



## Enacting Music Curriculum Contextualization in the Philippine K to 12 Curriculum: Negotiations, Constraints, and Mediating Forces

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### ABSTRACT

This study problematized the K to 12 music curriculum contextualization policy, and the negotiations, constraints, and mediating forces experienced by selected music teachers in formal music education, given the interactions with informal and non-formal music education. This ethnography analyzed the experiences of 12 music teachers in a town with a long-standing community band tradition. Data were gathered through interviews, focused group discussions (FGDs), surveys, and classroom observations conducted over a seven-month period. Framed from the concept of “policy as practice” of music curriculum contextualization, the findings revealed the music teachers’ negotiations: music listening selections, immersion, and integrative teaching strategies; mediating forces: teachers’ policy understanding and music content knowledge; and constraints: standardized examinations and inadequate school music resources. The study concluded that music contextualization policy should consider practice-informed teacher negotiations on the ground, teachers’ mediating forces, and teacher-identified constraints. Recommendations included community dialogue, adaptations of community band practices in class, and a paradigm shift toward student-led learning and assessment.

**Keywords:** *music, curriculum, contextualization, policy, practice*

### Introduction

Music is an integral part of education across many societies. Music education has taken several forms or systems: 1) informal music education anchored in families and communities; 2) formal music education offered in schools; and 3) non-formal music education evident outside of schools and done in conservatories, academies, and modern-day studios. These music education systems are sustained by commonly held, historically-

rooted value systems and shared musical practices. In the past, these systems were viewed separately in a hierarchy where formal music education was given primacy over other systems (Bates, 2018; Green, 2014; Jorgensen, 2007; Wright, 2008;). This tripartite view is still present in the Philippines (Del Valle, n.d.) while recent studies have shown that this is not the case anymore in some countries. The recent works of Folkestad (2006), Jorgensen (2002), and Green (2008) view these forms of music education as located along a continuum with degrees of formality and informality within each system of music education.

With the contextualization policy of the K to 12 curricular reform in the Philippines, this continuum has provided possibilities for convergence. This contextualization policy is a main feature of the K to 12 curriculum based on the changing nature of the learner (Department of Education [DepEd], 2016a). In the K to 12 Philippine Basic Education Curriculum Framework, the learner in the 21st century is a “co-creator of knowledge and active maker of meaning, not a passive recipient of information” (DepEd, 2014, p. 3). This framework is reflected in Rule II of the implementing rules of the K to 12 law. The DepEd shall adhere to the following standards and principles, when appropriate, in developing the enhanced basic education curriculum:

“The curriculum shall be learner-centered, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate; The curriculum shall be relevant, responsive, and research-based; The curriculum shall be gender- and culture-sensitive; The curriculum shall be contextualized and global; The curriculum shall use pedagogical approaches that are constructivist, inquiry-based, reflective, collaborative, and integrative; h) The curriculum shall be flexible enough to enable and allow schools to localize, indigenize and enhance the same based on their respective educational and social contexts” (Page 3, Section 10.2 Implementing rules and regulations of Republic Act 10533 Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013).

Within this contextualization policy, localization is achieved when schools develop “locally produced teaching and learning materials” (K to 12 IRR, 2013, Section 10.3). Indigenization, meanwhile, is attained with the incorporation of indigenous knowledge, skills, and practices in the learning areas (DepEd Order No. 35, S. 2016b). In the case of the music subject, the guidelines for it are stated in DepEd Order No. 31, S. 2012: Implementing Guidelines for Grades 1 to 10 to Enhanced Basic Education Curriculum (pp. 4-5):

“Grades 1-6: The Music Program focuses on the learner as the recipient of the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for artistic expression and cultural literacy. The curriculum design is student-centered, based on spiral progression, and grounded in performance-based learning. Thus, the learner is empowered, through active involvement and participation, to effectively correlate music and art to the development of his/her own cultural identity and expand his/her vision of the world.

Grades 7-10: Music and Art deal with contributing to the development of individual and collective identity. It is designed to be student-centered, based on spiral progression, and grounded in performance-based learning focused on appreciation and application where basic fundamentals are further reinforced. The program design empowers the learners to effectively correlate Music and Art to the study of Philippine Culture, as influenced by history, the culture of its neighbors, and the effects of globalization and the advancement of information technology.”

In music education, these guidelines can be accomplished by teaching local songs, chants, games, and musical ensembles in Grades 1 to 6, while students’ interpretation of various music cultures is encouraged in Grades 7 to 10 (DepEd, 2012b). Within these examples of contextualization through the use of local materials and students’ interpretation, we ask how these happen in the classroom. We also attempt to identify the mediations that occur in enacting the policy from the perspective of teachers. Considering the anthropology of educational policy as practice, implementers on the ground are policy actors. It is through their enactment, engagement, or appropriation of policy that this contextualization policy should be analyzed. Music education becomes a platform for the interrogation of curricular contextualization. The problematization of curricular contextualization as a policy enacted from the ground is built on the presupposition of educational policy as practice.

This study focused on the curriculum contextualization in formal music education in Taytay, Rizal, a town east of Metro Manila with a long history of band music tradition. Given this, the policy of curriculum contextualization opens the school music education curriculum- defined as the goals, standards, and competencies of the music component of the K to 12 curriculum- to students as “co-constructors of knowledge” (DepEd, 2014, p.2). Their experiences may be influenced by other music education systems such as community band music education. This topic rests upon the inherent contradictions between the contextualization policy and the prevailing orientation of music education in schools, promoting a hierarchy of musical systems where formal music education is privileged over other systems. With the persistence of community band music education and its co-existence with school music education, one asks how teachers enact the policy of curriculum contextualization.

This study sought to unpack the enactment of the policy through everyday teacher decisions in the classroom. The enactment of policy is important in the anthropology of policy as practice in education because of the latter’s focus on what is happening on the ground, with the primary assumption that teachers are policy actors. Studies on this area of interest have been done in other countries, and this study aims to contribute to the literature on this topic using the Philippine context.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

The framework of the study hinges on two theoretical orientations, namely, educational policy as practice and curriculum contextualization.

First, the importance of educational policy as practiced, enacted, engaged, or negotiated by actors on the ground is an essential discourse of educational anthropological study (Hamann et al., 2007; Sutton & Levinson, 2001). Educational anthropology research on policy as practice delves into discontinuities in the policy concerning the practice of various actors across levels. Applying Sutton and Levinson's theories of negotiation, appropriation, and cultural production in education, the following studies are worth mentioning: Findlow (2008) on education, modernity, and religious interaction as shown in negotiations informed by power rather than culture in Arab states; Lanas et al. (2013) contesting national stereotypes in education by marginalized Finnish learners from the rural north against urbanized southern Finland; Bartlett and Vavrus (2014) on transversal analysis of global educational policies at macro-meso-micro levels and the policies' "creative appropriation" in Tanzania; Valentin (2011) on the challenges of linear educational outcomes implemented among urban poor learners in Nepal, among others. These studies show the conversations surrounding the engagement of actors in educational policy on the ground.

Similarly, policy research in music education is a significant area in the International Society for Music Education (ISME) under the Commission on Music in Cultural, Educational, and Mass media policy. Music education policy research has been done in Kenya, South Africa, the United States, Canada, Brazil, Spain, Germany, Japan, Korea, and China (Andang'o & Mugo, 2007; Frierson-Campbell, 2007; Richerme, 2016; Schmidt, 2013; 2019). Educational policy and music education research is a "matter of fact in our educational calculations and might impact everything from everyday actions to philosophical considerations to curricular and pedagogical adaptation" (Schmidt, 2013, p. 110). Schmidt (2019) uses Ball's idea of enactment in educational policy as practice and applies this to music educators' everyday decision-making in the classroom.

Second, as regards curriculum contextualization, context has been analyzed in anthropology by Dilley (1999), pointing out that contextualization is the process of finding connections. In its extreme forms, extreme contextualization or contextualism may lead to cultural relativism, which in education may present an educational anthropological dilemma on the nature of knowledge to be learned (Dilley, 1999). Similar to anthropology, in the sociology of education, Collingwood (as cited in Dilley, 1999, p. 215) critiques the nature of official knowledge in schools. The anthropological and sociological discourses on contextualization and the sociology of knowledge have resonated with curriculum studies scholars such as Lawton (1978) on the bearing of the sociology of knowledge in rationalizing curriculum content, Billings (2003 as cited in He et al., 2015) on culturally relevant curricula, and most recently Shahjahan et al. (2022) on decolonizing curricula. Contextualization is defined in relation to indigenization and localization in curriculum studies about science education (O'Hern & Nozaki, 2014; Semken et al., 2017) and literacy education (Glasswell et al., 2022). In a recent literature review of environmental education curriculum studies, Druker-Ibáñez and Cáceres-Jensen (2022) defined contextualization as considering student's interests while localization and indigenization were defined as using local knowledge.

Curriculum contextualization as it is implemented in the classroom was studied by Leite et al. (2018). They cited educational anthropology theorists such as Apple (1999), Giroux (1983), Hall (1996), and Ball (1998, 2001, 2014, 2016) who had previously identified curricular contextualization and policy as intertwined. They also explained that this relationship had been put to the fore in international education development by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union since 2006. In writing about Portugal's Project of Autonomy and Curricular Flexibility pilot tested in 2017 and extended nationally in 2018, Leite et al. (2018) documented the prevailing practices and constraints of curriculum contextualization and national curriculum policy from the lens of elementary and high school teachers. In an earlier study of Turkish middle school mathematics teachers, Haser (2010) found constraints for teachers in navigating national curricula, school culture, and classroom contexts. In the Philippines, the K to 12 Curriculum features curriculum contextualization and advises teachers to use a spiral progression of knowledge, differentiated instruction, and localization in their teaching approaches, materials, and assessment modes (DepEd Order No. 42, 2016). Bongco (2020) found that principals and school administrators deferred to teachers in implementing policy guidelines of the Philippine K to 12 curriculum.

The implementation of the contextualized curriculum also necessitates a closer look at curriculum studies and curriculum enactment. He and Schultz (2015) investigated the teacher's role in enacting culturally relevant curricula to help students not only in using what they learned in the classroom but also in engaging with social issues encountered outside school. Teachers need training (Reisman & Jay, 2022) and support in planning, enacting, and reflecting (McNeill et al., 2022) to enact contextualized curricula in their classrooms with good judgment (Qoyyimah et al., 2020) and confidence (Alfrey & Connor, 2020; Baregas, 2019; Doyle & Rosemartin, 2012).

Aside from the literature on policy as practice, contextualization, and curriculum enactment of contextualization, there is a need to connect how these discourses are applied in music education. For music curriculum contextualization and music education policy, research has been done by Johansen (2014), Hentschke (2013), Schmidt (2013), and Manzano (2016), among others. Sætre (2011) applied Doyle's curriculum enactment definition and analyzed music teachers' music background and decision-making skills in compositional teaching strategies as teachers' curriculum enactment knowledge. In these studies, the authors noted the tensions and challenges for teachers in contextualizing music education in schools (Frierson-Campbell, 2007; Hentschke, 2013).

Despite these tensions and challenges, studies recognize the need for contextualization (Schmidt, 2013) because "communities, schools, programs, and the individuals who participate in these groups are tied to the social, cultural, and political contexts in which they reside" (Van Deusen, 2016, p. 1). Schmidt (2019) elaborated on Levinson, Sutton, and Winstead's concept of policy as management classified into

two: traditional top-down and progressive from the ground up. He added that, even though policy was formal, it was very much context and action-oriented. Thus, a policy of contextualization seen from the ground up is natural from the perspective of educational anthropology of policy as practice.

## **Method**

The research employed the interpretive paradigm of qualitative research methodology. The interpretive paradigm is a framework of ethnographic research that uses thick description through data gathered from various sources and perspectives. The meanings culled from these sources and perspectives define the analysis.

### ***Ethnographic design, tools, and procedures***

Using ethnographic methods of participant observation, interviews, focused group discussions, and document analysis, meanings generated from the data were drawn from the actors' perspectives. Key informant sampling was used to ensure validity. The inclusion criteria for student key informant interlocutors included membership in the community band and enrollment in the public elementary or high schools in the town. The inclusion criterion for teacher key informant interlocutors was that they should be teaching music to the student community band member interlocutors at either public elementary or high school levels.

Member checks and data triangulation were employed to ensure the reliability of the results. Member check was done by having the interview or focused group discussion transcripts read and approved by the interlocutors before analysis could be made. Member check was done so that the interlocutors were assured that the analysis only considered data they had previously read and approved for inclusion. Triangulation was observed by comparing three data sources such as the interview or focused group discussion transcripts, researchers' field notes from the observation of rehearsals and music classes, and documents such as pictures, videos, and textbooks.

### ***Data analysis***

Documents for analysis in the study were classified into music books used in the classroom, audio-video materials used, and pictures of music classes. For the teachers' interview or focused group discussions, the questions revolved around (1) teachers' definitions of contextualization; (2) contextualization strategies; (3) contextualized materials; (4) contextualization policy versus mandated textbooks; (5) contextualized assessment; (6) problems in contextualization; (7) solutions to problems in contextualization; (8) recommendations for contextualized music classes; and the (9) dynamics of junior community band students and teachers in music classes. Music class observation noted the music lesson content, class activities, assessment methods if any, and interactions between the teacher and the students who were concurrent



members of the community bands during music class. Field notes were taken during each observation detailing the sequence of events and noteworthy incidents or comments made during the observation. Analysis of the observation field notes, interview, and focused group discussions was done through frequency count of keywords (Ryan & Bernard, 2003), classification of frequency-counted keywords into categories, and synthesis of the categories into themes. Insights from related literature also informed the thematization process which, together with thematic content analysis, formed an iterative process. Sentiment analysis from the interview transcripts was also processed using NVIVO 6.0 qualitative software.

To adhere to standards of research ethics, free and prior informed consent (FPIC) was solicited from all interlocutors before the study was made. Before conducting the research, permission to conduct the study was sought through a letter addressed to the Department of Education, Division of Rizal. Protocols such as anonymity, member check, and deletion of data in computer databases after the study were included in the parental advice. Before pictures and videos were taken, permission was asked from those whose pictures or videos were to be taken. Anonymity in pictures and names was also observed for data privacy.

## Results

### Setting

The study was done in Taytay town, Rizal province, Philippines. Located below Antipolo along the foothills of the Sierra Madre Mountains, some 22 kilometers away from Manila, Taytay is a first-class municipality and is in the first district of the province of Rizal. The town is also located along Laguna de Bay and is twelve kilometers away from the Pasig River. The town has six barangays: Dolores, Muzon, Santa Ana, San Juan, and San Isidro (Taytay Local Government, n.d.). See Figure 1 for the map of Taytay.

### Interlocutors

The interlocutors of the study were school music teachers and their students from community bands in Taytay, Rizal. The teacher interlocutors

**Figure 1**

*Barangays of Taytay map*



for the study were three elementary music teachers and five high school music teachers from Taytay, three music teachers from Angono, one bandmaster / high school music teacher, and one principal. Table 1 summarizes the demographic descriptions of the teacher interlocutors in the study.

**Table 1**

*Demography of Music teacher interlocutors*

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Educational Background</b>	<b>Classes</b>
Teacher R	Male	5	BEE	MAPEH
Teacher I	Female	15	BEE	MAPEH
Teacher H	Female	5	BEE with music certification	MAPEH
Teacher JR	Male	20	Diploma in Music performance, bandmaster	Music and Art
Teacher R	Male	11	BSE English	MAPEH
Teacher J	Male	10	BSE Physics, Church organist	MAPEH
Teacher M	Male	2	BSE Music Education	MAPEH
Teacher J	Female	2	BSE Music Education	MAPEH
Teacher M	Female	5	BSE Music Education	Music and Art
Teacher O	Male	20	BSE MAPEH	MAPEH TLE, Music coordinator Music, Voice
Teacher C	Female	3	BSE TLE	MAPEH TLE, Music coordinator
Teacher R	Female	10	BSE ESP	Music, Voice

Teachers' background data showed that their average years of teaching music experience was nine, with new teachers at two years and veteran teachers at 20 years. This background is significant as only six of the twelve (50%) music teachers had music backgrounds. Of these six teachers, only three had professional music education



degrees, one had a MAPEH degree, and two had a musician's diploma and a music certificate. The other half of the teacher interlocutors were generalists or educators with professional elementary education degrees in subjects other than music.

Considering the aforementioned information, it could be assumed that only three out of 12 were music educators with pre-service preparation for content, pedagogical, and pedagogical content knowledge for music in basic education. Teachers with music diplomas and certificates are equipped with music content knowledge but may not have pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge which could be gained from music education methods courses. Given only 12 units of Music in the BSE MAPEH program, the pre-service course preparation of the MAPEH teachers may also be lacking in terms of music content and pedagogy. There is no music education course for generalist and non-music subject area teachers in their pre-service teacher education curriculum. Given the nature of the music curriculum and its content and performance standards, music concepts, and competencies, there is an implied assumption that teachers have adequate professional preparation for music education to teach the music curriculum and to contextualize it. However, according to the study's data, only 3 of the 12 teachers have adequate music education preparation. Therefore, at the onset, the teachers expected to enact the policy on the ground are already constrained because while the policy assumes they have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach the standards and contextualize them their qualifications show otherwise. Thus, it can be said that the teachers' context (i.e., educational background, music content, and pedagogical knowledge) is a mediating force in the enactment of the contextualization policy. Where they are coming from acts as a lens through which their policy enactment intersects with the requirements of the music curriculum in formal music education.

### ***Napakadugo (Difficult): Defining Contextualization***

The word cloud (Figure 2) illustrates the teachers' concept of contextualization. They primarily associated contextualization with the words: "local," "lesson plan," "English," "Music," and "materials." The word contextualization was equated with the words "local" and "akma" (appropriate), meaning what was contextual was local and appropriate to the learner. Local materials derived from the students' experiences were used to discuss the concepts learned in subjects. Thus, the abstract concepts in the curriculum were made real by deploying materials that the learners were familiar with, exposed to, and interested in.

The teachers' definition of contextualization is aligned with localization where appropriate learning materials are chosen considering the students' a) ability and interest, b) community and technology exposure, and c) emotions associated with learning the concept. It is noteworthy that one music teacher's understanding and definition of the contextualization were tied to the English subject despite the policy being threaded across all the subjects in the K to 12 curriculum, including music. Teachers also understood that proper contextualization was difficult and entailed

Figure 2

## Teachers' Contextualization Definitions Word Cloud and Treemap



consultation and validation, similar to the lesson planning of Indigenous Pedagogy (IPED). During the interview, one Grade 10 IPED-BSE English teacher teaching music said:

*“Sa pagbuo ng curriculum ng contextualization based on what I attended sa regional seminar sa IPED, napakadugo, napakadugo bago ka makapag-come up ng isang lesson plan na masasabi mong authentic contextualize lesson plan it will take talagang napakahabang proseso.”* (In enacting curriculum contextualization based on the IPED regional seminars I attended, it is difficult, very difficult even before you can produce one lesson plan that is considered as an authentic contextualized lesson. It takes a very long process.) (Teacher R, Grade 10 music teacher)

The teacher's emphatic comment “napakadugo” may reflect the difficulty of ensuring culturally responsive content and pedagogy on top of the curriculum's music content and performance standards. Thus, for teachers whose professional preparation differs from what they are teaching, the requirements for contextualization add to the critical music content, which they must master and then contextualize.

### **Relate, Integrate: Enacting Contextualization through Classroom Learning Strategies**

Teachers were open to sharing their teaching strategies when prompted about their activities to contextualize their music lessons. Teachers R and M shared their practices while Teacher I asked N, a junior student who is also a community band member in class, how school music knowledge was applied in the band and vice versa.

*“Yong contextualization na ginagawa ko for the past kasi hindi nila maintindihan 'yong impressionist music. 'Pag ganoon, ini-integrate namin agad si arts para*

*malaman nila through the elements of arts, through the elements of music, ahh, ganoon pala 'yong feeling ng music na ganito.'* (In past contextualization lessons on impressionist music, when students did not understand it, we integrated the elements of music with the elements of art. So students learned the feel of the music.) (Teacher R, Grade 10 music teacher)

*"Kaya po minsan 'pag may pinapatugtog kami, kailangan may alam kaming na parang ire-relate namin kaagad para mas mabilis nila matandaan Music sila tapos pinapatungan ng cartoons. Tom and Jerry."* (At times in listening, we have to know something about the music that we can relate immediately for easier recall... music associated with cartoons like Tom and Jerry.) (Teacher M, Grade 9 music teacher)

*"'Yong indigenization, 'yong local knowledge ngayon, contextualization lahat 'yong lahat, both local knowledge and local materials. So in the case of me, for example ang context mo taga-banda ka, nag-aaral ka rin ng music so nagagamit mo 'yong banda sa pag-aaral ng music, nagagamit mo ba 'yong school music mo sa pag-aaral mo sa banda? Oo, papaano?"* (Presently, indigenization and local knowledge are all contextualization. The use of local knowledge and local materials. In my case, if your context is community band and you have music in school, I ask you if you are able to use your band knowledge in the study of school music and vice-versa. If so, how?) (Teacher I, Grade 6 music teacher)

Aside from integration strategies, the teachers also asked the students to interpret and immerse themselves in the assigned topic. An interpretation was made visually or through role-plays, while community immersion entailed interviewing people from the community. The teachers thought that experiencing and applying the topics in the lesson would help maintain students' interest associated with contextualization. The choice of materials and the teacher's disposition were also important to motivate students in lessons that students could not relate to. Teacher C shared:

*"Ayaw naming ikulong sa discussion. Present through short skits 'yong pong topic na ina-assign sa kanila o through pa-drawing interpretation. Through research, assignments, tapos, pumupunta rin po sila mismo sa lugar din po... 'yong sa health talagang nag-uusap sila sa taong mismo doon sa health center, kung ano mayroon sa community, so as much as possible 'yong experience talaga...maranasan nila para maintindihan nila kung ano mayroon sa community."* (We do not want to limit the class to discussions. Students can present or interpret assigned topics through short skits or drawings. Through research and assignments, they go to the actual places ... like health centers to talk to health workers. We use what is in the community as much as possible and for students' real-life community experience to be able to understand.) (Teacher C, high school music coordinator)



## ***Ginagawa, Walang Magawa (Do, Make Do): Enabling Contextualization through Materials Selection***

In their definitions of contextualization, the teachers identified student interest as important. However, when prompted about music that students preferred to be studied in class, Teacher H said there was no time to accommodate students' preferences. In these instances, a paradox is revealed. Despite the learner-centeredness definition of the contextualization policy as defined by documents and the teachers themselves, the non-negotiable curriculum competencies are still followed and largely disregard student music preferences when it comes to materials selection. Teacher J2 points out:

*"We stick to what is needed competency from the curriculum itself because it's non-negotiable. So ang ginagawa namin aside from the book, we have to search for the other ideas or knowledge from Google." (We stick to what is needed competency from the curriculum itself because it's non-negotiable. So what we do is that aside from the book, we have to search for the other ideas or knowledge from Google.) (Teacher J2, Grade 10 music teacher)*

In the word analysis (Figure 4), the most important words connected to contextualized materials selection in music are "sounds," "ginagawa" (being done), "music," "iba" (different), "book," and "speaker." In words, with "ginagawa" (being done) and "sound," teachers recognized the value of musical experience through actual music-making. The word, "speaker," represented technology mediations in materials selection and signified an added burden to teachers who did not have good equipment. However, the word "book" implied that despite using local materials, the teachers still depended on music textbooks for materials. This practice was validated during observation where the selections viewed in class were based on or derived from the examples from the music textbook. Despite teachers' definitions of contextualization being based on localization,

**Figure 4**

*Teachers' Contextualizing Materials Word Cloud*





materials from books abounded, and localization by developing materials grounded in community traditions per policy was lacking.

“Ginagawa” (being done), in music, is tied to the concept of experience, especially in the experience of music, whether familiar or unfamiliar, through listening, performing, evaluating, or creating. Because of the required competencies, the lack of teacher training in music education, and the unavailability of musical instruments and technologies, teachers could only discuss music lessons on a superficial level, which de-contextualized music. The teachers were limited to motivating students through the injection of humor or focusing on extra-musical things in class.

In the contextualization policy, research is necessary to utilize local traditions as sources for learning materials. Teacher JR said that the paperwork required consumed the time which should have been allotted to research. Teacher O shared that their school also limited the research which teachers may require of students to contextualize their learning materials. Teacher JR added that research done by some teachers may not be directly useful in their music classrooms and may have been mounted only for career promotion purposes.

### **Boxed-in: Assessment of Contextualized Learning**

The problem of standardized assessment and what one teacher identified as “boxed-in” assessment is that it contradicts the principles of contextualized assessment (DepEd, 2012c). Teacher R had this to say about standardized music testing, “Hindi maganda (standardized exam) kasi kung halimbawa, may hindi ka naturo tapos isasama sa exam, eh hindi masasagot ng bata. Kung ano ‘yong tinuro ng teacher, ‘yon dapat. (Standardized exam is not good. For example, there may have been lessons not taught yet included in the exam that the students cannot answer. Whatever the teacher has taught is what should be assessed.) (Teacher R, Grade 6 music teacher)

The teachers also commented on performance assessment in music which, they say, should complement traditional forms of assessment. Teacher JR said of performance assessments in music, “*Ang ginagawa na lang nila nag-aano lang ng mga MP3, audio. Actually, di na nila tinutugtog, sumasayaw na lang sila eh. Mahirap. Mahirap, oo, para kaming naka box kasi, di ba? Naka box ‘yong ano mo. Eto lang ang kailangan mong ituro. Eto lang . . . Mahirap, di mo alam kung paano mo i-explore ng basta ano. Pagka nag explore ka, kailangan mo ng mas maraming days, di ba?*” (What they do is just play the MP3 audio and just dance. It is difficult, we are like in a box, right? This is what you are allowed to teach. Just this. It is difficult because you do not know how to explore other things. If you do explore, you will need more contact days, right?) (Teacher JR, Grades 7–10 music teacher)

Based on the NVIVO sentiment analysis of the interviews with teachers, their sentiments toward contextualized assessment were mostly negative. The analysis



showed three negative sentiments, one very negative sentiment, one mixed sentiment, and six neutral views about assessment. The negative sentiments of the teachers pointed to standardized examinations, especially at the elementary level, that went against the principles of contextualization. Aside from division-wide standardized music examinations in elementary, the music examinations sometimes had wrong answers or concepts that were not taught because only one teacher in the division office prepared them. Teachers also explained why objective type testing did not work in favor of contextualization. For teachers to give authentic assessments using music as experienced by the students, they highlighted the need for longer contact time. In performance task assessments, the students could only sing or dance but not play musical instruments in an ensemble due to the limited time given to music. Even when a singing requirement was chosen as the culminating activity, the students had to make time outside of class hours to practice. It is clear that, while the assessment policy accompanying the contextualization policy details non-traditional forms of assessment, performance-based assessment in music requires adjustments to the curriculum schedule, teacher expertise, and resources such as equipment and instruments. The teachers also pointed out that contextualized assessment necessitated out-of-the-box thinking, but the instructional plan for music per quarter (only 8 hours for music per quarter) could only accommodate traditional paper and pencil tests or, at best, singing and/or dancing to recorded music for culminating activities.

#### ***“LAC” Training: Proposed Solution to Problems Encountered***

The teacher informants also identified possible solutions to the problems they shared. These were a) teacher training programs and Learning Action Cells (LACs), b) motivation strategies, c) prioritization of acquisition of musical instruments, d) provision of actual music experience, and e) dialog with the community.

The teachers identified the need for harmonization between the music programs offered at the basic education level and the teacher training programs in music education at the tertiary level. The teachers also pointed out that the MAPEH components (Music, Art, Physical Education, and Health) being taught by one teacher may sacrifice critical content in these four components. Teacher H also suggested that contextualized music lessons be done through Learning Action Cells (LACs), defined as collaborative planning sessions for a group of teachers in a school: “Sa LAC session po na music learning action sinama nila, half day ng aming session para sa music isa ako sa mga nagturo. Sabi ng mga teachers ay ganoon pala ‘yon, aminado sila na di nila naiintindihan kung ano ‘yong nangyayari doon” (In the LAC sessions where we had half a day for music, I was one of those who trained my fellow teachers and they finally understood and admitted they did not understand these before.) (Teacher H, Grade 6 music teacher)

Teachers used various motivation strategies to keep students interested in the required content in the music curriculum that may not be relevant or interesting. Teacher H and Teacher JR utilized humor or “twists” in presenting what would seem to

be uninteresting content to students. Teacher O used fear to exercise his power over the students, warning his students that if they persisted in not listening, they would have to perform the musical example he was explaining. For most teachers, extrinsic motivation was superficial, and they preferred additional music lessons. The policy of contextualization is framed around learner-centered knowledge, which implies music relevant to the learner's musical experience. The teachers' use of humor and fear in some cases is an extrinsic motivation for a problem of music curricula not framed around students. While the contextualization policy allows schools and teachers to contextualize the curriculum, they must also observe the music competencies that prescribe the content to be delivered. In an ironic twist, the musical experience (which can serve as an enjoyable, student-directed, meaning-making activity) is used as a punishment for not listening, i.e., *if you don't listen, you will perform the music*.

Despite limited music backgrounds, some teachers realized the importance of musical experience over textbooks. Teacher JR brought personal musical instruments to show to his classes. He and Teacher H devoted additional time outside of class to instrumental music education (e.g., orchestra, band, choir) for students interested in learning actual music-making. For these free extra music classes, they asked parents and organizations to donate instruments. Teachers R preferred the provision of instruments to textbooks, *"Hmm, kasi ang pagtuturo naman iba-iba naman tao, kung halimbawa sa kaniya nagdedepende sa libro, eh ako, mas gusto ko eh instrument mismo kahit magkakaiba na tayo, basta nandoon iyong instrument. Di ba. Mas madaling umano kasi sa bata, madali nilang tanda 'yong apply 'pag nasa application"* (Teaching diverse people does not depend on the book. What I prefer is using musical instruments, right? Children remember better when they apply what they learned) (Teacher R, Grade 6 music teacher).

Teacher R saw lesson planning in consultation with experts and the community as another solution, but admitted this was a tedious process:

*"Kahit teacher ako ng paaralan eh hindi naman ako taga Muzon so how could I verify it kung yun ba talaga ay nangyayari o talagang pina practice nila kaya dapat may involvement ang community. I think it takes involving a lot of experts na para makihalobilo sa mga teachers na nasa ilalim na talagang gumagawa ng contextualization sa pang araw-araw na pagtuturo kasi kung parang ide-define ng contextualization even without providing trainings, let's say seminars and workshops, I don't think talagang maachieve ng teacher yung real essence ng contextualization. So it's not about providing the memo or the awareness that we have to include contextualization but also exposing the teachers how to make a preparation to come up a contextualization lesson plan in connection to teaching music subject."* (Even if I am a school teacher, I am not from Muzon so how could I verify if that is what is truly practiced? That is why community involvement is a must. I think it involves a lot of experts to interact with teachers on the ground who are enacting contextualization every day in their teaching because if we just define contextualization without providing training, like seminars

and workshops, I don't think the teacher can really achieve the essence of contextualization. So it's not about providing the memo or the awareness that we have to include contextualization but also exposing the teachers to how to prepare a contextualization lesson plan in connection to teaching the music subject.) (Teacher R, Grade 10 music teacher)

In synthesis, the teachers' implementation of the music curricular contextualization policy is mediated by their understanding of the policy and their music content and pedagogical knowledge. Issues in enacting the policy include the lack of school music resources (e.g., contact time and music instruments) and assessment constraints (standardized examinations). Through collaboration with other music teachers in LACs, the teachers strategize to improve instruction through additional training in music and by reworking contact time for culminating activities in music as contextualized performance assessment.

## Discussion

The experiences of the music teachers in the study were analyzed from two main perspectives, namely, Fernandes et al.'s (2013) and Leite et al.'s (2018) curricular contextualization approaches and Schmidt's (2019) policy as practice for music educators.

### ***Music Contextualization Influx and Formal Music Curricula: A Paradox***

Using the contextualization practices identified by Leite et al. as a framework for analysis, the practices of the music teacher interlocutors in the study involved mostly (1) adaptation of the curriculum to students' interests in music listening materials through techniques such as pointing out familiar classical music in cartoons and using Filipino popular music; (2) curriculum adaptation based on the student's life experiences through immersion projects; and (3) horizontal and vertical curriculum articulation through the integration of arts and music content through activities like festival presentations.

Using the same framework, the study found that what is lacking in the implementation of music curriculum contextualization is a) curriculum adaptation based on local features, which would entail the engagement of the community band tradition in the music lessons; and b) diversification of practices such as improvisation or watching live community band performances and relating these to music lessons instead of mostly listening activities. The curriculum contextualization practice of adapting based on local features is an important strategy that truly reflects the spirit of the contextualization policy being place-based and relevant to the learner. Given that the selected schools are in a town with a long-standing band tradition, the possibility of using the local community band in music contextualization is as important as ever. When students' experiences of community band traditions are considered in the classroom, these musical experiences not only consider people's voices in the implemented curriculum

but also bridge the gap and act as an enactment of the contextualization policy of the intended curriculum.

Similar to Leite et. al.'s findings on the paradox of formal curricula and implementing contextualization of the curriculum, the music interlocutors in the study pointed out that contextualization was a tedious process because of the non-negotiable content and competencies in the curriculum. While the curriculum has been decongested to a certain extent, the remaining content and competencies limit the time to contextualize music activities and accommodate student listening preferences. Andaya (2019), director of the Philippine Department of Education's Bureau of Curriculum Development (DepEd BCD), admitted this and suggested reducing the competencies and curriculum guides for better teacher flexibility. The standardized examinations required periodically also bear upon the teachers who must contextualize and at the same time prepare their students for the objective division-wide music paper and pencil tests, similar to findings of Leite et. al.'s study. In one music teacher's reflection, it is difficult to contextualize when a "box" is expected to be filled. This paradox of contextualization, which requires imagination, collaboration, and community awareness, contrasts with standardized music curricula and examinations. Hence, teachers can maneuver only within a limited space.

### ***Music Contextualization Policy in Practice: Enactment, Negotiation, Navigation***

Policy enactment is not only in policy documents but also in individuated, every day, political settings where "it is embodied by people" (Ball, 2006 as cited in Schmidt, 2019, p. xi). This enactment as embodied by individuals is mediated by their understanding of the policy language identified by Schmidt (2019) as policy know-how and their contexts as music educators.

Schmidt (2019) also detailed three important policy aspects of practice for music educators: content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and policy know-how. From the teachers' profiles, their professional music education shows a lack of content knowledge. The teachers in the study have identified the importance of the teachers' music content knowledge through music training to deliver and contextualize the content and performance standards of the music curriculum. Teacher recommendations to improve content knowledge include in-service music training through music LACs and teacher mentoring in the four-component subject, MAPEH. Teachers found that the four-component MAPEH presented problems related to mastery of content knowledge in four disciplines by one teacher. Thus, a review of teacher pre-service music education programs vis-a-vis the music curriculum requirements in basic education is needed to address music content knowledge in general and its implications for the contextualization policy in particular.

Besides content knowledge, teachers' knowledge of the contextualization policy affects its enactment. The teachers' views of research as removed from the teaching

process do not feed into the policy's framework where research into local traditions informs contextualization practices. The paradigm shift from teacher-led processes toward student-directed learning as contained in the policy framework on learner-centeredness is yet to be seen except for student-produced culminating activities in music. Thus, in terms of policy know-how and understanding the language of the contextualization policy, the practice on the ground needs further clarification. Concerning pedagogical knowledge, the teachers showed many examples of this despite material and personal limitations. In implementing the contextualization policy, there is an attempt at enactment of the policy but only superficially according to the teachers themselves.

Negotiations and navigations of what is possible within the limited spaces between contextualization and curriculum are also revealed in the everyday music interactions in school. With this limited space, lack of resources, and the expectation to contextualize and meet the curriculum standards simultaneously as the backdrop, the music teachers diffuse the tension by injecting humor into their music lessons to keep students motivated. In the absence of musical experience, for some teachers, negotiation between realizing the curriculum content and contextualizing it for students in a town with band traditions requires free extra music lessons with instruments donated by organizations and interested parents. These strategies for the navigation of policy within limited spaces are necessary so that teachers can implement curriculum contextualization given the aforementioned limitations.

Teachers recognize that the contextualization policy, if properly implemented, will entail research and consultation with the community. Given their limited music content knowledge and policy know-how, they recommend having more music training and regular consultations with the community and educational experts on the policy, aside from official memoranda containing guidelines, which they say will improve their confidence in contextualizing the curriculum. For the teachers, policy know-how is not only about reading DepEd orders but also about working together to identify common experiences and collaboration. In Schmidt's (2019) policy as practice for music educators, the individual embodiment of policy is important through everyday decision-making in the classroom. However, based on the data from the study, policy negotiations are possible if teachers plan collectively (Banegas, 2019) and collaborate through the LACs. In the schools observed, music teachers who act in teams rather than as individuals have more power in negotiating for changes to benefit their music classes. Thus, embodied contextualization policy as practice in music education is a collective practice based on this study's results.

Teachers know the policy and its importance, but material and human constraints limit its enactment. Cognizant of their limitations and the extent of their understanding of the policy from memoranda and guidelines, teachers want policy experts to work with them and the community to prepare contextualized music lessons.

## Conclusions

Teachers defined contextualization as localization using materials interesting for students on the ground. This definition was enacted through (a) selection of familiar music materials, (b) integration of music with other disciplines, (c) wide use of technology, and (d) use of music performance assessment tasks like culminating activities. The teachers' enactment of policy was mediated by their understanding of the contextualization policy and their musical backgrounds. Issues that may hinder their policy enactment include school constraints (resources) and division standardized assessment.

Music teachers negotiate the constraints micro-structurally in their classrooms by using positive (humor) and negative (fear) motivation strategies. At the macro-structural level, the teachers negotiate policy constraints by working in teams through music learning action cells (LACs), advocating for space to make teaching decisions.

Three forces mediated the enactment of the policy. First, teachers' policy know-how (understanding of the language of policy) where their understanding of the paradigm shift to student-centered learning is inconsistent with their textbook-directed lessons. Second, teachers' lack of music qualifications also mediates the contextualization of the music curriculum as teachers cannot facilitate students' personal musical experiences in the classroom. Third, teachers' limited understanding of research as an aid to localization resulted in a lack of awareness of using community band traditions as context. Because of the lack of awareness of local music (place-based) traditions, teachers could not use local community band traditions in their lessons. Instead of interpreting the policy from official documents alone, the teachers advocate for a collaborative effort in implementing the policy through regular dialogue with the community, the teachers, and educational experts.

The results of the study support discussions on the paradox of curriculum contextualization and standardized curricula, implying the complex nature of music curriculum contextualization as practiced. While previous studies identify curriculum contextualization enabling factors for teacher confidence like the provision of teacher training on content knowledge and contextualization pedagogy, the results of the study revealed that collective teacher decision-making in the everyday enactment of the policy provided alternatives to exercise professional judgment. The importance of teachers' collective decision-making not only helped the teachers compensate for their limited knowledge necessary for the enactment of policy but also provided opportunities for the sharing of material, social, and cultural resources. In the formulation of contextualization policy, as seen from the enactment of teachers from the ground, the importance of the teachers' contexts redefines contextualization apart from the focus on learner-centeredness in its educational definition. These teachers' contexts not only inform policy redefinition but also help re-conceptualize future policy directions for curriculum contextualization with an awareness of contextualism in its extreme forms.



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