a part of our lives since the beginning of time. In Newfoundland and Labrador it has been an integral part of our culture and education system. It has connected generations of people in pursuit of establishing a history, making a future,

challenging or accepting change, offering perceptions or interpretations, and supplying a unique source of entertainment and enjoyment.

Music is so deeply embedded in our daily life that we are often unaware of its presence. It is for this reason that it is inseparable from our human development. It is a strong part of our society in the development of our spirit, mind, and person. Consequently, the vital relationship between *education* and *music* cannot be divorced from one another.

Music should be experienced by all students as a part of their education. The arts are an essential part of the human experience and a student's education should include the arts. Music education is important to the province's education system because it can give insight and contribute to all areas of learning. It is a subject which contributes to history, culture, aesthetic experiences, physical activity, an understanding of the environment, intellectual development, and self expression. Moreover, music education offers an environment for students to develop their abilities to work both individually and as a group while encouraging creative, critical, and analytical thinking.

In Newfoundland and Labrador music is a recognized course by the Department of Education and is offered in some capacity by most boards in the province. The music program in rural areas is often taught by a nonspecialist, while in urban areas it is normally taught by specialists.

Music education offers specific experiences and knowledge for each of the levels of school. The province has music education programs organized on five levels. The five levels are:

- 1. Kindergarten**
- 2. Primary**                      - grades one to three
- 3. Elementary**                - grades four to six
- 4. Junior High**                - grades seven to nine
- 5. Senior High**               - grades ten to twelve or levels I to III

The following sections present a brief summary of kindergarten, primary, elementary, intermediate, and senior high curriculum for the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. This chapter also includes a presentation of the statistics for music teachers and student enrolment in music education programs in the province. These statistics include the 1995-1996 school year. The chapter concludes with a brief look at the most recent developments for music education in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### ***Kindergarten/Primary/Elementary***

In an overview, the primary and elementary years of a music program, kindergarten to grade six, focuses on developing aural sensitivity through discovering, creating, listening, singing, and playing. There is a great emphasis placed on bodily

movement through singing. At this level the Orff and Kodaly methods are most commonly in use. The program is classroom based and taught throughout the daily schedule. A choir at both levels is also usually slotted into the regular daily schedule. This rehearsal is often viewed as a lab component to the classroom program.

### ***Kindergarten***

In kindergarten “ . . . the major goal for music education is to awaken and develop aesthetic sensitivity” (Program of Studies, 1995-1996, p.5). The musical elements which are explored in kindergarten include rhythm, melody, and expressive controls of mood, tempo, and dynamics. The musical elements combine to form an integrated program of music, speech, and movement which encourages aesthetic awareness through experience. These elements are constantly reinforced as students listen, sing, move, respond, and create in the music classroom.

For kindergarten, subject areas are grouped into categories with specific instructional time allotments in the daily school schedule. Music is placed in the Practical and Fine Arts category with Physical Education and Art. These three subjects combine to share a 20% time allotment. The kindergarten curriculum is included in the primary curriculum guides.

### ***Primary***

In the primary grades music is an essential part of the curriculum “ . . . because it promotes growth in the three major areas of learning: the affective, the cognitive, and the psychomotor” (Program of Studies, 1995-1996, p.31). The Program of Studies suggests that the music teacher should work closely with other staff members because at the primary level the objectives of the music program complement other subjects such as language, physical education, and social studies.

The primary subjects are grouped into the same categories and instructional time allotments as kindergarten. Therefore, music is placed in the Practical and Fine Arts category with Physical Education and Art with a 20% time allotment among the three subjects in the daily school schedule.

The primary grades use *Primary Music: A Teaching Guide*. The guide is organized into 15 sections, or chapters. The sections discuss areas such as philosophy, program objectives, instructional procedures, materials, and resources.

### ***Elementary***

The intent of the elementary music program is the same as that of the primary program. It is essential to the elementary curriculum because it promotes growth in the three major areas of learning listed above. For the elementary grades subjects are not grouped into categories, but are dealt with individually for instructional time allotments. Music receives 6% of the daily school schedule’s instructional time.

The elementary grades use *Elementary Music: Curriculum and Teaching Guide*. The guide is organized into 18 sections. As with the primary guide, these sections cover areas such as the philosophy, general and specific objectives, instructional procedures, and resources for the elementary music program.

### ***Junior High***

The junior high years of a music program includes grades seven to nine. Music education is usually organized into three sections. The first is a classroom component which is mandatory for grades seven and eight, and an elective for grade nine. The second is a choral music program and the third is an instrumental music program. The choral and instrumental programs are given some daily scheduling time but are mostly extracurricular. Currently in the province there are two programs existing. The first is the specialist program and the second is the nonspecialist program. The specialist program is taught by a trained music educator and will generally follow the proceeding format. The nonspecialist program offers a modified classroom version of the specialist program.

The goal of the junior high music program is to introduce students to music elements, forms, and notation, to encourage students to make music through vocal or instrumental means, to expose students to recordings of classical and contemporary repertoires, and to guide students to an understanding of the cultural significance of music in our society. Most important, the program attempts to focus on developing social and

individual skills, self-discipline, and self-confidence. The intermediate level music program further develops musical literacy and aesthetic awareness.

As with the elementary grades, the recommended instructional time allotments for the intermediate grades are given on an individual subject basis. Music is grouped with art and receives 5% of instructional time.

*Intermediate Music: A Curriculum and Teaching Guide* is the specialist guide which is used at the junior high level for grades seven to nine. The guide is organized into 13 sections. These sections include the philosophy, nonmusical and musical objectives, concepts, lesson planning, instructional procedures, and exploratory units, etc., which are a part of the intermediate music program. The nonspecialist music program uses the curriculum guide *Exploring Music*. This guide also discusses, for example, things such as philosophy, nonmusical and musical objectives, and instructional procedures.

### ***Senior High***

The senior high includes grades 10 to 12 or levels I to III. At this level music is an elective subject within the general course offerings. As in the junior high, the program is organized on three levels, classroom, choral, and instrumental.

At the senior high level courses and methods usually cover a wide variety of music concepts ranging from musical composition, musical scoring, harmonic elements, melodic elements, technology, rhythm forms, instrumental and vocal techniques, ensemble

experiences, genres of music, music and culture, historical periods, and the science of sound technology.

In senior high the courses offered include subjects such as *Applied Music* and *Experiencing Music*. The recommended instructional time for senior high music is based on the high school credit system. To attain the specific number of credits to graduate from school, senior high students must satisfy the core requirements such as language, literature, mathematics, science, and social studies. These courses total 25 credits of the required 36 for students to graduate. The remaining 11 credits can be filled with any other subject areas not listed above as long as not less than 20 credits in the total 36 are from level two and three courses and not less than nine credits are from level three courses. It is in this 11 credit allotment that a student is able to take a high school music course.

The course descriptions used for the senior high courses have the same general layout as the teaching and curriculum guides for kindergarten, primary, elementary, and intermediate. The guides discuss areas such as the statement of purpose, music education and the Essential Graduation Learnings, general curriculum outcomes, course content, and instructional strategies.

### ***Music Teachers***

In Newfoundland and Labrador music is taught by both generalist and specialist teachers. The classroom music teacher may have some musical training but not a formal university education in the music discipline. In parts of Newfoundland and Labrador this

is common at the primary and elementary levels. However, at the junior high and senior high levels music is usually taught by specialist teachers. Specialist teachers have a background and training in the area of music and music education at the university level.

The training received by most Newfoundland and Labrador music teachers is the conjoint degree's program of Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Music Education from Memorial University of Newfoundland. For the school Year of 1995-1996 the number of teachers province wide with a music degree was 37, with a music education degree 13, and with both degrees 82. The total number of teachers with one or both of the degrees was 132.

### ***Statistics***

The following sections are a presentation of statistics of general student enrolment in the province's schools and enrolment in music programs for each school grade for the 1995-1996 school year. The statistics used were taken from the Department of Education's annual publication *Education Statistics-Elementary-Secondary*.

**Table 4.1:** General student enrolment for grades kindergarten to grade nine and student enrolment in music programs for the school year 1995-1996.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Enrolment</b>	<b>Enrolment in music</b>
Kindergarten	7 465	7 080
Grade 1	7 510	7 064
Grade 2	7 273	6 785
Grade 3	7 441	6 929
Grade 4	7 639	6 902
Grade 5	8 264	7 475
Grade 6	8 434	7 633
Grade 7	8 793	5 362
Grade 8	9 072	3 500
Grade 9	9 060	1 634
<b>Total</b>	125 133	60 364

Music is not a mandatory course at the senior high level. The following two tables include a breakdown of general student enrolment for level I to level IV and student enrolment by high school credit course.

**Table 4.2:** Student enrolment for level I to level IV.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Enrolment</b>
Level I	9 101
Level II	9 136
Level III	8 493
Level IV	2 182
<b>Total</b>	<b>28 912</b>

**Table 4.3:** Student enrolment in music credit courses at the senior high level for the school year 1995-1996.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Student Enrolment</b>
Choral Performance 1103	222
Choral Performance 2103	198
Choral Performance 3103	138
Ensemble Performance 1105	611
Ensemble Performance 2105	457
Ensemble Performance 3105	238
Experiencing Music 1210	54
Experiencing Music 2110	38
Harmony and History	49
Instrumental Performance 1104	647
Instrumental Performance 2104	323
Instrumental Performance 3104	178
Music History 3120	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 154</b>

### ***Recent Developments***

The 1993 spring edition of *Imagination*, the National Arts and Education Newsletter, reported that, “. . . in Newfoundland, a disturbing development saw the Department of Education lay off 20 of its 46 curriculum consultants on March 26. There are no longer official representatives for visual arts and theater at the Department level. One music consultant remains and there are no consultants at the board level” (p.4).

Since this publication the one music consultant position which remained at the Department of Education has also been dissolved. As stated earlier in this research, the arts subjects as one entity is now overseen by one consultant. No music specialists remain at the Department of Education or School Board levels.

### **Provincial Government Document Summary Statements**

Developing policies and documents for our education system in Newfoundland and Labrador is a very challenging task. These documents guide the school life of our most important stakeholder in the education process, the student. “Policy decisions affect nearly every aspect of our lives. Whether overtly or covertly, they regulate and influence our daily actions” (Barresi and Olson, 1992, p. 760). Why is it important to look at policy definition? Policy formation is an important and critical stage in the process of constructing and developing research reports and documents which are used as the basis for classroom practice in the education system.

The Newfoundland and Labrador education system is currently experiencing the growing pains and changes which accompany the implementation of formulated policies and developed documents. In this study the following selected provincial Government documents have been identified as those which are most relevant to this study. The following diagram illustrates a time-line of the Government policies and their dates of origin.

**Figure 4.1:** Time line for the publication of selected provincial Government documents.

<b>1990</b>	<i>The Student at the Centre: Challenge for Excellence</i>
<b>1992</b>	<i>Our Children, Our Future: Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Delivery of Programs and Services in Primary, Elementary, Secondary Education</i>
<b>1994</b>	<i>Adjusting the Course Part I</i>
<b>1994</b>	<i>Adjusting the Course Part II</i>
<b>1996</b>	<i>Learning For All [Draft]</i> <i>Primary/Elementary Levels Handbook [Draft]</i> <i>Intermediate Levels Handbook [Draft]</i>

The following sections contain a summary of the review of selected provincial Government documents. The most pertinent and salient points that are important to the analysis of curriculum construction and music education have been extracted from the documents and presented.

***The Challenge For Excellence: The Student at the Centre (1990)***

- One of the major tasks of the Committee was to analyze and evaluate the information described in the literature from the perspective of Newfoundland's and Labrador's own situation.
- The Committee stated that we must strive to provide our youth with the educational resources necessary to manage problems on a global scale.
- A school improvement initiative should not focus solely on enhancing academic achievement but should also focus on a continual transmission of personal, spiritual, and cultural values, values which have enriched the lives of Newfoundlander's for many years.
- In order for any of these programs to be successful, they must be initiated, supported and monitored by the Department of Education and school districts administrative bodies.
- It must be recognized that change is a process which is carried out over a period of time. All initiatives cannot be effectively implemented at once.
- Any initiative for school improvement must have a proper philosophical base, acceptable guiding principles, and a realistic framework. In turn, these components must be supported by a workable implementation plan and strengthened with ongoing support and problem-solving mechanisms.
- The philosophical base presented in this report for school improvement is based on the idea that education is a part of a society which is experiencing change at rapid speed.
- School improvement initiatives are not a top down, or bottom up exercise, but form a shared responsibility which requires a shared response.
- School improvement results from the recognition, acceptance, and ongoing development of four essential characteristics. They are credibility, commitment, competence, and confidence.
- Educational personnel involved with the school improvement process must receive adequate time, personal and technical support, and the encouragement to undertake the tasks required to improve conditions for students.
- The objective of those in the delivery of education in Newfoundland and Labrador should be a desire for excellence in all aspects of the school program.

***Our Children, Our Future (1992)***

- The two objectives fundamental to schooling are firstly, students must be taught the basic skills of numeracy and literacy which are required for citizenship as well as survival in a technological age, and secondly students must be initiated into the major forms of human knowledge.
- It is important that school teach students how to interact with other students, help them think critically, expose them to a variety of viewpoints and instill in them a core of common values.
- The four principles necessary to guide schooling are:
  1. All children are entitled to a curriculum rich and varied, challenging and inspiring, which enables them to reach the highest possible level of fulfillment, so that all, for the benefit of all, are able to shape their own destinies and create a better world;
  2. All children, to the best of their ability, should be able to master the basic knowledge and skills necessary for independent living: literacy and numeracy, the development of aesthetic sensibilities, and an understanding and appreciation of their cultural and religious heritage;
  3. At the end of schooling, all children should be able to make rational choices, within the framework of accepted values and traditions of the culture, about the way they should live their lives;
  4. At the end of schooling, all children should be prepared to assume personal responsibility, to become enterprising individuals, knowledge of their own strengths and confident of their abilities to participate in all the aspects of society which interest them.
- The business sector would like to see education redirect its priorities to meet an economic agenda.
- There should be a focus on in the development of effective learning processes which will enable the province's students to adapt to the rapidly changing environments in society after they leave the school setting.
- The aim for today's education system is to try and support a culture and environment more conducive to the promotion of student motivation, academic success, and the achievement of excellence.
- Curriculum content is vital to the education system because it is a means of reinforcing social values, stimulates new thinking, prepares students to become participants in society, and helps them gain a critical awareness of their heritage,

traditions, and environment. It is also a means for students to know about various disciplines, to become effective communicators, and to acquire the skills they may need to meet the challenges and to cope with today's society.

- A relevant curriculum should accommodate all students regardless of their differences even if they have significant differences in their needs and interests, aptitudes, learning styles, learning rates, attitudes towards different disciplines, personal goals and aspirations.
- The Commissions conclusions on what a relevant curriculum should be are based on four assumptions. They are:
  1. Curriculum must be responsive to all children.
  2. The curriculum must have an academic focus.
  3. Some courses are more important than others.
  4. Responsibility for ensuring that curriculum goals are achieved must rest with the Department of Education.
- Labeling courses as core areas of discipline is to imply that they are fundamental to the success in other subject areas. As a result these areas of study should receive the largest instructional time allocation, and evaluation in these areas should constitute an indicator of the student, the school, and the systems performance. The report states that other courses should remain mandatory but that instruction in these academic and core subject areas should not be compromised.
- In the workplace, it is vital to know how to think abstractly, conceptualize and solve problems, analyze and utilize information, and think critically.
- One problem with curriculum in our school system is the lack of continuity within subjects and the lack of connection made between subjects.
- The new model for the process of curriculum development, revision and implementation should be a collaborative responsibility involving the Department of Education, school boards and schools, and where circumstances warrant, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the Faculty of Education and other faculties of Memorial University.

- For the primary level education (kindergarten, grades one, two, and three), the Department subscribes to a philosophy of a child centred, activity-based primary education.
- Children in the elementary grades need a broad curriculum to satisfy their interests and enthusiasm for learning.
- A decrease in student dropouts and an increase in student retention has occurred at the expense of a rigorous and solid academic program.
- A core curriculum be identified that is based on the development needs of young adolescents and provides continuity with the curriculum of the elementary and senior high years.
- Recent changes in the graduation requirements should result in significant improvements in the core programs, recognize the link between education and business, reflect the significance of mathematics and science to a technological age, and make greater provision for students with special learning needs and those with exceptional talents and abilities.
- Curriculum should offer students who are not able to succeed in a traditional academic program, reasonable choices and opportunities to pursue their studies to the limit of their abilities.
- Programming between rural and urban high schools is quite pronounced.
- The education system must offer a broad curriculum to students.
- The education system must accept the responsibility for educating all students to the limit of their capabilities, and if these exceptionalities are not recognized, acknowledged, and addressed, the risk of leaving a large group of students unserved is very high.

### ***Adjusting the Course Part I (1994)***

- The education system in Newfoundland and Labrador has not been performing on par at the national level. This province has the highest illiteracy rate in Canada.
- Not all the needed changes can be addressed through a governance model. It states that governance and structure only set the stage for substantive change. This report suggests that the first step in bringing about any of this change is to streamline the basic governing structures.

### ***Adjusting the Course Part II (1994)***

- In today's society, students must be prepared for lifelong learning.
- The most effective way to develop the attributes of basic intellectual capabilities which will allow students to adapt to change is through emphasizing the core areas of language, mathematics, and science.
- The school's education program must also involve dealing with personal attributes and affective outcomes such as self esteem, ability to live and work independently and in cooperation with others, respect for those of different race, religion, gender, or ethnic origin, and development of ethical moral values.
- Two of the principles which are seen as ensuring the development of a more effective education system are:
  1. The curriculum must become more highly focused on the essential intellectual skills and capabilities which form the foundation for all other educational outcomes
  2. At least 50% of the school program must be devoted to the primary core areas of language, mathematics, and science technology.
- All children, except those with specific disabilities, be able to meet the set out standards
- The school system should be designed, as far as possible, to compensate for differences in ability
- Time has become one of the most important issues linked to achievement

- Curriculum has two origins. They are:
  1. Political - society has general expectations that are expressed in a variety of formal and informal ways. It is from these expectations that curriculum is influenced
  2. Research and policy documents - this is the professional source from which curriculum develops
- The potential common core for curriculum is so broad that any attempt to include all possible areas would place an impossible burden in the schools.
- There is little dispute over the importance of language, mathematics, and science. There is, however, a less common agreement on subjects such as second language studies, social studies, music, religion, and a variety of others. Moreover, the document states that the ability of a school to offer and handle some of these areas varies. Consequently, *Adjusting the Course Part II* (1994) suggests that curriculum should be thought of as having three components. For purposes of this document, these are labeled primary core, secondary core, and non-core.
- Two examples of what the committee lists as actions to deal with the issue of curriculum are:
  1. A provincial foundation curriculum will be developed, consisting of primary core areas to be taught in all schools at all levels, secondary core areas to be taught at specific levels, and non core areas to be offered at the discretion of the school.
  2. The primary core areas will consist of language, mathematics, and science. The secondary core will consist of second language, social studies (history, geography, culture, economics), music, fine arts, and physical education. All other areas will be considered non-core.
- The important factor is that a consistent message of the importance of time and effort from students be reinforced and emphasized to students from the very beginning of their school days.

***Learning For All: The Foundation Program Report (1996)***

- The students of this province require an education that will enable them to become contributing members and participants in society.
- Government places considerable importance on the role of education on the economic development of the province.

- The role of the school is to respond to and develop the intellectual capacity of the learner. The document states that each discipline in the school system contributes to the intellectual development of all learners.
- A broad balanced curriculum allows students to acquire and apply a range of knowledge, to develop and use practical and academic skills, and to value and demonstrate appreciation for the fundamental tenets, expressions and practices of society.
- an educated person is one who is equipped to respond appropriately to the intellectual, social, aesthetic, emotional, moral, spiritual, and physical dimensions of life, such that he or she is enabled and motivated.
- It is important to implement a required monitoring, revision, and updating of the program in a society which is exploding with technology and information
- The primary and elementary levels should be exposed to and have a full understanding of all disciplines in the school setting. At the intermediate level all subject areas should be made available with limited discretion. At the high school level opportunities should be offered to appeal to personal interests but most importantly to meet graduation requirements and post secondary entrance requirements.
- To ensure that the programs and courses offered in the province's education systems are focused on their task, each curriculum area is analyzed in terms of the degree to which it contributes to the achievement of the Essential Graduation Learnings. Curriculum content found to not contribute to the Essential Graduation Learnings, will be eliminated.
- Curriculum consists of planned programs, resources, environments, and instructional and learning experiences necessary for the ultimate attainment of the graduation learnings.
- A coherent curriculum demonstrates to students that all learning is connected, that the knowledge, skills and values acquired through the study of one discipline complement and/or resemble those in other subject areas.
- The Essential Graduation Learnings are intended to identify the broad understandings and generic skills expected of students upon the completion of a combined study of many disciplines.

- Curriculum management is a key factor in development and implementation. One of the principles that curriculum management is based on is that it encourages a collaborative approach to the process of education which is built upon planning and establishing priorities for change and improvement at all levels of the system.
- There should be continuous monitoring and regular reviewing of kindergarten to grade 12 programs at all times. This continuous assessment should answer a number of fundamental questions. One of these questions is that the curriculum should continue to be relevant to the Essential Graduation Learnings.

### ***Primary/Elementary Levels Handbook (1996)***

- The handbook states that education for primary and elementary students lays the foundation for learning which will lead to achievement in the main areas of aesthetic expression, citizenship, personal development, problem solving, technological competence, and spiritual and moral development of the Essential Graduation Learnings.
- The handbook suggests that education at the primary and elementary levels should achieve various standards and goals such as:
  1. cultivate self-sufficiency in the pursuit of learning and foster a love of learning;
  2. nurture physical, emotional, aesthetic, cultural, and spiritual growth in collaboration with other agencies;
  3. promote active and engaged learning through the use of a variety of instructional approaches, learning strategies and resources;
  4. respect diversity and respond appropriately to different needs, learning styles, background experiences, strengths and interests of learners;
  5. encourage learners to construct meaning from their experiences and to apply previous knowledge, skills and ideas to new learning situations.
- a primary child's approach to learning is very much a hands-on, minds-on approach and therefore experiences which provide for this are critical to achievement
- The primary grades of kindergarten to grade three are critical to learning because it is at this time that the basic curriculum concepts, values, and skills are developed. It is important at this time to create a seamless, more integrated approach to learning at the primary level it is necessary to relate and integrate concepts, values and skills of programs in language, science, mathematics, social studies, music, art, physical education, health, and religious education in a meaningful way.

- Learning time, or time on task, and time allocations are a major factor in the quality of education. One example of how the Committee feels learning time can be enhanced is to build in flexible scheduling to meet student needs and interests.
- Time allocations are intended to convey the relative weight of emphasis disciplines are expected to receive. They are not intended to provide guidance for structuring daily timetables, but to provide direction for overall planning of curriculum delivery.
- Some examples of the principles which the handbook states as considerations for curriculum delivery includes the following:
  1. All children need exposure to the multiple world-views that a variety of disciplines can provide;
  2. At least 50% of the curriculum is assigned to the areas of language arts, math, science and technology to be consistent with the recommendations of *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) and *Adjusting the Course Part II* (1994);
  3. The expressive nature of the child and the need for non-verbal symbolic communications systems are addressed when art and music are an integral part of their daily learning experiences;
  3. Physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs are addressed at this level through sensitive programs geared to the developmental level of the child;
  4. Children need a sense of place, cultural identity, cultural heritage and awareness of the heritage of others. This is achieved through the social studies program.
- The learning environment should:
  1. Effective learning occurs in an environment where students believe in themselves, where cooperation and collaboration is encouraged, where risk-taking is commonplace and encouraged, where a sense of personal ownership is felt by students, where decision making is practiced, and problem solving is the order of the day;
  2. Instruction which focuses on making connections, while retaining discrete teaching where necessary, is an effective way to promote learning;
  3. Student learning should be seen in a broad instructional approach where there is a balance between teacher-directed instruction and learner-directed instruction. Teaching and learning involves a complex system of interactive processes.

### ***Intermediate Levels Handbook (1996)***

- The Committee and the handbook were guided by many principles and assumptions. Some examples of these include:
  1. Since young adolescents demand relevancy on what they learn, and experiential approach which provides opportunities for hands-on, direct, active and personal involvement in learning is required;
  2. A minimum of 50% of instructional time is to be allocated to language arts, mathematics, science and technology;
  3. The program design will allow for access to a basic program for all students while providing flexibility to address individual and local needs;
  3. All subject areas are valued as important components of intermediate education and are considered in the overall program design;
  4. While there is a strong emphasis on math, language arts and science, students will be exposed to a wide range of subjects so that both depth and breath in programming contribute to their developmental needs and interests;
  5. School Boards will employ an instructional specialist for intermediate education;
  6. The design and implementation of the program should allow for a wide range of learning styles and abilities.
  
- The intermediate curriculum is designed to expose students to a wide range of views and experiences which will prepare and aid them in their course selection for high school.
  
- The rationale for a time allocation such as this one is to provide the opportunity to build on skills students attained at the primary and elementary level and to also prepare them for high school.

### **Interviews**

This section presents a summary of the ideas, perceptions and attitudes of the interviewees concerning the influence of current educational reform policies on the process of curriculum construction in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. One of the purposes of this research is to move toward an understanding of the views that

the major stakeholders in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system hold concerning music education. The responses of the participants are organized with respect to the categories and questions as outlined in Chapter III.

## **Category A: General Information**

### **Question #1**

**There has been considerable research done into the educational value of various subject areas. What drives such studies?**

Each interviewee gave more than one response to this question. However, three main points were made by the participants. The first point is that doing research into the educational value of subject areas is a means of bettering the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador for our students. All 14 subjects stated that in studying the value of a subject area, it can help educators to realize and improve on the curriculum areas so that their value can be of greater benefit to students. Interview Subject 10 (S10), a parent, stated, “. . . hopefully they [the researchers] do it to better studies, to better what’s happening.”

The second point made by interviewees focused on the idea that studies which investigate the educational value of subject areas tend to come after some kind of national or provincial testing. Whether the testing results are high or low, educators and the general public attempt to seek answers to explain student performance. Interview Subject 12 (S12), a kindergarten to grade nine educator and vice-principal, stated, “. . . we find

for example that we're below the national norm, especially on norm reference testing, in Newfoundland and at the bottom of the provinces, so we go and do some research into the math curriculum. The last time we did the Canadian Test of Basic Skills we were very low on language arts so they did some research into language arts programs."

Consequently, Interview Subject 11 (S11), a university professor with the Faculty of Education, stated, "... pursuing such studies becomes a discussion of politics."

The third point made by interviewees is that these types of studies are initiated because of the student interest and achievement in various subject areas. Interview Subject 3 (S3), a grade seven to level III music teacher, stated, "... I would say probably academic achievements and student interest fuel these studies. ..." Researchers, educators, and parents gain an interest in discovering why students enjoy and excel in various subject areas and not in others. Moreover, Interview Subject 8 (S8), a senior high school principal, added that educators "... look for answers as to why students achieve the way they do or why some students are successful in getting work, and others not."

Other points made by interviewees include the following. Interview Subject 2 (S2), a primary and senior high school choral music teacher, stated, "... studies such as these are often spearheaded by Government because of economic cuts to the education system." This interviewee stated that it is the Government's way of justifying some courses while decreasing the opportunity for students to take others or eliminating them completely.

Interview Subject 1 (S1), a senior high school instrumental music teacher stated, “ . . . these studies tend to be done with an economic perspective in mind. In other words, when considering a budget and available resources for the school year it is necessary to first offer the ‘more important’ courses and then in order of importance offer what’s left.” Consequently, this interviewee stated that it is necessary to do such studies to determine what these important ones are in the province’s education system.

Another theme which emerged from approximately 50% of the subjects is that the studies are undertaken for political reasons. The following responses offer the range of reasons which developed as part of this theme. Interview Subject 6 (S6), a university professor and former Department of Education official, stated, “ . . . Government and educators sometimes feel pressure from special interest or lobbyist groups to do such research.” Interview Subject 4 (S4) a primary/elementary music teacher and former school board music consultant stated, “ . . . in an effort to accommodate a political society, which elects members to Government, those involved tend to yield to this pressure.” Interview Subject 7 (S7), a primary/elementary school teacher and principal, stated, “ . . . the political reasons for researchers doing such work depends on their background.” For example, Interview Subject 9 (S9), a senior high school choral music teacher and former Department of Education music consultant, stated, “ . . . the research is usually being done by people in the field who may have one of two reasons for taking such a study. Firstly, they have a general interest in what they are researching because it is their “specialty” and area of discipline which they are trained in. Secondly, doing a study is a

way of trying to support what they already know about why a subject area should be in the curriculum.” In others words, this interviewee suggests that it is an attempt to support and protect those courses which appear to be eroding in the curriculum. S9 also suggested that studies are simply conducted on the assumption that certain subject areas are very important and the education system should have more of them. Therefore, she states that doing such a study will validate such a claim.

Forty-two percent of the participants discussed the notion that studying the educational value of various subject areas is driven by businesses, economical, and educational trends. The interviews suggested that the education community does this in hope of preparing the province’s students for post secondary studies as well as keeping them up to date with what the employment industry is seeking in the future workforce. Interview Subject 13 (S13), a senior high school student, stated, “. . . I think that they feel that math and sciences are more important in today’s world because they [educators and the Department of Education] feel that if you don’t have math or science you can’t get a job. They don’t think about the arts, they feel that they, [the arts], are not as important.”

Finally, there were two other significant points which emerged from the data. The first was that various subject areas are constantly undergoing change. Interview Subject 5 (S5), a senior Department of Education official, stated, “. . . there’s new research that’s adding to frameworks within the various disciplines and consequently there is a need to update the curriculum in all areas over a period of time.” Therefore, S5 states that doing such studies will help with this process.

The second point was made by Interview Subject 14 (S14), a senior Department of Education official. He stated that studies such as these are initiated to “. . . simply see or to get information on what types of knowledge, skills and attitudes students need to acquire during their K-12 continuum of education, in order to have what would be considered a good quality education and how they’re prepared to either enter the work force or go to other studies beyond that.” He states that these kinds of studies help to acquire the necessary information on what course’s aid in attaining this goal.

## **Question #2**

**When speaking of subject areas, are you familiar with such terms as primary core, secondary core, and non core?**

All but one of the participants answered yes, or that they had some knowledge of this terminology. The subject who responded no was the student interviewed.

The interviewees who answered an assured yes were the 42% of interviewees who held or still do hold Department of Education positions, School Board positions, or were involved in the school reform process, whether it was on research committees or the committees involved in writing the reform documents.

The 57% of participants who answered yes, prefacing their response stating that they had some knowledge of the terminology, were school teachers and some of the school administrators interviewed.

Some interviewees were familiar with terminology but felt that it was better qualified after a discussion with the researcher of this study. It should be noted that one

school administrator, S8, stated, “. . . I am familiar with the terminology but only in terms of scheduling for the school timetable because of graduation requirements.” A senior Department of Education official, S14, stated, “. . . I am familiar with the terms but we do not use them. The term “core” is used in some context to refer to mathematics, science, language arts and generally social studies.” S14 goes on to state, “. . . certainly we have an agreement with the other Atlantic provinces to develop a common core curriculum and these are the areas that we’re working in, but we’re also working in second language, although people tend not to include second language as core. But in our own curricular areas, we rarely, if ever, identify subjects using these categories.”

### **Question #3**

#### **What subjects are primary core, secondary core, and non-core?**

Thirty -five percent of the participants answered yes to being familiar with the terms primary core, secondary core, and non core and correctly labeled the courses in these categories. Another 35% of the interviewees answered that they had some knowledge of the terms and were also correct in labeling what they thought would fit into each of these categories based on the knowledge they had of current educational reform. Twenty-eight percent of the participants were unsure or had no knowledge of what courses had been designated to each category. However, they still correctly labeled the courses after the researcher gave a definition of these labels, but did not reveal what subjects the reform documents have identified under the primary, secondary, and non core categories.

#### **Question #4**

##### **How and why do subject areas get these labels?**

Two main points were present in the responses of all 14 interviewees from this question. The first is that those courses which have been labeled primary core are the ones that are considered to be the basic skills of living and learning and these are skills which are necessary for today's workforce. For example, S4 states, "... if you look at it that way, mathematics, science, and language arts are courses necessary for functioning in life." On the other hand, S4 suggests that "... secondary core are the other subjects that are of value but perhaps not perceived to be as necessary to function as the others." S3 adds that this has become the case because "... children have to have a thinking level that is achieved from mathematics and a comprehension level achieved through the science, and the way the world is today, with the push on computers, they [primary core subjects] become the focal subjects or the focal groups and all others become secondary to them." S2 states, "... it is more of a situation of catering to what is perceived to be the workforce, maybe the workforce is looking for other things that require a focus on some of the subjects which have been placed in the secondary core group."

S1 stated that educators are supposedly readying students for a world that is math and science oriented. This educator stated, "... the focus has become training our students so they will be able to compete in a world that is going to be technologically based, and everywhere you turn around, technology is being thrust." Consequently,

S14 states, “. . . these labels have been created because of how society views the importance of where the education system is going.” S1 adds “. . . right now, the direction of the education system is moving toward a technological field, therefore students need to be trained in such things as math and computer studies, things from those areas where there is going to be job availability.”

Somewhat related to the theme of skills necessary for life learning and the workforce, S6 stated that this perception turns the labeling of courses into a political activity. He stated, “. . . it’s simply a matter of who holds sway within society are those who get to determine what is of value. Those who would value other things are unable to, or they don’t have the power or influence to be able to persuade enough people to their way of thinking.” In the end S11 stated, “. . . this reflects the power groups within society and their influence upon the education system. The bigger and more influential the market the more power they hold. Every society will reflect this power structure.”

The second point which emerged was the idea that labeling courses is a part of the history of our educational system. S7 states, “. . . if you ask parents or grandparents what the most important subjects are in school, they will tell you the 3R’s, reading, writing, and arithmetic. Even with technology opening up into more and new areas these are still the courses perceived to be the ones needed for success in today’s society and workforce.” S7 also stated that it appears to be a cycle of what we, society, have understood to be necessary. For example, we see math as necessary because people need math skills.

However, as S8 states this lends to another issue and question about our educational system. He stated

. . . we see math as being necessary because people need math skills. But do we look at the careers that a person with good math skills goes into and say what else does that student need, and then attach that to the math, and say that's core as well. This is I think one of the areas where the definitions of primary, secondary and non core become fuzzy. If math is primary core, but if all the people whom we employ are math students say they can't work with us unless they are creative, does drama then become primary core as well because the career that person needs math for also needs drama for.

S9 adds “ . . . they [subjects] have been deemed to be primary core by individuals who don't know any better, it is what the public seems to think needs to be the primary core without an understanding of what you really need overall.” Three interviewees stated that we as a society have not been challenged to look at the labeling any differently. As a result, subjects under these headings have become “an accepted core” in our education system. S5 stated,

. . . I don't really make a big distinction between primary and secondary core, core is core. Unless you just interpret the more time that's spent on the discipline, if it's language arts, it's totally recognized, you spend a lot of time on language arts so that's primary core. So if you define your primary as that area which requires a lot of time, then fair enough, you can break it down that way.

Another point which was made by 35% of the interviews is that a lot of teaching is done in an effort to meet exam requirements. These standards have been set, and as

educators we have a responsibility to meet them. Therefore, as S12 states, “. . . any changes made, have to start at the top.”

### **Question #5**

#### **Why are some subject areas allotted more time in curriculum offerings than others?**

Three main points were made by the participants in response to this question. The first, as S3 stated, is that “. . . some courses simply need more time than others to cover the required curriculum offerings. Unfortunately, what happens in today’s education system is that the course requirements for mathematics, science, and language arts are so extensive that these courses need to take at least 50% or 60% of the time table in school.” However, as S2 stated, “. . . these courses are perceived to be more important, the question then arises of the natural bias and experience of who’s making the decisions about these courses and what their perception is of determined need.” S3 stated, “. . . some courses may indeed need more time than others, but do we do this at the expense of under-stressing other courses. This then becomes a fine line which is very difficult to walk.”

The second point raised amongst the interviewees was a consensus that some subject areas are allotted more time because in an attempt to monitor what society wants and needs for the employment industry, the courses identified as requirements for students are the maths, sciences, and language arts. S1 offered the following example. “We have x number of jobs in technology, we have 40 unemployed music teachers in the system,

obviously the people [the Department of Education] are going to allot more time toward computer technology courses than they are toward music courses.” Consequently, S5 stated, “. . . the focus has to be being sensitive to where students are going and what they need for the future.”

The third point raised from 35% of the interviewees is that time allotment has been based more on availability of teachers than on the needs for program outcomes. This availability of teachers has been affected mostly due to cutbacks. In other words, due to student enrollment, not all schools can justify having a large staff or specialized teachers to cover all courses which may be offered in the school system. Therefore, determined need for subjects is established. S4 stated, “. . . for the primary core, in order for students to achieve the outcomes that have been established, the instructional time is necessary to give them time to learn. In some of the secondary cores, they haven’t been given as much time because it hasn’t been perceived that the content is as great and they don’t need as much time on task.” As a result, S4 adds that “. . . the areas that tend to get cut back in terms of allocations are the specialist areas, that of course results in loss of time in these areas, and unfortunately they are really suffering as a result of it.”

Finally, other responses included the following reasons for a difference in time allotment between courses. The S13 stated, “. . . I feel that they have to get significant time, they need this time to get the work done, they [the education system] have to make sure that we do receive the education we need to get jobs.” S12 stated that it is a spiral system, “. . . we teach this way because the aims of education, public exams says this is

what we're going to be evaluating, but they're not an end in themselves, they are geared toward what are going to be the requirements for a kid coming out and going into university, so I'm not sure where you start to change it, but as it stands right now kids need most of their courses in math, science, and language arts to graduate."

S7 and S8 stated that it is a historical or traditional function some subject areas are allotted more time than others. Both participants stated that it reflects the historical perception that these are courses which members of society need to function, so they should therefore be given more time in the school offerings. Consequently, S9 stated, "... the traditional view has been to give the 'basic subjects' which have become accepted core about one half of the school time table. S14 stated that it is a reflection of what is currently happening in society. He states, "... if you examine timetables ... not only in this province but across the county, at least 50% of instruction time seems to be given to mathematics, science, language arts, and technology tends to get thrown in there now."

#### **Question #6**

**Do you agree with the present allocations for the primary core, secondary core, and non core subjects? Why/Why not?**

Each of the interviewees answered either yes or no to this question but asked for an opportunity to explain their responses. When responding yes, 42% of the interviewees expressed two views. The first was a consensus amongst six subjects that these are the skills that the workforce is looking. Therefore, in an effort to prepare our students for the

employment industry, these subjects require at least half of the time table. The second, as S12 stated, is that “ . . . subjects such as these need that much time in the schedule to meet curriculum requirements.” There was no dispute amongst the six subjects, as S3 stated, that “ . . . these subjects do form the basis and develop literacy and numeracy skills needed for pursuing other courses and areas of discipline.”

The second point raised was from 57% of the participants who answered no to this question. This group of interviewees stated that we must not neglect other subject areas because those subjects may be the reason why some students are still in school. In other words, S2 stated, “ . . . we need to be conscious of those students who do not excel in the areas of mathematics, science, and language arts but do excel in physical education, music, industrial arts, home economics, etc.” S9 stated, “ . . . in our commitment as educators, we must develop the “whole” student. In doing this, there are students who gain a sense of self achievement and interest in subject areas other than those listed as primary core in the reform documents.”

A second point raised by the subjects who answered no to this question is the issue of scheduling the secondary courses in the remaining section of the time table. Because the time is less for these courses, the interviewees felt that it is difficult to, first, offer a comprehensive and solid course to students and, secondly, to offer one which meets the needs of the students. S4 stated,

. . . the time allocated for music right now varies from school to school far more than other curricular areas. Right now, you are doing well if you get an average of 75 minutes in a six-day cycle. There are many areas in this province

who don't even have that time, they have only 30 minutes a cycle, or no time allocated whatsoever for music. I think if you're going to help students progress, you need to see them an absolute minimum of 90 minutes a cycle throughout the entire year. Then I think you can expect certain outcomes from that. I think a lot is done in the time that's allocated, but there are weaknesses in the outcome of the students, particularly in terms of literacy that result because there's inadequate time there.

The student and the parent interviewed expressed a concern at the difficulty of arranging their school time table in an effort to take arts courses because they were either trying to fit in their required courses first or with the slots they had left they could not take the elective courses they wanted because of time table clashes. The parent stated, “. . . I don't think that there's anything in our system presently geared toward children in high schools who want to go into the arts. There's no time to get music during the day, it's all after school.”

Finally, S6 stated that these terms were introduced for very straightforward reasons and have been somewhat overwhelmed since their introduction in the original 1993 document *Adjusting the Course*. He states, “. . . what we wanted to try to do was identify those subjects that should be taught to all students at all levels, . . . those subjects which should be taught to all students at some levels . . . and those subjects which should be taught to some students at some levels. . . it was designed to carve up the time table. It got overblown and we got a great deal of criticism for using the terminology.”

## **Category B: General Value and Support for Music Education**

### **Question #1**

**Is there a need for further study regarding the value and contribution of music education in the curriculum? Why/Why not?**

The responses to this question were equally split in half with yes and no answers.

There is no clear division of teachers versus administrators on either side. The yes and no groups were mixed in their makeup.

The participants who answered yes expressed a concern that there is constant talk of developing the whole person and as educators we know that is important. However, when it comes down to making decisions about our education system S1 stated, “. . . we go right back to the 3R’s.” S3 stated yes because they felt that music is really under stressed in the education system. He stated, “I’m not quite sure that students should have six or seven periods per cycle of social studies or of french, and probably two cycles for music. I think it would be much better if they had their primary subjects and then they were able to choose from three of the others and have those other three getting the other 50% of the timetable.” S3 went on to state that maybe studies need to be done to dispel the myth that music is a frivolous adventure because “. . . unless they [administrators] themselves are musicians, or have studied the discipline, many are building on the knowledge of what they had for a music program when they were in school. If it wasn’t a very good program, the school administrator may not give much support.”

S9 suggested that there is a need for further study because there is a need for more awareness of what has been done. “It seems that the general public and so-called education people often don’t understand the value of it [music education] until they have a child who has experienced it, and then all of a sudden it’s like the light bulb comes on and they realize what this has done to their child’s development overall.”

S10 stated that there is a need for further study because it appears as though music has dropped in importance in the eyes of the powers that be. She states, “. . . when I attended school, that was quite a while ago, we had more music, art, and drama then. If they are going to educate the whole person, they’ve got to look at the whole person. There are a lot of children that three quarters of their makeup is geared toward the arts, the other quarter is geared toward the maths and sciences.”

Finally, S14 stated that there should be more study for the simple fact that “. . . there does seem to be an under-representation of research on the value of the arts to an overall education. If you look broadly, that is outside of North America, you tend to find a few more things.”

From those participants who answered no, one main point was made. Interviewees felt that there have been many good studies done, but unfortunately the people that make the decisions don’t necessarily accept the results of the study. S1 states that music has been studied to death. So as S4 suggests it’s not that more studies are needed, it’s a case of changing the mind-set of people. S11 stated,

. . . with regard to music, it gets the short shrift I think when you stack it against math, science, and language arts - it’s

interesting that happens in a society that traditionally has valued music a lot. It may be that the kind of music that we try to teach is not the kind of music that society has valued. How many of us include the accordion in our music programs, how many include the spoons, or the folk songs, or the culture? So it may be that the music programs have been teaching something which is not central to the local culture.

Finally, S7 stated that in Newfoundland there isn't a need to study the value of music education because one of the things Newfoundlanders are very aware of is the value of music. He stated, "... one of the problems is that the people who are involved in music, per se in the province, are not the people who are involved in music education."

## **Question #2**

**Do you feel there is value in having music education in the formal school system?**

All 14 participants agreed that there is value in having music education in the formal school system. Most interviewees elaborated on their answers, while S4 and S9 did not.

The first view which emerged, as S2 and S12 stated, is that our education system focuses on developing the entire individual from a holistic point of view. Therefore, S1 stated, "... music can play an extremely important role in this development of the child." S5 added that as educators we must also be aware that education is for all students." He stated,

... for those that would pursue a career later in the area of the fine arts, then obviously there should be a degree of

exposure, but not only for them. You become a better person, a better scientist if you have some appreciation for music and art and some other areas, not just that narrow area. So for public education, I believe we have to be committed to what I consider to be a balanced curriculum, and certainly that includes fine arts, and you'll be pleased to hear music.

S11 stated that we should also consider liberally educating our students. In other words, we should offer a liberal arts program to expose students to a variety of experiences and not just training them for jobs.

The second view discussed is that students need variety in their school day. S13 stated, “. . . you need a break from doing math. Music to me is something that's enjoyable to learn, it's nice to have, I don't know how I'd get through a day without it.” However, S3 stated that students should not be coming out of class to experience a music program. He stated that the student loses instructional time from their other courses and in general disrupts the lesson plans of other teachers. S3 stated, “. . . this type of practice also discredits the music program because it starts to become a frustration to other staff members. Consequently, students should be taking a credit courses in music and not missing instructional time.”

This lends to another issue of studying music in the school system. S6 stated, “the real problem is this performance business. Music in some sense emphasizes performance, in the common sense term. It doesn't emphasize achievement, in the sense that it doesn't grade students or it doesn't grade them on how well they do and it certainly doesn't fail them in any sense because they don't do well.” S6 continued, stating that a decision must

be made concerning whether students are in music for participation or for something more. If you want something more than that, S6 stated, “. . . music should be taken seriously enough to do it and emphasize achievement in some way. Therefore, it is necessary to have a strong academic, as well as performance program, in place.”

S14 stated that there is no question in the value of having music in the formal school system and this is clearly evident by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. He stated that the new legislation in the issue of school viability is a school's ability to offer what's called a minimum provincial program. S14 stated, “. . . if I'm not mistaken, the Minister of Education did include both art and music at the primary, elementary, and intermediate grades as one of the programs that schools need to be able to offer in order to be considered viable.”

S8 stated, “. . . although I feel there is a place for music education in the formal school setting, there is a problem facing administrators. In our school we are finding it difficult to employ a full time music teacher because we do not have the student enrolment in music courses.” S8 also stated that they did not know if student enrolment is low because they have not made a link to the arts courses in their school or if it's simply a case of not showing students their options.

S1 stated that there is a tremendous benefit of having music in the formal school system. He states, “. . . unfortunately it is very difficult to identify what those values are. You can get utilitarian and say that music promotes team work, social interaction, and other relevant things . . . but there is something that's very inarticulate about music that is

very difficult to try and define.” S1 concludes that “. . . it is for these reasons that people get hung up in their justification of what music is because it is such a difficult thing to articulate.”

In summary, S7 suggests that, “. . . music education should have a place in the formal school system because it should be the soul of the school.”

### **Question #3**

#### **Are arts and music subjects supported by the province’s educational system?**

The responses to this question were very mixed from all educational parties represented. Twenty-eight percent of the participants answered a firm yes, while the other 71% felt that there has been support in the past but in more recent years this does not appear to be the case.

From 71% of the interviewees, one concern raised is that it appears as though there is support on a district level for music but not necessarily on a Department of Education level. S1 stated, “. . . the superintendent is so impressed by what music is doing in our school board, he is a firm supporter.” However, the concern surfaced that there is no music coordinator with the Avalon East Board and no music consultant at the Department of Education. As a result, S7 and S9 stated that actions such as these send a significant message to educators and the general public. S7 stated, “. . . these subjects are not supported by the province’s education system. At one time we had a music consultant and an art consultant and they are gone now. I think when it comes time to cut, these

courses come back to the concept of non-core. I think Government has put music and art in a non-core category and they therefore go first.”

S10 stated that there is certainly no support given to these courses but there is lip service given about supposed support. S2 stated,

. . . there's this little pat on the back that says good for you, that's great that you're doing that, but in essence they don't want it, and we're feeling it now in school by teachers of the core subjects who are saying I don't want time missed form math, I don't want time missed for science, and as long as this is a curriculum addition, as long as it is extra curricular, it's fine, but as long as it is a part of the curriculum, it's a disturbance, both from within the school and from the administration and from Government as well.

A second concern raised by the interviewees is that support has been shown for music and arts programs but at the expense of the music program itself. For example, S3 stated that Ensemble Performance has been put into the curriculum but it's been to the detriment of other music courses. In other words, this course has been put in the curriculum but others have been taken out. Moreover, he stated that although this course is a part of the curriculum, the manner in which it is placed in the school time table is not the same as the placement of other courses. S3 stated, “. . . we are asking students to come out in the mornings when they have no control over the situation in their household, and we're partially basing their marks on whether they're there at 8:00 or 8:15 and meanwhile back at the house, you don't know what that child is going through to get there on time.” In conclusion, S3 stated that this arrangement is upsetting because students don't have to do that for their math classes or any of their core courses.

A third issue raised is that there does indeed appear to be support for the arts and music programs because of the teacher allocation for specialists and the ongoing construction of curriculum and courses for this area. However, as S4 states it's one thing to assume that this is going on and another to insist that it be happening in the schools. She states, " . . . I think the Department [of Education] has shied away and not supported adequately because they have accepted that if you do not have a music specialist then you cannot offer a music program." S4 concluded suggesting that there should be more support from the Department of Education and more demand for music instruction from teachers and administrators. She stated that the time that is allocated and the curriculum which is set out from the Department of Education for music should be expected to be delivered in the schools.

S9 added that Government's lack of support for these programs are really affecting their place in the school. She stated that there is a provincial curriculum, yet if you look at the province as a whole, there are vast areas that have absolutely nothing in the way of arts programs in the schools. S9 added that the Government is saying they support the arts and music but they are not providing the teaching units required to offer these programs in the schools. She continues suggesting that the responsibility is passed on to the school board to make the allocation decision. However, when there are not enough units, the arts are generally cut first because administrators do not know the value of music education. S9 stated that unless there's something done to ensure that there's

personnel to teach music from the top, i.e. the Department of Education, we will continue to see an eroding of music education programs. S9 states,

. . . there is a slipping back from the gains made in the 1970's and 1980's, it appears as though the Government is paying lip service to the whole issue. We just lost the consultant, of course, and yet at a curriculum level, in program development, the Department of Education are supporting music. But when decisions go up through whoever, when it comes to dollars and cents, and actually having people to teach it, the support is just not there, it is more on the surface. The Department [of Education] will get up and often say the right things but unless they can actually hire teachers to teach, what kind of message is this sending?

In general, the participants who did not feel there was adequate support stated that the Department of Education, i.e. the Government, tend to give lip service about the support for arts and music courses in the province's school system, but do not follow through on their statements about the support. S12 stated that this became evident to him in budget allocations.

. . . I can see a decrease in the amount of support. For example, I can remember just five years ago when we received our budgeting and granting, it was all listed down into math, science, music, physical education, and now it's lumped into language arts and science, but now you have all the other non categorical stuff, so music now has to compete with physical education and industrial arts and whatever. So, it's easier to get lost in the shuffle.

The student interviewed stated, “. . . lately, the Government doesn't have enough money so music is threatened. There must be money somewhere to keep it [music programs] going, you can't just cut it out of your system, it's not fair, it's not right.”

Those participants who felt that Government were supporting the programs offered the following reasons. S14 stated that there are various types of support. He states,

. . . I don't feel that we have pushed mathematics and science in particular, at the expense of other things. What we tried to do is have a good strong program in mathematics and science and so on throughout the grades, but we have maintained up to this year a consultant in both of the areas of the arts, music and art, to try and help us develop and put in place a good music program.

S14 concluded stating that this could be interpreted as a lack of support for music, however " . . . we [the Department of Education] have a consultant who has been given responsibility for music and art, his expertise is art, but for instance, we have contracted last year's music consultant to finalize a curriculum framework, so we're continuing to develop while we don't have a music consultant."

S5 stated that in today's society, the reality is a decreasing staff at the Department of Education level. He added that the Department of Education had a music consultant and art consultant for a number of years, but when the program development division dropped from twelve down to seven staff people, rather than having specialists in both areas, one person covers both the fine arts areas. S5 stated that the Department of Education continues to tap into the resources of various university professors and local teachers to provide the expertise on working committees. He concluded stating that,

. . . on the curriculum development side I've been pleased and I think that our track record is good. On the implementation side, because of the vast number of teachers involved and also at the board level there have been very

few specialists at the board level, program coordinators to work with teachers as well. So these two factors I think, mean that we could do a much better job in the improvement of fine arts education throughout the province, particularly on the delivery side.

S11 made a very significant point which impacted on their perception and answer to this question. They addressed the issue of what the true definition of Government is. He stated, “when you say Government I think you’re talking about the people. I think the Government supports what the people want, when I say people, those who are influential.” S11 stated that Government reflects the general society and it doesn’t appear that the same sort of value is placed on music in the general society as there is math. He states, “. . . if you ask the person in the street what schools are about, they’ll say it’s about reading and writing and things to get a job.”

#### **Question #4**

**Is there strong support for these programs by the general community? Why/Why not?**

Some interviewees made the distinction of there being support but it depended on what the situation is. For example, S2 stated that during the year there is not a lot of support for music programs, but when Remembrance Day, Christmas, Easter, or Graduation Ceremonies are held everyone is glad to see a band or a choir participate. However, she said it is sometimes difficult to get a large audience at school performances, therefore, monetary support is not there.

A second interviewee stated that these points are very true but are also affected by the success of the school. S3 stated, “. . . I think if your program is successful, whether it be music or sports, the parents will then fall behind and support you.” S13 stated that her experience has been that their school bands get support if they need it. She stated, “. . . our bands do so well when we compete that support is usually there. The support isn’t present on a daily basis but if we needed any type of support we would be able to get it.

S12 stated that music programs have been supported where it’s competitive. He stated that other programs that are not competitive, do not carry as much prominence and therefore receive less support. S4 stated, “. . . I think that varies in the school community, depending on what’s happening with music in your school. If you have a very supportive school community and they can see for themselves first hand the value of the music experience for their children then they will support you.”

S10 stated that the support is getting greater than it was in the past. S9 stated that the support is definitely there now because sometimes when programs are in jeopardy people tend to realize their significance more. S10 stated that it appears as though support is getting greater than it was for the very reason of eroding music programs.

S11 made the distinction that one’s definition of community would give entirely different answers. For example, He stated that if the definition of community support is parental support then yes there is community support. However, if the definition of community support is the general public, then, no, the support is not there. S1 stated,

“ . . . I think Newfoundlanders continue to view themselves as have not people . . . so it is only when a choir or band receives an award or distinction of some kind that the community jumps on the bandwagon in support of that group in ways such as attending a concert. However, it would not occur to a member of the general community to attend, for example, a high school’s Christmas concert.”

In conclusion, S7 and S8 stated that the support is definitely there from a parental perspective. Every year during concert time their school is filled with an audience. Moreover, both subjects stated that the parents are very involved in fund-raising and allocating the money to equipment the music program needs.

#### **Question #5**

**Will there be any effects on our students and society if arts and music subjects were absent from our education system? Why/Why not?**

The answer to this question by all 14 interviewees was an overwhelming yes. The general consensus from all of the interviewees is that the effect would be a negative one. The main reason offered for this negative effect, as S8 stated, is that as educators we must make a commitment to develop the whole student. S9 stated, “ . . . in terms of developing an individual who can experience and think and be well rounded, then we need to turn out real people, not robots. If we only have science, technology and mathematics, we’ll end up with robots.”

S10 stated that music is such a big part of our culture. If it were absent from our school system so would the opportunity of experiencing the culture of our province. S12

stated that it would be detrimental to those who have an inherent gift in the area of music.

He stated,

. . . schooling sometimes is the outlet where a lot of talents are discovered, students are motivated and encouraged that if you have the gift you ought to pursue it and refine it, not only for employment purposes but for their own intrinsic value, self esteem and self worth. I know a lot of kids here for example who are not A students who have singing abilities, it's their claim to fame, and if you take that away then the only people you have who have any self worth is those who are academically bright. That's unfair. That's a gift as well. That's important as well as the academic excellence.

S14 stated that students would get a less than adequate education because the full range of the curriculum is important in order for a student to have a good broad base education program. He stated, “. . . one of the essential graduation learnings that the four Atlantic provinces have in common is aesthetic expression. While I don't think aesthetic expression is the sole domain of an art's education, certainly art's education would be a major contributor to students developing knowledge and skills in this area.” S14 added that art's education does more things than people realize. He stated, for instance, art's education is a major contributor to developing things like creative thinking skills, which can be, for example, important to post secondary technology programs. S14 stated, “. . . I've also been told by post secondary institutions, particularly Cabot College, that for a number of their programs, including technology programs, that students with a good strong arts background are much better prepared for these programs than students who don't have that type of background.” Finally, S4 stated that the danger in not offering a

full range curriculum program results in the province's students getting a 'lopsided' education.

S7 stated that we need to recognize whether the absence of arts or music courses would have a negative impact on children. He stated, "... it's like taking color out of the world. If children have to go without any color in the world it would be like going without music in the world. I don't know how children could live without music."

S5 stated that there is tremendous value for the fine arts in the curriculum and without them we don't have a balanced curriculum. He stated, "... I hate to see the day when we don't have it, even though I know in reality in smaller schools there's very limited exposure to these areas, but nonetheless it's still there as recognized within the curriculum as you'll see in the new draft documents."

S6 stated, "... they're not absent ... they're not likely to be absent ... these things [arts courses] are inherent parts of the curriculum and I don't think they're under very much threat at all. He stated, "... there's a question of time, there's a question of emphasis, there's a question of how you get the teachers to teach music because there's some funny things happening in the employment of teachers, however, my sense is that they're not at any risk in the curriculum at all."

Finally, S3 stated that the reaction to something like this would be severe in Newfoundland. "We have got such a tradition of music here, between the schools, the churches, the folk musicians, and everything else, I'd be surprised if there wasn't a great

reaction . . . Hopefully the musicians would keep on working in spite of the bad Government.”

## **Category C:        Decision Making and Curriculum**

### **Question #1**

#### **Who are the decision-makers regarding curriculum development?**

The general perception of who the decision-makers of the province’s curriculum is the Government, i.e. the Department of Education, or the party in power, i.e. the Minister of Education. S5 added that there is a process in place which involves “ . . . various types of public, experts in the field, university people, teachers and the NLTA.” However, in reality 78% of the interviewees stated that most decisions or recommendations are made at other levels than this one. S11 stated,

. . . we would like to think that decision makers are a group of people in Confederation Building . . . I don’t think that’s the case at all. I think they react to public pressure and so the influence on them comes from the population, exerted in a variety of ways, through lobby groups and interest groups and so on. But I think it’s very difficult, for example, for somebody at the Department of Education to say this is what I want to do and therefore this is the way it’s going to be . . . so I really do think decision making reflects the general population in some sense.

S11 stated that there is a tendency to look at people in the Department of Education and say these are the culprits, however, he doesn’t think that’s the case at all. He stated that the people at the Department of Education level just reflect what they are hearing from

other sources. He said, “. . . occasionally there’ll be a strong-willed individual who will try to skew things his or her way but by large, they’re taking their cues.”

A second point to be raised concerning the decision-makers of our curriculum focused on economics. S13 stated that what ultimately influences decisions is money not the general public. She stated, “. . .if they don’t have the money to fund courses, they won’t do it. We have a problem with money in our province, and that’s influencing decisions.” S2 stated, “. . . Government’s mandate is another agenda, and that agenda is economics.” S9 stated, “. . . decisions are being driven by an agenda from outside the education circle . . . it’s a movement that’s come right across the country, probably in reaction to economic factors and the influence of business on education. It is a reality now that it is not who but what is the decision-maker for our curriculum.” S8 stated that in a time of financial restraint the education system is unable to do nice things because it comes down to the essentials.

S1 simply stated, “. . . unfortunately the wrong people are making decisions.” His perception is that the people who sit on the Committees are educators who are too far removed from what’s going on in the actual day to day operation of school music programs that they should not be making these decisions. S1 stated,

. . . there are people at the university level that are clearly not part of what goes on in schools, they are so far removed from what is going on from the realism of what’s happening. The support that we get from the university is minimal and certainly does not qualify them to make judgements about what I am going to teach - ludicrous. Yet if you look at curriculum development committees, it’s these people who make the decisions as to what to teach,

it's ridiculous. The people on these committees should be those who are in the field and know what's appropriate to make music a successful participant in the curriculum.

S3 stated that ultimately he thinks that for music in the junior and senior high areas the teacher in his or her own school is the curriculum developer. He stated that the individual teacher will tend to stress their own interest the most, or probably their area of expertise the most. He suggests that this is probably the case because of the different levels students are at in terms of their musical training.

S4 stated that officially the decision-maker is the Department of Education. She goes on to say that currently the program development staff is significantly reduced with the loss of a music consultant at the Department of Education and music coordinators at the School Boards. S4 stated that in the past they have significantly influenced curriculum construction and development. She stated,

. . . the music consultant has been able to speak to the powers that be at the Department of Education and help then realize the need for revising and developing curriculum. Without that person there, I am really quite concerned about curriculum development in the future. Finances play a big part in which areas receive attention and where we are not primary core and where we do not have somebody to help these people realize what we need, then I'm afraid we will be pushed on the back burner.

S10 stated that it's really hard to know. She continued stating that it appears to come from the Department of Education, yet some material is outdated or unsuitable for the classroom. She believes that " . . . instead of having people on committees with doctorates, take your run of the mill teacher with experience and say what do you think of

this or what do you think of that . . . this is important because many of the people legislating curriculum have been out of the classroom for years.”

Finally, S14 stated that ultimately the decision-maker is the Minister of Education or the Premier, however, the school principal is perhaps the key decision maker in the entire process. He cites an example of an arts educator who became the principal of a school that was offering a very narrow arts program, no art, no music, and no drama. After only four months into the school year students and parents were demanding an art’s program. S14 concluded stating,

. . . at the Department of Education, we’ve made a commitment to continue and to develop art and music programs and that will not stop. Whether or not students get exposure to art and music depends on the school, and that’s where I think the principal comes in. School councils which will be mandated by the new School’s Act can bring pressure to bear on principals, so in some ways maybe parents will be key elements of the decision making in the future.

## **Question #2**

**Are the decision-makers of our curriculum informed and capable of making these decisions?**

The answers to this question was a definite no from 64% of the interviewees, while 28% of the interviewees stated that the decision makers try to be informed. One participant simply stated that this is not even an issue.

The interviewees who answered that they try to be informed were those representatives from the Department of Education. S5 stated that the Department of

Education is now recognizing that the public is the constituency. He stated that at one time it was more or less true and some people probably still feel that, somebody at the Department of Education develops this [curriculum] and throws it out there and teachers have to do it, this however is not the case. S5 stated that the Department of Education goes with drafts and consultations for not only curriculum issues but also broader educational issues which are pending.

S14 felt that schools, administrators, and teachers have somewhat been misinformed about information and this could be the reason why they might have preconceived ideas about the question of decision-makers being informed. He cites the example that as he addressed a group of music and art educators in a presentation, there was general agreement that administrators tended to base their perceptions about music programs on their own experiences as a student. S14 states unfortunately an administrators experience was lack of exposure to music programs so “. . . they probably still see art and music programs as being like the one they did.”

S12 felt that the Department of Education was informed. He based his answer around the idea that our province has a standardized curriculum. In other words, S12 stated that the Department of Education has tried to recognize that although some districts may feel that the suggested programs are out of reach for them, for those schools who can have such programs it is best to have a standard curriculum in place.

S11 also felt that the decision-makers were informed. He stated that the people he knew at the Department of Education are very capable people. He said that it is important

to remember that if, for example, you take reports such as *The Royal Commission's Our Children Our Future* (1992) or *Adjusting the Course* (1994) you might be getting the viewpoints of some people at the Department of Education, but really you're getting the viewpoints of the general public. S11 stated that if anything you're getting the viewpoint of the people at the Board of Trade who are pushing a particular agenda, but that particular agenda has been pushed strongly enough so that there is a large following of that agenda within the general population, and therefore to say that it's only people at the Department of Education that are the decision makers is not accurate. He states, "... I think that's a political activity and politicians very seldom, if ever, lead the parade, they tend to follow the parade."

For those interviewees who felt that the decision makers were not informed and not capable of making decisions, their reasons were primarily based around the belief that although the Department of Education states they attempt to contact educators there is still a perception that they don't talk to enough teachers. S2 stated that if they were as educated as they say, or if they were to do the best job in curriculum decisions, then one would think that they would come to the schools and ask the teachers for their input into the curriculum. She states, "... they sit in ivory towers and do it from there, where most of them haven't been in a classroom in 20-30 years." S2 also added that the curriculum decision makers are very removed from the situation and yet they're making decisions which they know nothing about. She stated, "... it's like me as a music and arts teacher taking over or making a decision regarding health care in the province. What do I know

about that. They still make these decisions and it is absolutely amazing. That's typical though, isn't it?"

For music programs specifically, S4 stated that she doesn't have faith that the decision-makers are musically educated to the degree where they can make those decisions. She stated, "... they can have sympathy for music, and usually what you get is great support for music until you really need something significant. But I don't think right now they have the expertise to lead that way."

S7 added that he didn't think they have any knowledge base in terms of what music and art are about in the school. He stated that this was evident in decisions made by the School Board. S7 stated that the School Board had a full time music consultant that went to half time then the half time position dissolved all together. As a result, S7 stated that one of the assistant superintendents, with absolutely no music background, took over the responsibility for music. He stated,

... when it came time to hire music teachers or to put money in the programs, she didn't know what to do, so she had to rely on the expertise of other people. Then, because there was no music consultant, there was no funding for music, so that made the problem greater. So after a year or two there was no need for her to be involved in music.

S8 had somewhat of a different view concerning informed decision-making. He stated that his first response would be no, but if you talk to the people making the decisions you realize they have made tough decisions themselves about the province's curriculum. S8 stated that the problem in Newfoundland is that decisions are not easily made, "... we're down to the fifth year of cuts, and when you're getting down to that

point, you're starting to throw out some very critical things, and I think that's the problem. I think we've cut too much, and the decisions that we're making now, people sit around and try to justify it."

S13 felt that "... they don't know the importance of these [arts] courses. They feel it's not as important as math, but to somebody it is. Music is so underestimated, it is just looked upon as a vegetable course, anybody can do that, but it's not true."

S3 stated that he's sure that the decision makers are being informed from sources somewhere. However, he adds that the weakest workshops he has attended have been the music ones and that the material he has left with very rarely works in the classroom. S3 concludes stating that he doesn't know where the advice is coming from "... but it is really poor advice. It should be that we want these children to have an outstanding aesthetic education, that they can appreciate a painting or Beethoven and take pride in their school ... which you can't get from math or science."

Finally, S6 stated that this is not even an issue because there's no question about whether the decision-makers of our curriculum are informed and capable of making decisions. He states that the flaw cannot be laid at the level of curriculum construction because the curriculum is in pretty good shape. S6 states, "... granted it [curriculum] always needs updating, and some of its quite controversial in terms of what you should be emphasizing, but generally speaking my sense is that ... the curriculum is in pretty decent shape."

### **Question #3**

#### **On what basis do you feel they make their decisions?**

Two main points were made by the participants in response to this question. The first, as S1 states, is that they base their decisions on a theoretical or research perspective. S6 added “ . . . the actual content of curriculum as it’s developed is mainly the professional literature in the area . . . this also includes asking the professionals in the given field.” For example, as S3 stated, in the case of music, they must be asking musicians. However, as stated previously, S3 reiterates that he has rarely, if ever, returned from a music workshop with hands on material that he can take and go with in his classroom. The material, S3 suggests, tends to be so “artsy fartsy” it’s inoperable in a normal situation. S4 adds that input from the boards and special interest councils are also included in the Department of Education’s information pool when making curriculum decisions.

However, all 14 participants also stated that when tapping into the above mentioned sources they [the decision makers] must ensure that all literature and experts are tapped into to ensure that all avenues have been exhausted. S10 stated that it is important that the decision makers recognize that they should be forming their decisions on a practical basis and not a theoretical one.

S2 stated that economics play a role in curriculum decisions. She said that it is a sign of the times. “ . . . We’re in a time of economic restraint and as we well know the cuts that have come first are in education and health. So if they think that they can do it,

they do, and justify themselves by saying that if they can save x amount of dollars by cutting here they will.”

The representatives from the Department of Education stated that the decisions are based on what they feel would be in the best interest of the children. Consequently, as S5 stated the more recent decisions have evolved from the Royal Commission studies. “. . . That study in itself had a tremendous amount of public consultation and we’ve moved on quite a number of these recommendations. We feel that the approach of public consultation used in the Royal Commission basically has given us a fair degree of comfort of what the public wants.”

S7 suggested that the decision makers are influenced by other boards and what’s happening across the country but are not influenced by expertise from the School Board or Department of Education level in this province because there’s none there. He states, “. . . I don’t think anybody at our board level currently, will be keeping up on the research as to what’s coming next. I think all they will be doing is looking at numbers and seeing where they can cut.”

S8 suggests that courses are being placed by the perception of where it fits. He states, “. . . it’s [arts courses] still seen as nice to do as opposed to being primary core or secondary core or essential courses.” S8 states that he doesn’t know if people are listening to the industry when they’re telling us that the student needs not only the math and science, but also needs the creative edge as well. This interviewee sites an example of presentations he attended one year that were given to teachers in Ontario by IBM and

Human Resources Canada. These organizations stated, “. . . we want the creative edge, we do not want to sit around a board table, design your computer or a piece of software with people who have not experienced Beethoven or acting in a Shakespeare play, we want them to know these things . . . we can’t train them to do that, that’s got to come from school.” S8 went on to say that these companies stated that they would train students, but the school needs to start them off with that creative edge. The subject stated that these sorts of requests from areas such as IBM and Human Resources Canada have to be listened to more.

Finally, S14 stated that decisions are probably being made based on what they feel would be in the best interest of the children. He states, “. . . when we did the review of the senior high program a couple of years ago . . . we did a survey of one thousand parents and asked them to write the subjects that their children would do, the last two were music and art. They’re probably reflecting what society thinks about music and art.” S14 concluded stating that time tabling also affects decisions. He stated, “. . . you are time tabling the subjects you see as the highest value, so if you have a small school, you’ll probably say I’ve got to offer mathematics, I’ve got to offer language arts and science, and eventually you say that’s all I can offer, but that reflects a valuing of the subjects, so to some extent I think that goes on as well.”

#### Question #4

#### **What are some possible effects of their decisions for school offerings? and for the Student?**

In general all 14 participants felt that the effects would be numerous. One of the participants made the point that his answer to this question was affected by his general concerns that there are courses which are going to be cut. S1 stated that, “. . . in order to answer that question you have to try and anticipate or try to visualize what school would be like without things like band programs or physical education programs. He asked,

. . . what would school be like? Who knows realistically, who knows what it would be like. Maybe the loss of music wouldn't have a tremendous ill effect at all . . . all I know is that the kids that I deal within my experiences with music, I find that there's a dimension to these kids that is not present in kids who are not involved in music, that their ability to be compatible in a society such as our.

A second interviewee stated that her concern stems from the change in graduation requirements facing students. S2 stated that there's going to be more stress on the students to get more credits finished in a certain amount of time. Moreover, she felt that the requirements also tend to indicate “. . . that there are only certain ones that they [students] should do in order to be best suited for the job market when they come out, and I think that the pressure that's going to be put on them will be enormous . . .” S13 added that this combined with fewer course offerings in a subject such as music, limits what a student can fit in the time slots which are free in their timetable. She stated, “. . . It won't give people any choices, you'll be forced to do things that maybe you do not need . . . but it leaves the rest of them out.”

S3 stated that there is a tremendous downloading of responsibilities and work to teachers, therefore, the effects will “. . . depend on how much energy the teacher has, how busy they are, and how much they want a program to succeed . . . the program will fall back on each individual teacher and how much the staff supports him or her.” S3 stated that music educators really need to have a program in place and get out and prove themselves so that they can continue to get support. He also stated that in terms of the students, this kind of work on the part of the teacher is necessary. If there is a musical student at any given school where a teacher is very tired or their work load is too great, “. . . then you have a musical child who slips through the cracks.” This interviewee concluded stating that if music was taken out of the school curriculum the result would be negligible because most teachers are doing their programs outside of class time anyway. He stated, “. . . how long somebody can sustain that from the time they start their career, I don't know . . .”

S4 raised the issue of site-based management. She stated that in terms of the direction the system is moving there is already evidence of schools determining what courses they can and cannot offer. She cited the example of technology courses versus music courses. S4 stated the approach appears to have become “. . . how are we going to put this technology course in, take the music time.”

Three Department of Education officials did not see this as being an issue. S5, S6, and S14 all agreed that there is an effort on the Department of Educations behalf to offer a balanced curriculum to students, and this balanced curriculum includes arts courses.

S7 stated that in terms of offerings, the boards, year by year, have started and will continue to cut back. As a result, he stated that schools will go to the communities to look for volunteers to help with some areas, with music potentially being a candidate. S7 also stated that eventually this approach will die out too,

... I think what's going to happen in the long run is that we're going to go back thirty or forty years ago when there was no music at all and no physical education, and there was very much an emphasis on the basics. Children will come to school at nine o'clock in the morning and they will work until three o'clock in the afternoon and then they'll go home again, totally bored and totally disinterested and that in twenty years time, someone will say how come our scores were so low again. Straight basics.

S10 felt that Government should not make their decisions by talking to people who are already in education " . . . they've got to branch out a bit more, talk to medical doctors, talk to career academies, they've given out so many questionnaires to students about what they want and what they need, there should be enough there to know what's relevant now."

Finally, S12 noted that curriculum runs in cycles. Presently, he states, it's likely, and hopefully, so our math, language arts, and social studies scores will rise. S12 stated, " . . . you'll probably see a decrease in student satisfaction with the system and probably in 10 years it'll flatten out again and drift back toward a more balanced approach. But as it is right now, I know that business has a really large impact upon what courses are offered, especially in the high school."

## **Category D: Educational Reform**

### **Question #1**

#### **What factors have influenced current educational reform? Why?**

Two main points emerged from this question. The first point discussed by 64% of the interviewees is, as S14 stated, the shrinking financial resources in today's society have influenced current educational reform. S8 stated, "... a lot of it has been financially driven ... the idea that we have to be as good as another province, we have to be as good as the world is a factor. We don't have as much money as the rest of the provinces." S4 added,

... money primarily. I have tried to determine what else could have affected some of the recommendations that have been made. I think that there have been certain special interest influences in their whole decision making process and of this math, science, and technology being a mainline of focus. But I think predominantly it gets back to money and I think that is the major influence. ... If we can help teachers, we're helping students and I'm rather concerned right now because it seems like our channels for help and for communication are being cut, and that, I think, will be a major problem.

S4 stated that the Government has been looking for ways to save money in education and in doing so they have made some major cuts which have not been thought through completely. She feels that the Government has tried to do things too quickly and that the schools and individuals are not ready to take on and accept the role that has been handed to them right now.

The second point raised by 28% of the interviewees is, as S5 states, there is a need for change in our education system because of a competitive changing society. S12 adds that “. . . as the population increases, as the number of jobs decreases, and more competition for less work, it’s going to go to those who are better trained technically.” S9 stated that because of this reality, education is being examined everywhere because it has to change and improve. She stated, “. . . what we did in the fifty’s and sixty’s is not what needs to be done today . . . you can’t keep going on the status quo . . . nor can you keep having thirty-five kids herded from one room into another room being taught a, b, and c . . . however, there seemed to be a very small number who were having great influence on certain subject areas. . . they had an agenda.” S9 concluded stating that maybe her perception is wrong, but as a person just teaching in a school in her field, it “. . . seemed like we were hearing over and over again more math, more science, more for the core and we don’t need music in the school system, they should do that privately . . . and yet they [the Government] promote a philosophy of the balanced child . . . to me that’s a bit frightening that there’s such a strong representation from a certain group.”

S10 stated that reform has evolved out of the people in power recognizing that there has been a need for change in an effort to see that different curriculum gets offered to students regardless of their level, color, race, or religion. While S1 stated that the need for this change has stemmed from the idea that our students are ill equipped to face an ever changing and fast paced technological society.

Some other points raised by interviewees include the following. S3 stated that one of the factors influencing current educational reform is incompetence on the part of the Government. He stated, “. . . the Government tends to take things out on the backs of children and sick people.” He went on to state that in the case of music “. . . it’s not being promoted in the right way at the top. I don’t know who is giving advice to who, but it is sure wrong.”

S11 stated, “. . . I think there’s been a myth developed in the western world that competition on an international sphere determines national prosperity. National prosperity was contingent upon the highly educated populous, one that could be productive, and that meant doing the things that were necessary in order to make producers, and so we ended up with a focus on math, science, and language skills.” The subject concluded that when talking of English the Government is not really talking about exposure to fine literature but rather are talking about acquiring the kinds of basic skills necessary to write reports and read manuals.

S14 stated that what they [the Department of Education] are in the process of doing has been done in most every province in the country, not necessarily in the same way, but in the same process. He states that one of the reasons is for accountability. The interviewee stated, “. . . we do all types of indicators, how well we are doing in school, what we put into the school, we’re involved in national, regional, and international testing, all of which are designed to find out how well our students are doing.” S14 also stated

that politics have also been a driver in current educational reform. He stated, “. . . any Minister of Education wants to have an education system in which students do well.”

Finally, S6 made two points on current educational reform. The first is that if you focus on the curriculum “. . . what’s influenced reform is a kind of return to grassroots on the part of the public. The schools, however, are not doing a very good job in the basic core areas.” S6 stated that if you look at what’s driving reform more broadly in this province it “. . . is religion more than anything else. The rival between Government and the churches is driving reform and cost savings. That has almost nothing to do with curriculum.”

## **Question #2**

### **What direction is the curriculum moving as a result of these influences?**

Twelve of the interviewees agreed that as a result of these influences, the direction curriculum is moving in is one of science, math, and language. S10 stated, “. . . there’s definitely a need for it, but they’ve got to coordinate what they’re doing everywhere.” She suggested that this includes K to 12 teachers and also university professors. S10 stated, “. . . everybody has to work together.”

S1 stated that, “. . . it’s [the curriculum] moving to a technologically oriented curriculum, people believing things like mathematics and science and advance placement courses and this kind of trend lead toward excellence, that is the way we have to go.” S2

agreed that the curriculum is moving toward math, science, and technology, however, she states,

. . . I think maybe that's born out of Newfoundlanders perception of themselves of not being caught up with the rest of Canada. What I think sets us apart, has always set us apart, and has made us a unique province is the fact that we are so rich in the arts . . . unfortunately the Government, even though they may know it, won't give credence to it because if they do, it may mean that in order to support what we are artistically, it will cost them money. So they'd rather flush it.

S9 stated that a thrust of science, math, and technology is having a detrimental effect on music programs. She stated, “. . . you can see it in the high school programs because the enrolment has been going down. We're [music teachers] finding it difficult to have students take courses in music in high school because there's so many things that they have to take. By the time they get to high school years, it's very clear what subjects are really important.” Consequently, S7 views this as the curriculum moving in a negative direction. S13 stated, “. . . I don't think you're getting your full education if you're just getting math, science, language, or technology courses . . . you need to have music, you need to have secondary things. You have to have them, it's part of education, you just can't let them go and just focus on that, you only see one side of things, you don't see the other.” S4 stated that there will be a fragmentation of the curriculum,

. . . I think we are going to miss having that person or persons who are familiar with that entire K-12 development. If you contract out the curriculum you run the risk, I think of having certain biased influences on it. I can't say for sure, I'm just weary of certain things, but a person who is developing a curriculum part-time while they're working,

can have very limited time knowing the demands of teaching and the job, and I don't think we'll have the time to do as thorough a job as has been done in the past, because again, we've missed and lost key personnel.

One of the Department of Education officials, S5, interviewed stated that society itself places a tremendous value on what is now a designated core “ . . . so all we do is really follow the dictates of society.” S5 went on to state, “ . . . children coming out of primary and elementary school, must be able to read and write, so the language art's areas are probably critical to anything else that we will do.” He goes on to state, “ . . . students must be able to perform to an acceptable level in the area of mathematics because it's such a basic requirement and a prerequisite, if you don't get it earlier, you can't pick it up later because of the skills you loose, it is an accumulative thing.” However, another Department of Education official, S14, stated that the Department of Education attempts to try and promote a broad-based curriculum for all schools. He stated, “ . . . the viability of a school is going to be related to its ability to offer the minimum program, and the minimum program up to grade nine seems to include virtually all of the subject areas. So if a school can't offer all subjects, it would be considered one of the non viable schools. That's going to present some interesting challenges to the principals and teachers.”

S11 stated the reform documents have not had much of an influence and that they have not changed anything. “These are all slogans and smoke in mirrors.” He went on to state that if we were to look at the amount of time devoted to all these subject areas now, compare it to the amount of time that was devoted before theses documents, you'll find very little difference. S11 stated, “ . . . I'm willing to bet that music has not been

diminished one bit, except maybe in a certain school or another, but generally speaking the amount of time has remained the same. There was very little time devoted to music before, there won't be anymore, or any less now. Certainly not because of those documents."

Finally, S6 stated that curriculum construction is not moving anywhere very fast. He stated, "... details are moving a fair bit, in other words content tends to shift, but if you look at the emphasis on a particular area I don't see that shifting very much at all." S6 stated that at the primary and elementary levels there is no student choice and you take what's there, the choice is made by the school. At the junior high level subjects such as music and physical education begin to peter out, they are still a part of the curriculum but for whatever reason the emphasis becomes some what more academic, while in the high school the curriculum is based around student choice. Therefore, S6 stated that a subject such as music begins to taper out much more. He said that this is not a deliberate decision on anybody's part, it seems to be what happens at the local school level. S6 stated, "... as far as the Department of Education is concerned music is part of the junior high school curriculum. Whether it actually gets done or not is a function of a local school and a local school board."

### **Question #3**

#### **How are reform policies affecting curriculum construction and development?**

As with question number two 28% of the interviewees answered that the focus of the curriculum appears to be becoming math, science, and technology oriented. S13 stated that there is a focus on these subject areas because they appear to be the courses that society is demanding for the education system. S3 stated, “. . . it’s math, English, and science, without a doubt.

A second point raised by interviewees, as S2 stated, is that immediate administrators will not have as much say as they did in the past to ensure that schools retain something of the arts. She stated, “. . . with the restructured board this is really going to be gone, because now you’re answerable to a much bigger board and it’s going to be much more impersonal.” This is a major concern because, as S7 states, it appears as though the curriculum is being imposed from the top down.

Two interviewees, S9 and S10, simply stated that generally the effect the reform policies are having is a negative impact on different areas of schooling. While S1 stated, “. . . from a developmental point of view reform policies are having little effect because things are at a standstill. There are some new courses that are being piloted this year but it’s just paying lip service.” S4 stated that her concern is “. . . the loss of personnel, in particular, are where we [music educators] are going to lose out.”

Two of the Department of Education officials interviewed state that the reform policies are promoting and offering a broad-based curriculum and education. They both

stated that this education includes a variety of experiences and exposure from all areas of the curriculum.

#### **Question #4**

##### **Is there a prioritizing of curriculum?**

In response to this question all 14 interviewees agreed that there is a prioritizing of curriculum. S1 stated that right now there certainly is an understandable trend. He stated that a lot of the reason is because as music educators, we have practically failed in trying to justify our existence. He stated,

. . . it's really our own fault. The opportunities were given to us and we failed. There were all kinds of attempts by trying to make people feel guilty and getting them to write letters and trying to develop some advocacy for music education. We had an opportunity and we never seized it, a lot of it is because we're very complacent, somehow we think we're untouchable and that's not the case and that may not be the case.

He concluded stating that with the reorganization of the schools most of the power is going to be at the school level, it's now going to be up to the principal to decide whether there is going to be a music program or not. S1 stated, ". . . you know, I don't have a problem with that because if we can't justify our existence, how can you expect anyone to support something that they really don't know why it's important. Our [music educators] biggest problem is that we are too complacent."

S2 stated that the prioritizing right now consists of math, science, and technology first and then maybe language is secondary after that. She went on to say that you need

only to look at the student's perception of prioritizing too. This educator stated that the student's perception is that if you are an art's educator then you teach the vegetable courses, you teach the bird courses, and why do we have homework in that anyway. S2 stated that if you go into biology or math, because students sit for 40 minutes and write notes from the board, go home and memorize them, then write them on a test, students have learned something. However, this interviewee stated that students usually forget it after the test, so what have they actually learned. She concluded,

. . . the perception is that this is a stronger education because it is discussed based, performance based, and involves inner discipline and responsibility outside of the classroom. But where is this perception coming from, if it's not steered by teachers of these so called core subjects, as well as any reform documents. The idea is you've got your stressful subjects now but don't worry because you got your bird courses after words.

S3 agreed that there is a prioritizing of curriculum. He stated that it's the core subjects of math, science, language, and technology which have been brought forward over the last couple of years. He stated, ". . . with the Crocker commission and this type of work being done, it doesn't appear very well for the arts. The arts will only work on outside time, I think."

S4 stated that, ". . . definitely there is a prioritizing of curriculum." S4 stated, ". . . so one area is promoting that well rounded individual and yet the other area is saying you be well-rounded but math, science, and technology is really what you have to know, no matter what else." She stated, ". . . all stakeholders in the education process have to

work toward having a balanced program for students so that they have the equal opportunity to develop as well rounded individuals.”

S5 stated that he thinks there is a prioritizing of curriculum and that the gap from what the Government defines as an acceptable program for students and what is actually happening is quite different from school to school. He stated, “. . . I think the vast majority of parents would say that kids have to be able to read and perform mathematics. That seems to be the attitude.”

S6 stated, “. . . sure there is a prioritizing of curriculum, there always is, almost inevitably there is. But prioritizing is done, particularly in the high school level, more in student choices than it is in any deliberate plot or scheme on the part of anybody to do one thing or the other.” This subject stated that enrolments in science since the mid 1980's have grown in leaps and bounds in high school not because there have been massive numbers of science features added to the curriculum, or that the science lobby is particularly more powerful than the music lobby, but because students want to do it and they know they have to do it in order to get into a university. S6 added that it is not just student choice which affects prioritizing as much as an indication of what the public believes. He stated,

. . . who drives the students? The parents to a large degree, the community, their peers, and to some degree teachers, I'll grant you that, and that prioritizing is there, and it is inevitable and not undesirable particularly. Now the real problem is, should all students be exposed to all areas and the answer is yes, but at what level, and the answer seems to be at the elementary/primary level, yes, at the high school level, no, let it be a matter of choice.

S7 stated,

. . . that somebody has been prioritizing for the past number of years and when the boards come together and become bigger, the prioritizing is going to become more ingrained. As a result of where we are in terms of an international, national, and provincial level, there's going to be a prioritizing on science, math, and language. Other courses may fall into place somewhere along the line, but music and art won't be on the scale at all.

S8 stated, “. . . I'd have to say there probably is a prioritizing of curriculum.” He stated that if he went to the School Board asking for a teacher to teach music he'd probably get turned down, however, if he went and asked for a math or science teacher the School Board would solve that problem. He used the following example, “. . . if I were to present the critical problem to the School Board that I can't offer chemistry next year, they would solve that problem. But if I say I can't offer a full time music program, they may not solve that problem. Where does that decision happen? I don't know.” S8 stated, “. . . we're not getting the music teachers so there's obviously a prioritizing of curriculum, whether it's intentional or not, I don't know.” This interviewee concluded stating, “. . . I think we need to be looking at the full student and I think we need to be looking at a different way of doing it, but I don't know if that's coming.”

S9 stated that there must be a prioritizing of curriculum because of the powers that some groups have in the school. This interviewee stated that if she wanted to take the students for a rehearsal but there was a math class on she was unable to have her rehearsal. She went on to state that this is unfortunate because “. . . something like music

or art, which lends to personal development, is not even being considered at times.” S9 concluded stating, “. . . here we’re supposedly being more progressive and yet we seem to be going backwards, reverting back to the 50’s in some ways. The philosophy seems to be very progressive and we talk about different intelligences but on the other hand what’s actually happening in practice is very different.”

S10 simply stated, “. . . there is a thrust on science, language, and math, there’s definitely a need for it, but they’ve got to coordinate everywhere what they’re doing throughout each grade level and into university.” S11 stated that he doesn’t think very much has changed in the last 100 years. He stated, “. . . if I look at my schooling and I ask myself how much time I spend doing math, language, literature, and science it would be half, or around that, of the timetable, and that’s 40 years ago. I don’t think that’s very different now. How much music did I do? None, in a small rural Newfoundland school.” He continued “. . . as a matter of fact, maybe you’d find more music now than you would have found then.” S11 concluded with the following point “. . . we academics are people who have the time to discuss this stuff, but if you go out, if you were to do a study and ask teachers who are on the front line, what difference have these things made, I’m willing to bet that 90% of them would say, I don’t know.”

S12 stated, that there is prioritizing at his school and at many other schools throughout the province because of evaluation results. Therefore, S12 added that in the face of that kind of accountability, teachers are accountable to the public for teaching math, science, and language, but not accountable for music. As a result, this subject stated

that if music is going to have a bonafide role in the curriculum, music teachers have to become more accountable for teaching it. He stated,

. . . that's how we prioritize, what our employer expects of us, what the public expects of the students that are coming out of it. It seems to me, music has not been able to nail down at the Department [of Education] level, or even at the Atlantic provinces level, a really meaningful place here actually. Maybe it's because of the relative importance to other subjects, maybe it's a lack of political will among music educators to make sure it has a rightful place.

S12 concluded stating, “. . . music probably has the lowest voice of any of the curriculum areas. There are not a lot of political activists ensuring that music stays.”

S13 stated that in her school every day she sees prioritizing “. . . it is definitely there. Just in society in general, people feel that in speaking of music, you can be a musician as a hobby but not as a lifestyle, you can't make it.” She went on to state that a person needs to be technical to be something today,

. . . I don't think that's fair as society puts it and I don't think it's fair that if the Government is going to cut things that it is music. It's not fair to people who are dedicated, who do work because it's hard work, it's a study. That's why society is wrong. They come off like music is not important, that it doesn't have value like math.

Finally, S14 cited an example to illustrate his thoughts on this question. He stated that the principal usually timetables, particularly in the primary, elementary, and intermediate grades, and that sometimes some subjects are left off the timetable and that therefore “. . . probably reflects some valuing of the subject, just as if we as the Department of Education were to stop developing the curriculum in some area, that would

reflect the same thing. He stated that from a Department of Education level they made a decision to maintain at least a core of subjects in every subject area that they offer. S14 stated, “. . . we’ve made a decision that in senior high every subject area really should have at least three courses, one for grade 10, one for grade 11, and one for grade 12, and if enrolment is low, our approach will now be, instead of dropping the course we will attempt to find out why the enrolment is low.”

### **Final Comments**

At the end of each interview the participants were asked if there was anything else they would like to add. Some interviewees stated no, while others used the opportunity to express final thoughts. The following are some of the pertinent points made by the subjects.

S1 stated that music teachers need to be willing to work. He stated that music teachers need to be willing to work at a music education program. They need to be willing to put the time in, which may mean before school starts, lunch times, or after school because music teachers need to get out of the mode of thinking that they are part of the curriculum. S1 stated, “. . . sure that’s important, and how dare people think that we’re not. I just think that we have to be willing to bend and carry this outside of the school.” This educator concluded stating that if music teachers don’t mind putting the time in, then they are going to have success.

S2 stated that she thinks it's ironic that in a year that Newfoundland is celebrating 500 years of culture and community spirit that is rich in music and the arts it appears as though lip service is being given to the arts by putting temporary money into the celebrations, while at the same time it is all about to be cut in the succeeding years. She stated, "... once again it's just a political statement, saying what needs to be said and doing what needs to be done at the time, but then in the end it comes down to the almighty dollar."

S4 stated that the expectations that are there for teachers right now are really quite unrealistic. She stated, "... just that being in the classroom and realizing what it's like to have a different group of students every 30 minutes and trying to come to know a school full of children and realize what aspect of the curriculum they need at that point in time, is an extremely demanding job." S4 concludes stating that when you're in an administrator's position you need to understand and empathize with this demand.

S6 concluded his interview stating that music is not under any particular threat. He stated, "... it's fairly high profile in the mind of the public in this province. It's reasonably well emphasized in our schools, probably in this province as much or more as anywhere in the world."

S7 stated that he knows a teacher who says she can teach any subject through art, science to art, math to art, anything through art. He suggested "... maybe we need to be looking at art and music as the primary core and then looking at language arts and math and science as secondary core and see what happens then."

S9 stated that over the last 20 years there has been a tremendous amount of progress for music education programs in the schools. However, she is very concerned that all of a sudden the financial crunch is hitting and music programs will go back twenty or more years. Moreover, she stated,

. . . it's also a great concern that things are written in documents, things from the Department of Education that are very supportive of all this stuff but in actual reality, it's not happening. Some students have the opportunity to have a well-rounded education and have music and art, but an awful lot of students don't. We are not providing across the board. Instruction time has been reduced too much.

S9 concluded by asking if every child needs this much time in science and math. She stated,

. . . if I'm going into a mathematical field and I'm very good at that, I should be extremely challenged, I feel. But a regular student who doesn't intend to pursue this, is it necessary for every single student to have all of this rammed down their throat when they're never going to go on and do it at an advanced level. I question that.

S13 stated that like any other profession, music takes a lot of hard work and dedication. But society cannot forget that music isn't just a hobby, there's another side as well, “. . . you can make it as a lifestyle, I think that's important to remember.”

Finally, S14 stated that arts education is in an era where it needs support, probably from non educators. He stated that each time he has given a presentation to arts educators in the last couple of years, he felt the need to speak to them about soliciting support probably from outside education, but certainly from outside the arts education

community because he feels that if you are part of a community and you make recommendations to strengthen your area, you're seen as self serving. S14 stated,

. . . I think if I were outside of Government and involved in arts education, one of my strategies would be to attempt to garner support from business, perhaps other Government Departments or labour organizations within the community that see a value of the arts and would promote on behalf of educators, because it's through hearing these kinds of people that as a society, I think, become more aware of the value of different types of programs.

S14 concluded suggesting that it may be the time for arts educators to think about soliciting other types of support. He stated, “. . . I'm not saying that you don't need to pressure Government, it probably never hurts to keep issues in front of Government, but Government, like anyone else, would probably be more influenced if there was a strong and consistent message coming from around the various communities within the province.”

## **Chapter V**

### **Data Analysis**

The focal question which guided this research is how school curriculum is being constructed in light of current educational reform policies in Newfoundland and Labrador. Specifically, this study examines the place of music education in the educational restructuring process. The analysis of the data uncovered general characteristics of policy formation and its impact on curriculum and music education in the province's education system.

This chapter includes an analysis of the information provided by the data collected in this study. For the purpose of analysis, the data has been organized and reconstructed into emerging themes using Harvey's (1990) seven building blocks for critical social methodology. The seven building blocks are abstract generalization, totality, essence, praxis, ideology, structure, and history.

#### **Abstract Generalization**

The first element of critical research, abstract generalization, focuses on moving from the abstract to something more concrete through investigation. In this study, curriculum construction is the abstract generalization to be considered. The following questions emerge. What is curriculum? How is it constructed?

This research suggests that curriculum involves those opportunities a student experiences in school as part of their development for the competitive global market. The Government documents reviewed, as well as the interviews conducted, revealed that curriculum is something which can be prioritized, and indeed has been, in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. The data also revealed a perception and general understanding that some disciplines are deemed to be more important for success in today's society. These specific disciplines include mathematics, science, language arts, and technology.

School curriculum has become an important issue in current educational reform. *Adjusting the Course (1994)* states that curriculum has two origins. The first is political, i.e., the influence that society's expectations have on the curriculum. The second is research and policy documents, i.e., the professional source from which curriculum develops. As part of the process of abstract generalization, it is necessary to ask what is the effect of public perception and input on curriculum construction and specifically on the role and place of music education in the school system. Moreover, what message is being sent from the academic realm and Government concerning music education and school curriculum with no music coordinator at the Department of Education, nor a fine arts requirement for high school graduation.

*Our Children, Our Future (1992)*, states that a relevant curriculum should be based on four assumptions. The first assumption is that curriculum must be responsive to all children. The second assumption is curriculum must have an academic focus.

“Non academic courses have a role in the school system, such as maintaining student interest or providing essential life skills but all students should be able to obtain a high quality academic education which will enable them to pursue other educational and job-related interests after graduation” (*Our Children, Our Future*, 1992, p. 298). Within this analysis of curriculum construction, the question arises of who defines the terms academic and non academic.

It appears as though the Government has assumed the responsibility of the role in defining and putting into place policies and documents stemming from the definitions of academic and non-academic courses. Consequently, there is already a misconception that arts courses are non academic. This misconception was perhaps initiated and later reinforced with the introduction of the terms primary core, secondary core, and non-core in Government Documents such as *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) and *Adjusting the Course Part II* (1994). The phenomenon emerging here is that when labels are given to subject areas, value and non-value are assigned to them. Consequently, secondary and non-core labels have caused a de-valuing of courses such as music, physical education, and arts education.

*Children, Our Future* (1992) states that the third assumption is that some courses are more important than others. “All courses in the curriculum have value, but those in certain areas such as language, mathematics, and science are essential to further advancement and therefore must take precedence over others. All students in the province should have access to these core courses, and more time should be allocated to these

subject areas than to others” (*Our Children, Our Future*, 1992, p. 299). This assumption implies a hierarchy of values and ideologies in the school system. It creates certain value judgements and serves to maintain the hegemonic process inherent in schooling.

The fourth assumption from *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) is that the responsibility for ensuring that curriculum goals are achieved must rest with the Department of Education. “To ensure that a high standard of education is available in all areas of the province, the Department of Education must define core curriculum, set program and learning goals and objectives, and be helpful, but not prescriptive, in proposing effective strategies for implementing the curriculum” (*Our Children, Our Future*, 1992, p. 299). However, one Department of Education official interviewed stated, “. . . our responsibility is to ensure that the curriculum be constructed and developed. As for curriculum implementation, that is becoming more of the responsibility of the school boards and the schools themselves.” This approach illustrates a break up of the areas of responsibility for curriculum delivery and in general a break in the curriculum construction process.

Another important issue arising here is that there is no music personnel left at either the Department of Education or School Board level, therefore, it is difficult to ensure that quality curriculum content will be monitored. One Government Official interviewed stated, “. . . we contract music specialists in to work on various documents and projects.” However, the concern remains that there is not a daily voice for the music discipline. One interviewee stated, “. . . with no music specialist at the Department of

Education, curriculum development cannot be ensured. It doesn't seem fair when there are specialists from other subjects areas." Moreover, when committees are formed to develop curriculum, some decisions are already made by the Department of Education which gravely affect the implementation of curriculum for music education programs. For example, much work and thought went into constructing, developing, and implementing the new high school curriculum guides for the applied and general music courses. These guides are very detailed in their layout for the general organization and implementation of music programs. Specifically, they make significant mention of the Essential Graduation Learnings and the role music plays in each of the seven learning areas, in particular, aesthetic development. However, with no fine arts requirement for high school, as put forth in Government policy, there is no guarantee or assurance of music programs, with established curricula, coming to their true fruition in the school setting. Nor is there accountability to provide students with the opportunity to achieve all the Essential Graduation Learnings, and particularly the first learning, aesthetic expression.

*Adjusting the Course (1994)* states that the school system should be designed to compensate for differences in ability. Consequently, there is a need for options and diversity in the school curriculum. *Our children, Our Future (1992)* refers to the fact that there should be a focus on the development of effective learning processes which will enable the province's students to adapt to the rapidly changing environments. The question then arises of who determines what the effective learning processes are for various children with various levels of learning abilities, talents, and interests. The process

of arts expression is very important in all learning because of the intellectual, creative, and critical processes which are involved. With the current policy and practice, arts education is at risk.

*Our Children, Our Future (1992)* also states that a relevant curriculum is necessary to the school system. It should accommodate all students regardless of their differences in needs, interests, learning styles, and personal goals. The report also states that the education system must accept the responsibility for educating all students to their attainable limit. If the education system does not recognize and address this responsibility, the risk of a group of students being unserved is very high. What happens to the students who are not strong in mathematics and science but are strong in music? What courses can they access ? It is important as educators in this province to acknowledge and recognize that some students are not strong in the four disciplines of mathematics, science, language arts, and technology. Various ways of knowing and other forms of knowledge need to be considered in all curriculum construction and implementation. One interviewee stated, “. . . it is important to recognize that areas such as music and art are areas in which some students get their sense of culture, tradition, social values, and develop critical thinking skills.”

*Our Children, Our Future (1992)* states that curriculum content is vital to the education system because it is a means of reinforcing social values, it stimulates new thinking, it prepares students to become participants in society, and it helps them gain a critical awareness of their heritage, traditions, and environment. These skills highlight the

very language and process of arts and music education. The music education environment and experience provides, for example, an opportunity for the development of awareness of tradition and culture and promotes self-esteem and self-confidence. These are skills which some of the reform documents state as necessary to the general education of all students.

In light of current educational reform, *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) states that a core curriculum based on subject areas such as language, mathematics, and science must be established because the province's school system is designed for academic education. High standards of achievement must be the primary aim of this curriculum. It is important to note that *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) also states that labeling these courses as core areas of discipline is to imply that they are fundamental to the success in other subject areas. As a result these areas of study should receive the largest instructional time allocation, and evaluation in these areas should constitute an indicator of the student, the school, and the system's performance. The report states that other courses should remain mandatory, but that instruction in these academic and core subject areas must not be compromised.

The second question raised in the introduction of this section as part of the process of abstract generalization is how is curriculum constructed. One of the major themes to emerge out of the data is the conflicting perception of who the decision-makers of the province's curriculum are. The Government perspective put forth in both the documents and the interviews, state that the decision makers are the public, the experts in the field, and ultimately the Minister of Education.

One Government representative interviewed stated, “. . . we [the Department of Education] have always had, and still have, a decision-making process in place which uses first, public consultation through hearings and submissions, second, tapping into the resources of expertise of university professors and school teachers, and finally consulting with the Minister of Education.” The other perception which was generated by 71% of the interviewees, is that the sole decision-maker regarding the construction of curriculum is the party in power, i.e., Department of Education. The problem with the party in power as the body of decision-makers, as stated by one interviewee, is that “. . . the people who sit on the curriculum construction committees are too far removed from what is going on in the actual day-to-day operation of school programs.” There appears to be a discrepancy regarding who the decision-makers of the province’s curriculum are. The Government believes their process for decision-making is inclusive of various stakeholders in education, yet some interviewees believe the process does not include or acknowledge adequately practitioners and parents. One reason for the discrepancy might be the apparent lack of communication between the various stakeholders in the education process, as noted by some interviewees.

In terms of music education, 64% of the interviewees stated that the decision-makers are not adequately informed about music education to warrant the decisions they have made. This perception stems particularly from the Government’s decision to abolish the position of music coordinator at the Department of Education level. Even though there is still someone overseeing music education at the Department of Education, this

group of interviewees stated that the voice of a specialist is now absent from the decision-making process. *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) and *Adjusting the Course Part I* (1994) and *Part II* (1994), state specific roles which the Department of Education, the School Board, and the school play in the process of ensuring a quality education. If there is no voice for music at any of these levels, there is a daily absence of expertise to make decisions, or to inform those persons who are making decisions, about the current issues affecting curriculum construction and music education.

The category of abstract generalization has been useful to this study because it has helped shed light on the process of curriculum construction and how it relates to music education in Newfoundland and Labrador. Specifically, this category has helped to illustrate what curriculum is and how it is constructed.

## **Totality**

In the second critical element, totality, we attempt to relate the empirical details to a total structure. In other words, totality refers to social phenomena that are interrelated and form a whole structural system. In this critical category, curriculum is viewed as one part of a social phenomenon. The formation of policy and the construction of curriculum does not happen in isolation. It is influenced by, and inextricably linked to, various social and economical factors.

The first major area which emerged as an influence on curriculum construction are the various facets of society. For example, the selected Government documents and the

interviewees stated that universities and the workforce, in general, have an influence on curriculum construction. One interviewee stated, “. . . they [universities and businesses] are dictating policy and curriculum construction to include the skills required of future students and employees.

There are four principles that *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) discuss as necessary to guiding schooling. The second of the four principles discusses that children, to the best of their ability, should be able to master the basic knowledge and skills necessary for independent living. These basic skills are literacy, numeracy, the development of aesthetic sensibilities, and an understanding and appreciation of cultural and religious heritage. Music education is a course which can satisfy some, if not all, of these skills. The literature review in Chapter II discussed how music plays a vital role in sustaining our culture. As Rose (1990) stated, the arts provide an opportunity for social and cultural interaction and an opportunity to produce culture. As well, the literature review also discussed the role the church and religion has played in the lives of Newfoundlanders. It was through the church that music saw its introduction into the school system. An investigation into this relationship of religion and music is a viable example of discovering one's religious heritage. The literature review presented highlights from provincial music curriculum guides. These guides clearly state that one of the contributions music makes to the education of students is aesthetic development and expression.

The fourth principle necessary to guiding schooling, as stated in *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) is “ . . . at the end of schooling, all children should be prepared to assume personal responsibility, to become enterprising individuals, knowledgeable of their own strengths and confident of their abilities to participate in all the aspects of society which interest them” (p.216). Therefore, it is important to ensure that a variety of subjects are offered in the province’s school curriculum so that students can, indeed, discover what their strengths and weaknesses are. One Government official interviewed stated that the Department of Education has put forth in Government Documents a varied curriculum. However, as the student and three high school teachers interviewed expressed, although the courses are listed as being offered it is often too difficult to access them in the daily school timetable because of meeting other high school graduation requirements. Hence, the struggle for school time is very much a consideration in the process of curriculum construction.

The second major area which emerged as influencing curriculum construction is economics. In terms of economic influence on curriculum construction, documents such as *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) and *Adjusting the Course Parts I and II* (1994) have stated that due to fiscal restraints, the education system has had to evaluate and rethink its method of program delivery for the school system in Newfoundland and Labrador. As a result of these economic demands facing the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador, it is necessary to critically examine the direction curriculum is moving. The

selected Government documents for this study and all 14 interviewees state that the direction is a strong emphasis on mathematics, science, language arts, and technology.

In recent years, the debate of establishing a quality education in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador has risen to new levels. There is a perception that the educational standards in Newfoundland and Labrador are too low. *Adjusting the Course Part I (1994)* states that the education system in this province has not been performing on par at a national level and that Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the highest illiteracy rates in Canada. *Our Children, Our Future (1992)*, states that many high school graduates lack the skills necessary to function in present and future societies. What has had this affect on the province's education system? *Our Children, Our Future (1992)* states, "... declining enrolments, demands for access to governance from groups not now enfranchised, pressures to increase achievement levels, and decreasing financial resources have created demands for change which cannot be ignored" (p. xv). With this decline in student populations there is "... a growing concern about effectiveness and cost-efficiency, and increasing demands for quality in education" (*Our Children, Our Future, 1992, p.3*). *Our Children, Our Future (1992)* also states that the economic reality is such that,

... the current economic outlook for Newfoundland and Labrador does not offer much encouragement that provincial revenues will increase significantly in the short term. Consequently, spending on education is not likely to rise despite demands by the education system for greater resources and by society for higher performance. Such demands, coupled with already difficult fiscal restraint, are forcing educators to rethink how they deliver programs and

services in this province, and questions are being raised about the value received for the education dollars spent (p, 3).

This economic outlook raises two important concerns. The first is that the money saved through the restructuring and reform process will not be returned to the education system. However, one Government official interviewed stated that, “. . . the province will continue their efforts to offer a broad curriculum to students. Therefore, efforts will remain and increase in the areas of curriculum construction, while, other areas of the education system need to be examined and cost-cutting measures taken.”

The second concern is that the current provincial improvement initiative appears to have been driven primarily by a reactionary mode to the current financial situation of the province. One interviewee stated that this is the approach as “. . . opposed to being a systematic effort to better the quality of education for our students.”

The category of totality has been useful to this research because it has helped to establish the relationships between curriculum and society, and curriculum and economics in current educational reform in this province. Specifically, this section clearly shows that the process of curriculum construction is interrelated with, and influenced by, various social phenomena.

## **Essence**

The third element of critical research, essence, plays an important role in the deconstruction process of examining school curriculum. Within this critical category, it is necessary to examine the various issues involved in constructing curriculum in an attempt to understand the whole process. As part of the deconstruction process, this study is concerned particularly with the significance of underlying issues related to the prioritizing of curriculum. As far as this study is concerned, the concept and practice of prioritizing is the essence of curriculum construction.

It appears that curriculum has been prioritized through two actions. The first action is the use of the language primary, secondary, and non-core introduced in the Government documents and policies. The second action is the implementation processes which have developed at the school level. Such issues as the struggle for school time, reductions in teacher allocations, and specifically reductions in music teachers allocations, have become significant factors in this process.

The result of prioritizing curriculum places implied values on various subject areas. This leads to some areas of the curriculum being advantaged while others are disadvantaged. For example, in current educational reform, mathematics is at an advantage, while music is at a disadvantage. One interviewee stated that, “. . . this is the case because mathematics is receiving more school time allocation and more teacher allocation than music in the schools.” The selected Government documents state that it is

because the skills acquired from mathematics, science, and language arts are those which are necessary for the success in other subjects, such as music.

Seventy-one percent of the interviewees held the perception that the Government is not lending the support to music that it should be. One interviewee stated, “. . . music is receiving a tremendous amount of lip service but no support. If support was still present at the Government level, the Department of Education would not have abolished the Music consultant position.”

Another theme which emerged from the interviews is that the Department of Education has shied away and not supported adequately its commitment to provide equal opportunity for students. One interviewee stated, “. . . the Government has accepted that if a school does not have a music specialist then a music program cannot be offered.” However, one of the Government officials interviewed stated, “. . . this is not the case. We have put in place both a specialist and nonspecialist program in the school system’s curriculum.” Hence, there are discrepancies in perceptions regarding the policy and practice around the use of specialist and non-specialist teachers and music programs. The issue of time and teacher allocation comes into question. Consistent and sequential delivery of constructed and developed music programs at all levels and adequate teacher allocation are essential if music is considered to be a part of the curriculum, secondary or otherwise. There should be accountability for equal opportunity and access for all students in the Newfoundland and Labrador school system.

On a community level, one theme which emerged is that, as stated by one interviewee, “. . . support can always be found for music during performance times like Christmas, Easter, and Graduation, but cannot always be found for general school concerts.” However, 78% of interviewees held the perception that there is always tremendous support from parents of music students and from the general public who know what goes on in a music program. This group also stated that there appears to be, however, little support from the community at large. Consequently, does the public know the value of having and being involved in a music program? It appears that the parents who have children involved in music programs know the value of such an experience. Therefore, the question arises as to who is responsible for supplying information concerning the value and contribution a music program offers in a students’ education. That is a question which still remains unanswered.

The category of essence has been useful to this research because it has helped to analyze the significance, and the practice of, prioritizing as the essence of curriculum construction.

## **Praxis**

The fourth element of critical research, praxis, refers to practical reflective activity or reflection on practice. In this category, the focus of analysis is on the notion of why and how the prioritizing of curriculum is a part of curriculum construction.

*Adjusting the Course (1994)* states that there is little dispute over the importance of mathematics, science, language arts, and technology courses. However, there is less common agreement on subjects such as second language studies, social studies, music, religion, and a variety of others. This document also states that the ability of a school to offer and handle some of these areas varies. Therefore, it is questionable as to whether the schools which cannot offer subjects such as music are offering a quality education. New school viability guidelines have been set out by the Department of Education which state that a school must be able to offer the minimum program to students in their course offerings. One Government official interviewed stated, “. . . music is one of the subject areas which is a part of the minimum program offerings.” One concern which surfaces here is how viability guidelines will be enforced. The Government position, as stated by those officials interviewed, is that they can develop the curriculum but it is up to the school districts to ensure that it is delivered.

*Adjusting the Course (1994)* states that curriculum should be thought of as having three components. Hence the terms primary, secondary and non-core emerged. The primary core consists of mathematics, science, and language arts. At least 50% of the school program must be devoted to these areas. The secondary core consists of second language, social studies, music, fine arts, and physical education. All other areas not listed are considered non-core.

One example of how the Department of Education has dealt with the issue of curriculum delivery is by stating that the primary courses are to be taught in all schools at

all levels, secondary core areas are to be taught at specific levels, and non-core areas are to be offered at the discretion of the school. The fact that discretionary decisions can be made is a concern for music education. If music is to be taught only at specific levels and at specific sites, the issue of curriculum continuity becomes a major concern for educators. There is often a huge gap in music education because of the inconsistency in the delivery and availability of music programs in the province's schools generally.

The new model Government is promoting in various documents, focuses on a collaborative approach for curriculum construction. For music, this becomes a difficult task considering that there is no music specialist representation at the Department of Education or School Board level. In general, 49% of the interviewees stated that they do not have a voice in the curriculum construction process. However, two of the Government officials interviewed insist that the people do have a voice because of the decision-making process which is in place at the Department of Education. These two Government Officials stated that they were very comfortable making this statement because part of the Government's decision-making process includes public consultation.

The new draft documents, such as *Learning For All (1996)*, address and promote many of the same philosophies, goals, and objectives that were stated in the reform documents. The new Essential Graduation Learnings are discussed in great detail in these documents. These learnings are fundamental to music holding a bonafide role in the education system because music is one course which can satisfy all of the Essential Graduation Learnings. However, with no graduation requirement for the arts subject area,

it is questionable as to how the Essential Graduation Learnings will be ensured. In fact students are now able to leave high school without any arts experience.

One Government official interviewed stated that, “. . . music is in no threat of disappearing because as far I am concerned, music does have a coordinator in the personnel member from the Department of Education who oversees all arts courses for the province.” As well, another Government official interviewed stated, “. . . music is one of the Department’s focuses in the curriculum development area.” However, 49% of the interviewees stated that there is quite the opposite message being sent to the public. These interviewees felt that music is being given a great deal of lip service but very little of anything else. In other words, the Department of Education may be developing music curriculum and also ensuring that it is overseen by a coordinator, however, what is being developed in policy is not what is being offered and implemented in all of the province’s schools. For example, some of the schools in Newfoundland and Labrador do not have music programs. As well, one interviewee stated, “. . . it is very difficult to justify having a music teacher in some of the schools across the province because of the enrolment numbers in the schools in general as well as in high school credit courses.”

The study revealed that the process of prioritizing curriculum has emerged in the school system because of the changes taking place in society which have placed more and new demands on students primarily espoused by the business sector and job-related training needs. Government reform policies and documents have been developed to

examine the education system and put in place a method of restructuring to deal with these demands.

The value of music education in the school system is explicitly stated in the various Government policy documents and music curriculum guides. Moreover, the Government officials interviewed stated that the Department of Education is developing music, from a curriculum perspective, on a regular basis. However, in actual practice throughout the province, music education has decreasing numbers of music specialists allocated to schools, less time allotments in the school timetable, less availability for senior high school students because of schedule conflicts, and competition in the timetable due to pressure on students to elect for courses in science and technology at the high school level.

This category of praxis has been useful to this research because it has helped to analyze how and why the prioritizing of curriculum has become a part of curriculum construction. This section also analyzed the claims made about the value of music education as compared to the actual practice in the province's school system.

## **Ideology**

The fifth element, ideology, is important to critical research as an analytical tool used in the deconstruction and reconstruction process of analysis. Within this category, it is necessary to examine what values, beliefs, and ideas are foundational to curriculum construction, policy formation, and educational reform. As part of the examination of ideology, this study focuses on investigating dominant ideologies, the concept of

prioritizing curriculum through the educational policies and practice, and the recommendations for reform.

One of the first problems in probing the ideological concerns has to do with the question of who the decision-makers are for curriculum construction. This critical question helps to determine what ideology is likely to be dominant in curriculum construction and policy development.

The study revealed that there is a discrepancy between the stated goals, or ideology, by the Department of Education of how music education programs are to be delivered across the province and what is actually happening in the schools. One interviewee stated, “. . . the provincial curriculum is not being delivered as prescribed by the Department of Education.” Consequently, the policies and reports have left many unanswered questions as to the place of music education in the province’s education system. Therefore, as another interviewee stated, “. . . it is unclear as to the Government’s ideology on the place of arts and music education in the province’s school system

In this regard, as part of the process of ideology, it is necessary to question who and what has influenced the decision-makers of the province’s curriculum. One major factor that emerged in this study as an influence is shrinking financial resources in this province. As previously mentioned, *Our Children, Our Future* (1992) has made references to the fact that this situation has forced educators to re-evaluate the mode of program delivery they are using and seek out cost-cutting measures where possible.

However, the perception which emerged from 64% of the interviewees is that in looking for ways to save money through making major cuts in the education system, the Government has not taken the time to completely assess the ramifications of such actions. One interviewee stated, “. . . the rate at which curriculum decisions are being made is very disturbing.” There is a need to re-assess the driving force behind such rapid, fast-paced reform to be assured that limited agencies of ideologies are not the sole driving force in the province’s educational reform.

A second major ideology to emerge from the data is that educational reform has been fueled by a need to prepare the students for a competitive and ever-changing society. Forty-two percent of the interviewees felt that it is necessary for students to receive a different education than they did twenty years ago because of the rising technological demands in the workplace. *Our Children, Our Future (1992)* states that the business sector would like to see education redirect its priorities to meet an economic agenda. Consequently, students need to leave school with a competitive edge. Both the selected Government documents and 35% of the interviewees stated that the result of an inadequate curriculum has not prepared the province’s students for the challenges of the global workforce. For example, one only has to look at the impact the loss of the fishing industry has had on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. One interviewee stated, “. . . this tragedy revealed that a large population in the province was not qualified to do anything else in the workforce when the fishery shut down.” The question arises, what does it mean to be competitive? The Government’s beliefs in this regard, as reflected in

the selected Government documents, focuses on the need for concentrated studies in mathematics, science, and technology. Yet, as put forth in these same Government documents, and by 57% of the interviewees, to be competitive requires, for example, creativity and critical thinking from the general work-force.

A third ideology to emerge from the data is that educational reform has been sparked by the results of various educational and theoretical studies. One general perception that emerged from this study was that we need to be aware of what and who are driving such studies. One interviewee stated, “. . . studies are done when student achievement is down on provincial or national testing levels. In this province, provincial and national testing results have had serious discrepancies.” Over the years, this poor performance has lead to the need for studies which have investigated this issue of student achievement.

Another theme that emerged from the interviews and the selected Government documents has to do with educational reform and the development of the ‘whole’ student. The question rises as to whether or not exposure and studies in arts and music education are included in the development of the whole student. All fourteen interviewees agreed that music does contribute to the development of the whole student.

The reasons for having music education in the school system are manifold. Music education programs are crucial to the overall development of the student. They offer the experiences needed to achieve many of the skills laid out in the reform documents. For example, a music program offers opportunities to develop cultural awareness, to develop

critical thinking, to promote self awareness, and social consciousness, through, for example, both individual and group experiences.

Music has been categorized in Government policy documents as a secondary core subject. As to the possible reasons why, one interviewee stated, “. . . this may be partly due to the fact that music appears to have a small voice in the education process. Another interviewee stated, “. . . the Government is doing what the people want.” Because of the discrepancy between the stated value of music education by both Government and interviewees as to why music has been classified as a secondary subject, the question arises as to whether there is a need for further study regarding the value and contribution of music education in the curriculum. There was an overall agreement from the Government officials interviewed that the Department of Education has done research and consulted with the stakeholders in the education process in order to warrant putting music in the secondary core designation. However, one interviewee felt that, “. . . maybe there should be more study done for the simple fact that there does seem to be an under representation of research on the value of the arts to an overall education.” The literature review in Chapter II clearly shows that the value and contribution of a music program are clearly presented in a variety of Government documents and curriculum guidelines, and supported by research that address the experiences and opportunities that a music program offers to the general education of students.

The category of ideology has been useful to this research because it has helped to examine some of the ideologies behind the structure of Government policy in the reform

documents. This section revealed that the apparent dominant ideology underlying current education reform is economic and business based. There are discrepancies surrounding the issue of “quality” education and what comprises the education of the “whole” student. There are various other ideologies at work in the interplay of policy and curriculum construction. However, it is very important to note that there was full agreement on the fact that music education plays an integral and vital role in education. How this ideology plays out in practice is an issue to be continually examined.

## **Structure**

The critical category of structure encourages us to examine a complex set of interdependent and interrelated elements which come together to form a complete structure. For this study, examples of these elements include the relationships which exist between education and the economy, education and geographical locations, and education and society. The purpose of this section is to investigate the relationship between curriculum construction, prioritizing of curriculum, educational reform, and the larger complex structures related to both social and economic reform.

One theme to emerge from the data is that in smaller communities and rural areas, students will not have as much, if any, opportunity to experience the arts. However, one Department of Education official interviewed stated, “. . . the Minister of Education released school viability guidelines which state the specified curriculum a school must offer to be viable. Music is a part of this required curriculum for viable schools.” The

issue of equal opportunity for students across the province comes into question. The general perception which pervaded most of the interviews was that equal opportunity cannot be guaranteed by the Department of Education in both urban and rural schools because every school cannot offer a curriculum which includes music.

This issue of school viability as it relates to curriculum implementation is an important one in light of the structure of curriculum construction. The inherent constraints of rural and small school settings need to be seriously considered in the process of curriculum construction. Further consideration needs to be given to the protection of quality education and equal opportunity.

A second theme to emerge from the data focused on the general public's knowledge and understanding of current educational reform. It is very informative that 21% of the interviewees were not familiar with any of the government reform documents and 28% of the interviewees were familiar with only some of the information contained in the reform documents. Fifty percent were not familiar with the terms primary, secondary, and non-core. The individuals who were familiar with the reform documents and terms were those who hold, or have held, Government or School Board positions. The implication for this general lack of public knowledge of educational reform has already had, and will continue to have, serious ramifications for the curriculum construction process. This has certainly already had an impact on music education programs.

The category of structure has been useful to this research because it has helped to analyze how education and factors such as the economy and equal opportunity for rural

and urban areas are interrelated and interdependent in the process of curriculum construction. When these elements are combined, they form the complete structure involving the many influences in the prioritizing of curriculum. Specifically, this category also sheds light on the factors influencing the place of music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system.

## **History**

The seventh element, history, involves the reconstruction of past events. The reconstruction process involves researching and actively interpreting facts. In this study, how society has evolved to its current position of practice in curriculum construction is examined. It is necessary to understand how current and prevailing structures and ideologies are sustained through the prioritizing of curriculum.

An examination of history has revealed that society has evolved to a position of prioritizing curriculum because in a time of fiscal restraint and repeated low provincial test results on national and international levels, the focus of curriculum is on subjects deemed important by Government. At the present time, the focus of curriculum on science and mathematics is sustained because of the demand, as stated by the business sector, for technological jobs in today's work environment.

Analysis of history has also demonstrated the important and valued role of music and arts education in a well-rounded and balanced education. The challenge for Government, and all stakeholders in the education process, is to achieve a balanced

curriculum so that significant components of education are not undermined and eventually lost. This is particularly important in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, whose history and culture is inextricably linked with the arts and music. People's identity, heritage, provincial pride, and continued musical and cultural production are at risk with the de-valuing of art and music in education.

From a historical point of view, a form of prioritizing has long taken place in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. One interviewee stated, "... subjects such as mathematics and english have always been considered core because of the concept of the "3R's" which prevailed in the school system throughout the mid 1900's. If you ask your grandparents and parents, they will tell you that the subjects which were considered important to their education were reading, writing, and arithmetic." However, 35% of the interviewees stated that, to some degree, music has also been deemed core because of the denominational school system in the province. One interviewee stated that, "... this has been the case because of the nature, relationship, and role music plays in the celebrations of various religious events and concerts throughout the school year."

Music is deeply rooted in the lives of Newfoundlanders because of its past and present role in our society and culture. Throughout history, it has become a particularly important part of our education system because of the influence and the role of music in the daily lives of Newfoundlanders. Throughout the mid 1900's to the early 1990's, music accomplished many milestones in terms of solidifying itself into mainstream curriculum, as well as establishing programs and curriculum guides at the Government level in the

Department of Education. Over the last 40 years music education has been clearly established as a recognized and integral program of study in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system.

However, the future for music education, in light of the current educational reform, is vague. If music was absent from the school curriculum, there would be a substantial effect on the province's students, culture, and society. All fourteen interviewees responded that an absence of music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system would have a negative effect. One interviewee raised the issue of developing the whole student. This interviewee stated, "... students would receive a less than adequate education because they would not be experiencing a good, broad-based education program." Music has been, and continues to be, a significant part of our Newfoundland and Labrador culture. Another interviewee stated, "... if it [music] was absent from the schools, one of the main opportunities for most of the province's students to experience the history and culture of Newfoundland and Labrador would be lost."

It is important to note that one interviewee stated that music is not absent and is not in any danger of being absent from the school system because it is an inherent part of our curriculum. This interviewee stated, "... the perceived absence is quite unrealistic, the reaction to something like this would be quite severe in Newfoundland and Labrador because of the tradition of music." However, in reality, music is slowly eroding from the province's education system.

The category of history has been useful to this research because it has helped to identify how society has evolved to its current position concerning school curriculum. Specifically, this critical category has provided insight into how current prevailing structures have been sustained through the formation of policy and the prioritizing of curriculum. In this regard, the question of how Government sustains its power emerged from the analysis. One Government Official stated, “. . . we listen to the wishes of the people and are therefore acting on what society wants in the province’s education system.” However, 49% of interviewees stated that they did not have a voice in this process. Seventy-one percent of the interviewees stated that they would like to see students experience a quality, broad-based curriculum which traditionally has included music education.

Since Confederation in 1949, a shift of power has occurred to present day where there continues to be a battle for control of the provincial educational system. This issue is far from being reconciled within educational reform. Currently, the predominant point of view is the Government’s vision of what school curriculum should be in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. In terms of history, this is a change from when churches generally had control over education within the denominational system.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Summary**

This chapter presents a summary and conclusions which have emerged from the data obtained in this research. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further study.

This study has investigated the influence of current educational reform documents on the process of curriculum construction in the province's school system. Specifically, it has studied the impact this process has had on music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. The study has synthesized the events surrounding educational reform and has examined why the issue of prioritizing has become so prominent in the process of curriculum construction. Specifically, this study has examined the role music education plays in the education of the province's students. The study has also attempted to illustrate how this process is affecting the equal opportunity and education for all students in this province.

The basis provided for the formation of these conclusions have come from the three areas of data presentation and analysis. They were:

1. An overview of the present status of music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system
2. A review and summary of selected provincial Government documents involved in the education process
3. Personal interviews

The purpose of this study was to gather the ideas, perceptions, and attitudes surrounding the influence of educational reform policies on the process of curriculum construction in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. The research stemmed from the process of how the restructuring and decision-making process is influencing and impacting on the role of music programs. This study has attempted to provide further insight into the nature of educational reform, policymaking, and curriculum construction. Specifically, it has attempted to shed light on the issue of prioritizing as a component of curriculum construction and the possible effects on arts and music education in Newfoundland and Labrador.

## **Conclusions**

One question which surfaced frequently in the data analysis is why the educational reform documents have come into existence. The answer is that they were the results of intense research initiated by the Government aimed at bettering the education system in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. However, the idea that the reports are economically driven emerged from the data as the more deliberate action and reason for the reports.

A careful analysis of the research indicates that there is a strong possibility for music to hold a place in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system because of the newly developed Essential Graduation Learnings which hold a significant role in the new primary/elementary and intermediate levels handbooks. The first Essential Graduation

Learning, Aesthetic Expression, states that graduates will be able to respond with critical awareness to various forms of the arts and be able to express themselves through the arts. Music is one example of an arts course which can satisfy this area of knowledge and skill development.

Music and the arts have traditionally held a prominent place in Newfoundland and Labrador society and culture. However, there have remained questions as to the place and role of music education in a school curriculum. The designation of secondary core has placed music education relatively low on the curriculum ladder. Yet, in actual fact, music develops some of the very skills which are identified in the documents analyzed in this study, as essential to the development of the 'whole' student. Music does contribute to a balanced curriculum and therefore should not be engaged in and subject to a constant struggle for school time. Moreover, there needs to be an arts requirement at the high school level for graduation if all the Essential Graduation Learnings are to be achieved by the province's students.

After many years of significant progress in the area of music education programs, a decrease in value or importance represents a significant loss to the arts and educational community. Students are very much encouraged to focus on mathematics, science, and technology as the only pathways to successful careers. This is a false notion when, as presented in the literature review, music and arts related careers hold many different possibilities in the global workforce. Hence, it is imperative that all stakeholders are clear on the goals for educational reform. In other words, if the education system is developing

the whole student, a student who is to have varied experiences while in school, then the Government needs to ensure equal opportunity and a broad-based curriculum to attain these stated goals. As Warnock (1978) stated,

. . . one ought first of all try to state clearly what the point of education is, what its goals are, or ought to be. Only with these goals in mind can one decide whether a given kind of education, a given school, or a given curriculum, is good or bad, or determine whether the educational needs of particular children are being satisfied. There must be criteria for the making of such judgements.  
(p. 17).

The future of music and arts courses in educational reform is vague at best. The selected Government documents and Government officials interviewed stated that one focus of the educational reform is school curriculum. Their goal is to put in place a school curriculum that is broad and offers an opportunity to educate the 'whole' student.

However it is disturbing, as Cantwell (1995) stated, that a careful,

. . . analysis of educational reports indicates a general lack of information with respect to the arts. When the arts subjects are mentioned, they are often referred to in general or vague terms or they are simply mentioned in a passing fashion. What is striking is that because of this lack of attention of reference to the arts, we are left to make only our own assumptions about the potential role of arts in education  
(p.134).

This study has substantiated Cantwell's claim. The arts, and especially music, courses have received only cursory mention in the reform and draft documents. When they are referred to, it is usually within a group of courses. For example, when time allocations are given for the junior and senior high school music courses they are grouped

with other courses such as art and physical education. Moreover, as cited throughout this study, the Department of Education has made a decision to abolish the music consultant position at the Government level, and there are at present no School Boards who have music coordinators. Actions such as these have left the public and the education community to make their own assumptions and conclusions about the role of arts and music courses in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. These actions have also left no assurance for a quality music program in the province because there are no specialists or qualified personnel to guarantee effective curriculum construction and continued professional development to the music teachers in the education system.

This study has revealed why it has become an important issue in today's society to focus on the primary courses as part of the process for curriculum construction. Educational reform is giving courses such as mathematics, science, language arts, and technology a monopoly and priority for school time. The selected Government documents state that these courses are to be given at least 50% of the school timetable and are not to be compromised in the delivery of curriculum. All of the secondary and non core courses are to be given what is left in the timetable. This arrangement constitutes a monopoly for the primary core courses. One interviewee, a Government Official, stated that these labels got completely blown out of proportion when the reform documents were published. He stated that the uproar which occurred was really unnecessary. However, whether the labels of primary, secondary, and non-core got blown out of proportion or not, they are still used to guide curriculum construction throughout the province. This leads to concern

because these labels contribute to forming the basis for decisions at various levels of curriculum and policy implementation.

As examined in the interviews, the officials at the Department of Education are reflecting what they are hearing from other sources. Therefore, it appears as though music needs a stronger voice not only at the Department of Education level but also at the school level and from the general population. The members of society who are concerned about the status of music education in the school system need to speak out clearly as to the value and contribution of art and music to school curriculum. It is apparent that Government officials have made many difficult decisions and those interviewees who were not Government officials, nor directly involved in the reform process, stated that they would not have wanted to be in the position of those who had to make the decisions concerning the province's education system.

The current mind set into the perception of the role of music education in the province's school system must change if music is to remain a bonafide part of the curriculum. It is evident that the general public views this as one of the main areas which need to be addressed. The interviews, without exception, stated clearly the value of music education. They must be educated about the role arts courses play in the education of students. If the public is already educated then it is time for them to speak out and take a stand on the eroding of arts programs currently underway in the province's education system.

It appears that the Government is very well aware of the contribution that an arts program can make to the development of the student. However, there appear to be other factors which have influenced the decisions and policies they have made. At the Department of Education level, there is a concern from some of the interviewees that decisions are being made without completely thinking them through. The Government has put itself in a position of stating one thing then doing another. In other words, music education is a recognized area of study by the Department of Education in Newfoundland and Labrador and is addressed, although in a very brief fashion, in the reform documents. However, the mandated criteria for music education programs are not being met in the schools of this province. In other words, the time allotments and teacher allocations for music education are not being given proper attention in the school system. There are some schools in the province which do not even offer a music program. If a science or mathematics course was not being delivered in the prescribed fashion, or not being delivered at all, then there would be serious inquiry given to that issue. This is not an equal arrangement for music in the delivery of a school curriculum.

The reality for society is that some of our students do enter into arts related careers. Consequently, there is an economic contribution made to the province's and country's economies, and specifically the cultural and arts industries. With less teachers and fewer programs, this economic contribution will be affected because fewer students will enter into such careers. One reason for this will be that students will have a lack of exposure to arts related experiences and another will be that students will not have people

in arts and music education programs to mentor throughout their formative school years. As a result the number of people entering arts related professions could possibly decline, and the quality of the arts and cultural industry will decrease.

There is a discrepancy between what the perceptions and visions are for our education system and what the actual reality and product is in the province's schools. This issue is very complex with many interrelationships between the people and institutions involved in the education process. Therefore, a process for effective communication and consultation must be put into place which consults with all parties involved in the issues and concerns surrounding the construction of curriculum for the Newfoundland and Labrador education system.

As a result of current educational reform, the shift in the province's educational paradigm to a focus on returning to the basics in the school system puts the future of music and arts programs at risk. The need to consider very carefully the issue of ideologies behind the terms "basic" and "quality" education, to whom and for whom, arises. With the support from all stakeholders in the education of our children, music and arts programs can remain a successful part of the curriculum and be a significant contributor to educational change and reform.

## **Suggestions for Further Research**

The goal of this research has been to investigate the influence of current educational reform policies on the process of curriculum construction in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. More specifically, it examined how the restructuring and decision making process is influencing and having an impact upon music education programs. Although this study achieved its stated goal, many important issues were raised from the data which require further study and consideration.

One issue which was raised in the interviews from the teachers, the parent, and the student was that the Government, i.e. the Department of Education make decisions without enough public consultation. The Department of Education officials said that this was not the case and cited the existence of public hearings and surveys as a part of the decision-making process. There appears to be a lack of communication surrounding the issue of current educational reform. There are many unanswered questions, misconceptions, and false assumptions concerning the issue of communication. Further interviewing of participants from all of these represented groups would help to shed light on this issue.

To continue and further this research, this study needs to be replicated using a different set of participants. The interviewees for this study came from the St. John's area. Interviewing participants from around the province, especially in more rural areas, may yield very different results from those in this study. It would also be interesting to interview the major stakeholders, for example in the business or medical industry, who are

the future employers of the students, and examine their perspectives on educational reform and the construction of and prioritizing of school curriculum.

This study was done during a time of ongoing restructuring in the province's education system. Many reform changes were made, while many others are still pending. For example, some of the reform documents were in draft form and most interviewees stated that "things need to settle" to see the true impact of educational reform. Consequently, a study of similar issues in three to five years into the impact of current educational reform would prove to be necessary and interesting.

Investigating the change in school structure from denominational to interdenominational schools and its effect on curriculum construction and implementation is also an important area of investigation. It would be interesting to see the effect on arts and music courses given the strong historical connection between them and the churches in this province.

Finally, the data has presented the fact that music education is experiencing declining enrolments as students advance in their grades. Why does this happen in music education programs? Has this trend fueled some of the issues facing music education programs in the current educational reform? A key area to investigate in a study such as this one, would be to interview a large cross-section of students, teachers, and administrators to gather their perceptions about this issue.

Critical theory has helped provide a method of analysis into the issue of curriculum construction and the role of music education in the Newfoundland and Labrador education

system. It has also raised more questions on the complex issue of educational reform facing this province. Critical theory holds many possibilities too further research and analyze the complex issue of prioritizing curriculum. Investigating and analysis through critical theory is an important process to the Newfoundland and Labrador education system and society if music education is to remain and sustain itself as an important part in the lives of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The issues surrounding music education and its place in the curriculum of the Newfoundland and Labrador education system are complex and varied. They warrant close scrutiny and need time and much thought. Critical theory holds the tools to explore the mind set which music education has become a part of in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system.

## Addendum

Since this research was completed, there have been more developments with educational reform. On September 2, 1997 there was a referendum held to revise Term 17 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*. Term 17 as it is currently worded states:

A17. (1) In lieu of section ninety-three of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, the following shall apply in respect of the Province of Newfoundland:

In an for the Province of Newfoundland, the Legislature shall have exclusive authority to make laws in relation to education but

(a)except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c), schools established, maintained and operated with public funds shall be denominational schools, and any class having rights under Term as it read on January 1, 1995 shall continue to have the right to provide for religious education, activities and observations for the children of that class in those schools, and the group of classes that formed one integrated school system by agreement in 1969 may exercise the same rights under this Term as a single class of persons;

(b)subject to provincial legislation that is uniformly applicable to all schools specifying conditions for the establishment or continued operation of schools,

(i)any class of persons referred to in paragraph (a) shall have the right to have a publicly funded denominational school established maintained and operated especially for that class, and

(ii)the Legislation may approve the establishment, maintenance and operation of a publicly funded school, whether denominational or non-denominational;

(c)where a school is established, maintained and operated pursuant to subparagraph (b)(i), the class of persons referred to in that subparagraph shall continue to have the right to provide for religious education, activities and observations and to direct the teaching of aspects of the curriculum affecting religious beliefs, student admission policy and the assignment and dismissal of teachers in that school;

(d)all schools referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) shall receive their share of public funds in accordance with scales determined on a non-discriminatory basis from time to time by the Legislature; and

(e)if the classes of persons having rights under this Term so desire, they shall have the right to elect not less than two thirds of the members of a school board, and any class so

desiring shall have the right to elect the portion of that total that is proportionate to the population of the class in the area under the board's jurisdiction.

The text of the proposed new Term 17 states,

A17. (1) In lieu of section ninety-three of the *Constitution Act 1867*, this shall apply in respect of the Province of Newfoundland.

(2) In and for the Province of Newfoundland, the Legislature shall have exclusive authority to make laws in relation to education, but shall provide for courses in religion that are not specific to a religious denomination.

(3) Religious observations shall be permitted in a school where requested by parents.

The question on the referendum of September 2, 1997 asked,

*“Do you support a single school system where all children, regardless of their religious affiliation, attend the same schools where opportunities for religious education and observations are provided?”*

Seventy-three percent of the public voted yes to revise Term 17 to the new wording as put forth by the Government.

As a result, the education system in this province still remains in a state of transition. However, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador are setting the foundations to proceed with educational reform for the 1998-1999 school year. The Government are taking all steps in anticipation of Term 17 passing and new non-denominational boards being elected for the upcoming school year.

There are obstacles still facing the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in this educational process. First, the amendment of Term 17 passing through both the House of Commons and the Senate is a very timely process. Second, the Roman Catholic

Churches have taken a challenge to the process and outcome of the referendum because they feel that it is an eradication of minority rights. Finally, the new Schools Act needs to be passed and implemented for the upcoming school year.

At present, educational reform is a piece of unfinished business which is not in a tidy package. The Government is proceeding as if all will be resolved. However, there remain to be ongoing constitutional challenges over the main issue of changing Term 17 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

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## **Appendix A: Letters of Consent**

**Letter to Government Official/University Professor/Administrator/Teacher/Parent:**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a graduate student from the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. Currently I am working on my thesis under the supervision of Dr. Andrea Rose. I am researching the influence of current educational reform policies on the process of curriculum construction and development in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. My study is investigating how the restructuring and decision making process is influencing the role of arts programs and more specifically impacting on music programs in our educational system. I am requesting permission to interview you at your convenience. The purpose of the interview is to gather your general perceptions on how current educational reform is influencing the role of music education in the school's curriculum.

All information gathered in this study is strictly confidential and at no time will individuals be identified. The process of informed consent will be continuous throughout this project. Therefore, participation is voluntary and you have the right to change your mind and withdraw at any time. This study has received the approval of the Faculty of Education's Ethics Review Committee. The results of my research will be made available to you upon request.

If you would like more detail about any information mentioned, please contact me, Katherine Dundas, at 726-3963, or if you would rather speak with a resource person not associated with the study, please contact Dr. P. Canning at the Associate Dean's office for graduate programs 737-8587 in the Faculty of Education.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information in this package regarding your participation in this research project. Thank you for your consideration and cooperation of this request.

Yours sincerely,  
Katherine Dundas

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give my permission to participate in a study on the influence of current educational reform policies on the process of curriculum development in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system being undertaken by Katherine Dundas. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. All information is strictly confidential and no individual will be identified.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Letter to Parent/Guardian for permission to interview students:**

Dear Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and/or Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ :

I am a graduate student from the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. Currently I am working on my thesis under the supervision of Dr. Andrea Rose. I am researching the influence of current educational reform policies on the process of curriculum construction and development in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. My study is investigating how the restructuring and decision making process is influencing the role of arts programs and more specifically the impact it is having on music programs in our educational system. I am requesting your permission to interview your child for this study. The purpose of the interview is to gather your child's general perceptions on how current educational reform is influencing the school's curriculum. The interview will be approximately 30 minutes in length and will be done outside of the school day at their convenience.

All information gathered in this study is strictly confidential and at no time will individuals be identified. The process of informed consent will be continuous throughout this project. Therefore, participation is voluntary and your child has the right to change their mind and withdraw at any time. They also have the right to refuse to answer any questions during the interview process. The interviews will be audio-taped and upon completion of the study will be destroyed. This study has received the approval of the Faculty of Education's Ethics Review Committee. The results of my research will be made available to you upon request.

If you would like more detail about any information mentioned, please contact me, Katherine Dundas, at 726-3963, or if you would rather speak with a resource person not associated with the study, please contact Dr. P. Canning at the Associate Dean's office for graduate programs 737-8587 in the Faculty of Education.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information in this package regarding your child's participation in this research project. Thank you for your consideration and cooperation of this request.

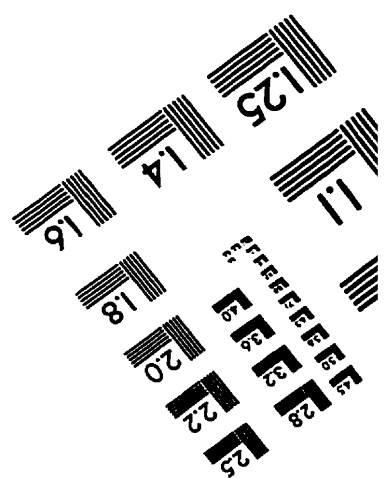
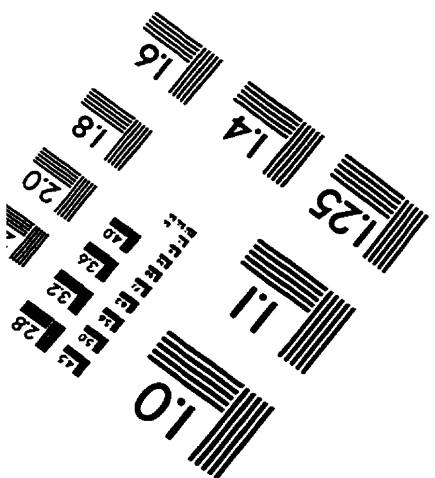
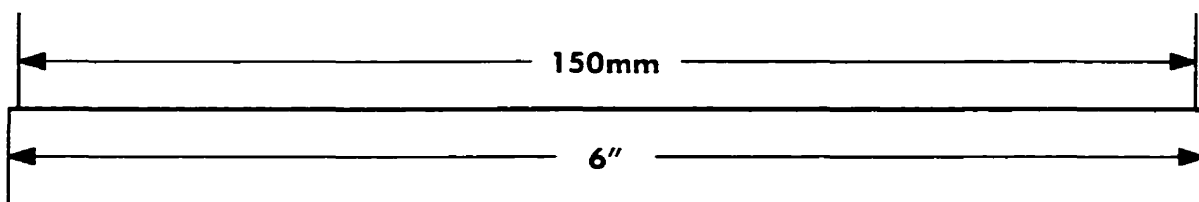
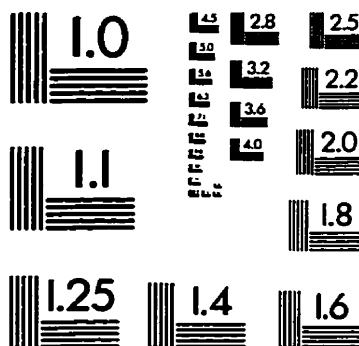
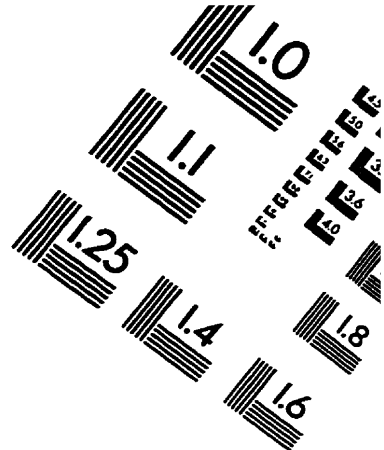
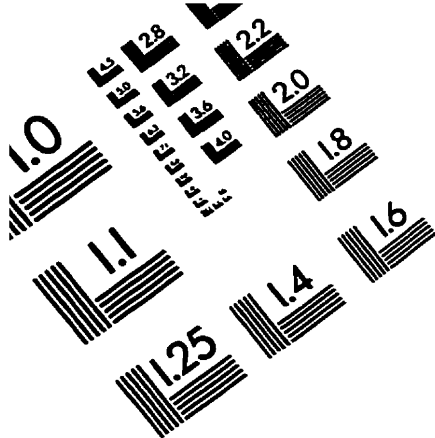
Yours sincerely,  
Katherine Dundas

I \_\_\_\_\_ (parent/guardian) hereby give my permission for  
\_\_\_\_\_ (son/daughter) to participate in a study on the influence of  
current educational reform policies on the process of curriculum development in the  
Newfoundland and Labrador education system being undertaken by Katherine Dundas. I  
understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that my child may withdraw from  
the study at any time and refuse to answer any questions. All information is strictly  
confidential and no individual will be identified.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Guardian

# TEST TARGET (QA-5)



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