



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
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**An analysis into the power of mindsets of Music Education lecturers**

by

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Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Degree

**Masters in Education**

**In the Department of Humanities Education**

**Faculty of Education**

At the

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

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2020


**“Nothing is IMPOSSIBLE. The word itself says I’M POSSIBLE.”**

**Audrey Hepburn**

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CLEARANCE NUMBER:

**HU 19/10/02**

**DEGREE AND PROJECT**

MEd

Music

An analysis into the power of mindsets of  
Education lecturers

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- Informed consent/assent,
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- Data storage requirements.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my beautiful and wonderful mother, Estelle Pike. Thank you for always believing in me, supporting me and never missing my performances. You have ignited a passion within me to succeed in life and to always follow my dreams.

## ABSTRACT

The title of this study is: An analysis into the power of mindsets of music education (MusEd) lecturers. My analysis focuses on the fixed and/or growth mindset feedback MusEd lecturers give to their student teachers. I investigate these two concepts, namely the mindset and the feedback. A fixed mindset means that one believes their abilities and talents are fixed and cannot change very much. Having a growth mindset means that one believes that with hard work and dedication their ability and talent are malleable and can grow. Feedback is information given to a student teacher by a lecturer on how they are learning and performing. There are two methods of giving feedback which shape the mindset of the student teacher. The one is process feedback that instils a growth mindset; the other is praise feedback that instils a fixed mindset. In this study, the following two research questions will be answered: a) How do the MusEd lecturers instil a fixed or growth mindset in their student teacher feedback? b) Why do the MusEd lecturers instil either a fixed or growth mindset in their student teacher feedback?

As a music performer and educator, I have experienced both sides of the receiving and giving end of feedback in a music classroom setting. Throughout my educational years, I had received praise feedback. Consequently, I had a fixed mindset about my ability, which hindered my progress in becoming a “world-renowned opera singer”. This has changed my view on how to approach feedback to students in a more critical way by instilling a growth mindset in them. This study will support the student teacher in how they view and proceed with their ability. Feedback is a crucial part of how a student can move forward or backwards in their future musical endeavours.

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**An analysis into the power of mindsets of Music Education lecturers**

by

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Yours sincerely

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the assistance received from the following people who made it possible to create this document:

- My supervisor, Dr De Villiers, thank you for always sticking by my side. Your dedication to push me to complete this Master's degree has been invaluable, and I am forever grateful!
- Prof. Wasserman, you are one of a kind! I strive to be a leader like you in my future endeavours. Thank you for always believing in me!
- My husband Pierro Smit and my Pike family, Estelle, AC and Christu. I cannot wait to celebrate with you all after this pandemic!
- My colleague and friend, Marchelle Dickinson. Thank you for introducing me to my supervisor and for allowing me to observe you at school. You were an angel sent on my path to guide me in the right direction.
- Madaleen Botha – almost Dr Botha. Thank you for working with me in the research commons, and for laughing so hard at funny videos during our break times that we got in trouble. Thank you for making this process a little bit more bearable!
- “Bless the Lord, oh my soul. I worship Your Holy name.” Thank you, Lord, for all the blessings!



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## ACRONYMS

<b>MusEd</b>	Music Education
<b>OBE</b>	Outcome-Based Education
<b>CAPS</b>	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
<b>IAM</b>	Indigenous African Music
<b>RNC</b>	Revised National Curriculum
<b>NCS</b>	National Curriculum Statement
<b>BMus</b>	Bachelor of Music
<b>BEd</b>	Bachelor of Education

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

An analysis into the power of mindsets of music education lecturers.

## 1.1. Introduction

In this research study, I focus on analysing what mindset feedback is given to music education (MusEd) students. According to O'Rourke et al. (2014:3339), "praising a student's inherent ability has been shown to promote the fixed mindset, or the belief that intelligence is unchangeable, while praising a student's strategies or effort promotes the growth mindset, or the belief that intelligence is malleable." This chapter serves as an introductory chapter. The structure outlines the main focus of this study by briefly discussing the importance of and reasons for conducting this research, the conceptual and theoretical framework and the methodological approach.

## 1.2. Background Information and Context

Receiving feedback is a vital part of the learning process of life. From the moment we are born we receive feedback. Feedback shapes the way we think and how we perceive life around us. Probably one of the most important forms of feedback we will ever receive throughout our life is that of our academic understanding and our academic achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007:102). Academic feedback shapes our mindset and the way we view our abilities. Carol Dweck has over the past few decades conducted research on ability mindsets. Students with a *fixed mindset* believe they are born with a certain set of talents and skills and are not malleable. When these students are faced with challenging tasks, they would rather miss the learning opportunity because they do not want to show any weakness or shortcomings if they struggle in any learning area. Students with a *growth mindset* believe that through hard work and persistence they can further develop their abilities. When these students are faced with a challenging task, they believe that challenging tasks develop and grow their abilities (Dweck, 2010a:16).

## 1.3. Rationale and Motivation

My music career started when I was six years old and my mother encouraged me to learn to play the recorder. As a young student, playing the recorder was not an instrument I could just pick up and play, but something that I worked hard on to master. My efforts paid off. I won

many school awards for best performing artist as well as numerous Eisteddfod awards throughout my primary school education. The time came when I had to decide which high school to attend in Grade 8. I followed my heart and chose to go to a high school that focused on developing my musicianship. However, I needed a second instrument to join the music department. I had never learned any other instruments, apart from singing in a choir and performing songs at a few Eisteddfods. My family and I then decided that I should audition to be accepted into the singing programme as my second instrument. Many years later, I completed matric with a distinction in singing as my first instrument. I also completed my BTech Vocal Art Degree in Opera as well as a BMus Honours Degree in Performing Art. The feedback I received from my singing teachers was usually “a God-given talent” or “a natural ability to sing classical music”. Yet, one thing was keeping me from having a lifelong successful opera career. It was my mindset.

**Personally**, I never knew that my mindset was the reason for my career taking a different turn. In 2015, I worked at an international school. This meant that I, as a born South African who was used to only South African education norms, was suddenly exposed to what was happening outside the South African world of education. Here the focus is on a growth mindset instead of a fixed mindset.

**Scholarly**, the mindset concept is popular and well known among international educators, but remains a foreign and unfamiliar concept for many South African educators. For the first time in my life, I realised that, as an opera singer, I had a fixed mindset. However, we are not born with a certain mindset; our mindset is developed throughout our life experiences. I had to reflect on what life experiences made me develop this mindset, and I came across a familiar term in education called “*feedback*”.

**Professionally**, throughout my whole singing career, I received ability feedback. I could put in little effort to learn an opera aria and I would receive feedback that praised me for having a natural born ability, such as “*God-given*” and “*talented individual*”. This instilled in me the wrong mindset – a mindset that caused me to avoid challenging work, as it led to a fear of failure.

**Academically**, these reflections led me to my research. After many discussions and literature review, the education institution where I am studying for my Master’s degree initiated the following questions. Are the MusEd lecturers instilling a growth mindset or a fixed mindset in

their music education students through their feedback? Can this research make a difference in the way the MusEd division shapes a student's mindset? Can this lead to a greater success rate in the future? My research will open many doors that will lead to many more questions and, hopefully in the future, lead to successful change.

#### **1.4. Focus**

The focus of this study is on analysing how the MusEd lecturers give feedback to their students by looking at the entity theory of a fixed and growth mindset. The focus of this study will also look at why MusEd lecturers give fixed or growth mindset feedback to their students.

#### **1.5. Purpose**

The purpose of the study is to understand the way in which the MusEd lecturers give fixed and growth mindset feedback to their students. It also explores the reasons that different feedback is given to music students by different MusEd lecturers and the mindset instilled through their feedback.

#### **1.6. Research Questions**

- a) How do the MusEd lecturers instil fixed or growth mindsets in their student feedback?
- b) Why do the MusEd lecturers instil either a fixed or growth mindset in their student feedback?

#### **1.7. Review of Related Literature**

The existing literature is discussed in more detail and depth in Chapter 2. Psychology professor Carol Dweck as a sixth grader experienced a classroom event that made her question how people view their abilities. They view their abilities as either a fixed trait or a quality that can further develop and grow. Her research "experiment" consisted of a room full of students who were seated in groups according to their IQ levels. Students who did not sit at the high IQ level table were not allowed to carry the assembly flag or clean their teacher's blackboard. The teacher made the students with the higher IQ levels believe that their IQ was the only thing that measured their intelligence, ability and character. Consequently, the high-ability students learned to fear challenges because they were not moved to the lower intelligence table (Trei, 2007).

This experiment and other research led to Carol Dweck's (2006) book *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. At that time, it was the most significant contribution to education research that was published (Agile Mind, 2021). This was due to her research that proved that students could increase their abilities by having a growth mindset. Her published research includes decades of investigations on the growth mindset and the fixed mindset (Boaler, 2013:143). Students with a *fixed mindset* believe they are born with a certain set of talents and skills and this cannot change. When these students are faced with challenging tasks, they would rather miss the learning opportunity because they do not want to show any weakness or shortcomings in any learning area. Students with a *growth mindset* believe that through hard work and persistence they can further develop their abilities. When these students are faced with a challenging task, they believe that challenging tasks develop and grow their abilities (Dweck, 2010a:16).

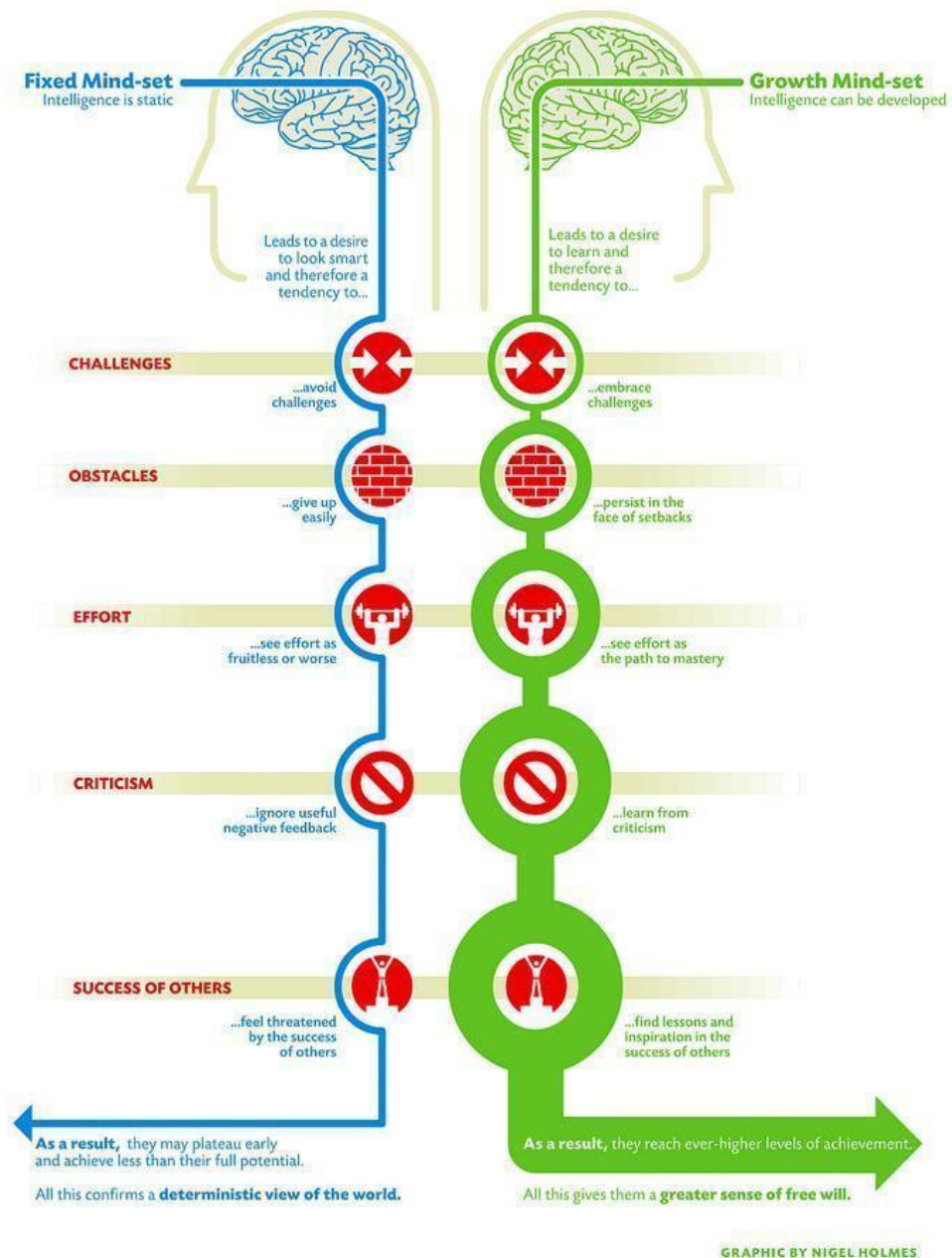
Dweck's theory of fixed and growth mindsets originates from a social cognitive perspective. This perspective posits that thought processes play a key role in human motivation, affect and action. Consequently, much of human thought and action originates by interaction with and observation of others in a social context (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Students build up theories of life in order to make sense of their life-worlds. From these theories, a framework of meaning is created that leads them to interpret events that happen in particular ways. This meaning framework dictates the extent to which students will persist, or not, in the face of setbacks and challenges.

According to Dweck (2006), there are two different basic belief systems related to abilities, namely entity and incremental belief systems. Entity theorists see the self as a compilation of fixed characteristics that can be evaluated and that do not change (fixed mindset). Incremental theorists, on the other hand, believe that abilities evolve in accordance with effort and experiences (growth mindset). Students with a *fixed mindset* believe that their talents and abilities are not malleable. The amount of talent and abilities one is born with is fixed and cannot change (Dweck, 2010a:16). When students with a fixed mindset fail at a task, they start to doubt their abilities and give up. This doubt in their ability causes them to avoid challenging tasks, therefore choosing tasks in which they can succeed (Boaler, 2013:143). Students with a growth mindset believe their abilities are malleable and can develop (Dweck, 2010a:16). They believe their abilities can grow through hard work and challenging tasks, even if this means they will fail at first (Trei, 2007). According to Stoycheva and Ruskov (2015), "a growth



mindset is one in which you see yourself as fluid, a work in progress. Your fate is one of growth and opportunity.”

*The Graphic Novel* by Nigel Holmes (Figure 1.1) describes that a student with a fixed mindset avoids challenges, while a student with a growth mindset embraces challenges. When a student with a fixed mindset is faced with a learning obstacle, they tend to give up easily, whereas a student with a growth mindset persists when faced with any obstacle. Holmes describes that a student with a fixed mindset views effort as something unproductive and useless, while a student with a growth mindset views effort as the path to mastery. When a student with a fixed mindset receives criticism, they ignore it because they view it as negative feedback. When a student with a growth mindset receives criticism, they view it as positive and something from which they can learn. Finally, Holmes states that a student with a fixed mindset will feel threatened by the success of their fellow classmates, but a student with a growth mindset will find lessons and inspiration in their fellow classmates' success. Therefore, a student with a fixed mindset might reach a certain stage of learning and not grow any further to achieve their full potential; a student with a growth mindset may reach a higher sense of achievement, which gives them a greater sense of free will.



**Figure 1.1:** The Graphic Novel by Nigel Holmes describes how the fixed and growth mindsets view challenges, obstacles, effort, criticism and the success of others.

Giving feedback is a valuable tool to address students' cognitive and motivational abilities. This should be an important part of the teaching and learning process. Feedback is given to students to deepen their understanding of how they are progressing towards their learning goals and what they need to develop further to be successful (Brookhart, 2017:1–2). A lecturer's belief about a student who was born with a “natural gift” or “remarkable talent” or of a student who is believed to not hold these talents can result in feedback from their lecturers. This feedback can alter their mindsets about their ability (Mercer & Ryan, 2009:1).

When students receive ability feedback on their natural talent, the lecturers instil a fixed mindset. According to Mueller and Dweck (1998:33), feedback for ability is the most “popular tool in the development and maintenance of individuals' academic achievement motivation, behaviours and strategies”. The misbelief is that feedback for ability builds motivation and confidence. There are experts in childcare who claim that increasing children's beliefs that they are talented will motivate them to set challenging goals and work hard. However, Mueller and Dweck (1998:33) believe that giving children feedback for good performances due to their abilities may have a negative impact on their future achievement. Praising a child's abilities after a successful performance can lead to thinking the “praise to be insincere and leads them to feel pressured to produce future good performance[s]”, thus resulting in a fixed mindset. Examples of ability feedback can be identified by the following statements:

- “Wow, you are so talented!”
- “I knew you had it in you!”
- “You are so lucky to have so much talent!”
- “Great job!”

When given feedback on their effort, students develop a growth mindset (O'Rourke, Peach, Dweck & Popovic, 2016:42). Lecturers can learn how to give feedback to their students that will foster a growth mindset. This growth mindset feedback can help students achieve their long-term performance goals by facing challenging tasks and developing excellence in performing music pieces (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015:49). Music lecturers can encourage growth mindset behaviour by changing the feedback they give to students who are successful in their assessments or classroom performances.

When students have a growth mindset, the belief is that hard work can further develop one's abilities. Students who focus on further developing their abilities do not worry about how talented they appear and will take on any challenging tasks (Dweck, 2007:34). Process feedback (effort) such as hard work, focus, persistence and determination informs students of the effort it took to be successful, and on how to be successful again in the future. This reflection process results in a growth mindset. According to Dweck (2007:36–37), process feedback can be identified by the following statements:

- “You really studied for your English test, and your improvement shows it. You read the material over several times, outlined it and tested yourself on it. That really worked!”
- “I like the way you tried all kinds of strategies on that mathematics problem until you finally grasped it.”
- “It was a long and difficult assignment, but you stuck to it and got it done. You stayed at your desk, kept up your concentration, and kept working. That’s great!”
- “I like how you took on that challenging project for your science class. It will take a lot of work doing the research, designing the machine, buying the parts, and building it. You’re going to learn a lot of great things” (O'Rourke, Peach, Dweck & Popovic, 2016:42).

Several studies have focused on ability feedback and process feedback. One such study conducted by Mueller and Dweck (1998) was a set of challenging problems given to fifth grade students, of which the results showed that they could do these challenging problems. The students were divided into two groups, namely the ability praise group and the process praise group. The ability praise group were given praise such as: “Wow, you did very well on these problems. You got [x number] right. That’s a really high score.” The other group was given process praise such as: “You must have worked hard on these problems.” The students who were given ability praise developed a fixed mindset and soon after chose a less challenging task over a more complicated task in order to succeed and look smarter than the rest of their peers. The group that received process praise on their success saw their abilities as malleable and stayed focused on the learning tasks, even if it was challenging, as this promoted their learning. When this group received challenging tasks, the group who was praised for their process did not doubt their abilities. They had more determination and better outcomes than the first group (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017:1851).

Kamins and Dweck (1999) conducted a study on kindergarten children in which they were given process and ability praise on role-playing tasks that were successful. After receiving the two types of praise, the children then roleplayed tasks that were unsuccessful. The kindergarten children who had received ability praise portrayed the characteristics of a fixed mindset and were less likely to react in a resilient manner. The kindergarten children who had received process praise portrayed characteristics of a growth mindset and were more likely to react with resilience with future tasks (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017:1852).

As there is much evidence that supports the entity and incremental theory, there have been some critiques on the findings of other researchers. Furnham, Chamorro-Premuzic and McDougall (2003:47-64) discovered that the fixed mindset and the growth mindset “were not significantly related to academic performance” in a longitudinal study of British university students. Researchers Ahmavaara and Houston (2007:613–632) supported Dweck's theory, but “cross-cultural differences came to light between these results and previous literature which merited further investigation”. Kristjansson has criticised Dweck’s intelligence questionnaire, which is found in Appendix (B), and explains that Dweck’s “exaggeratedly divisive answers” could possibly not accurately present the answers given by the students (Donohoe, Topping & Hannah, 2012:641–655). There have also been two recent studies that question the efficacy of the fixed and growth mindset interventions. A study from the Education Endowment Foundation, called “Changing Mindsets”, found that after giving students and teachers growth mindset training, students who received this intervention did not have a great statistical significance and that the teachers had no gain whatsoever. Another study by Bahník and Vranka (2007:139–143) studied the relationship between mindset and relationship by making use of a scholastic aptitude tests. The results showed that “the strength of the association between academic achievement and mindset might be weaker than previously thought” (Hendrick, 2019).

In conclusion, very limited research on growth mindset and feedback currently exists in the educational landscape of South African MusEd. While doing the literature review, I found that this is a niche area, which is discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

## 1.8. Theoretical Framework

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) describe that a theory can be useful only when it is used for “the development of scientific knowledge”. Anfara and Mertz (2014) explain that a theory should:

- a. *Provide a simple explanation of the observed relations relevant to a phenomenon; and*
- b. *Stimulate further research in areas that need investigation.*

The phenomenon of this study is the mindset feedback given to the MusEd student teachers. The findings will open new areas of research in the MusEd field regarding feedback and how it influences the mindset of the MusEd student teacher.

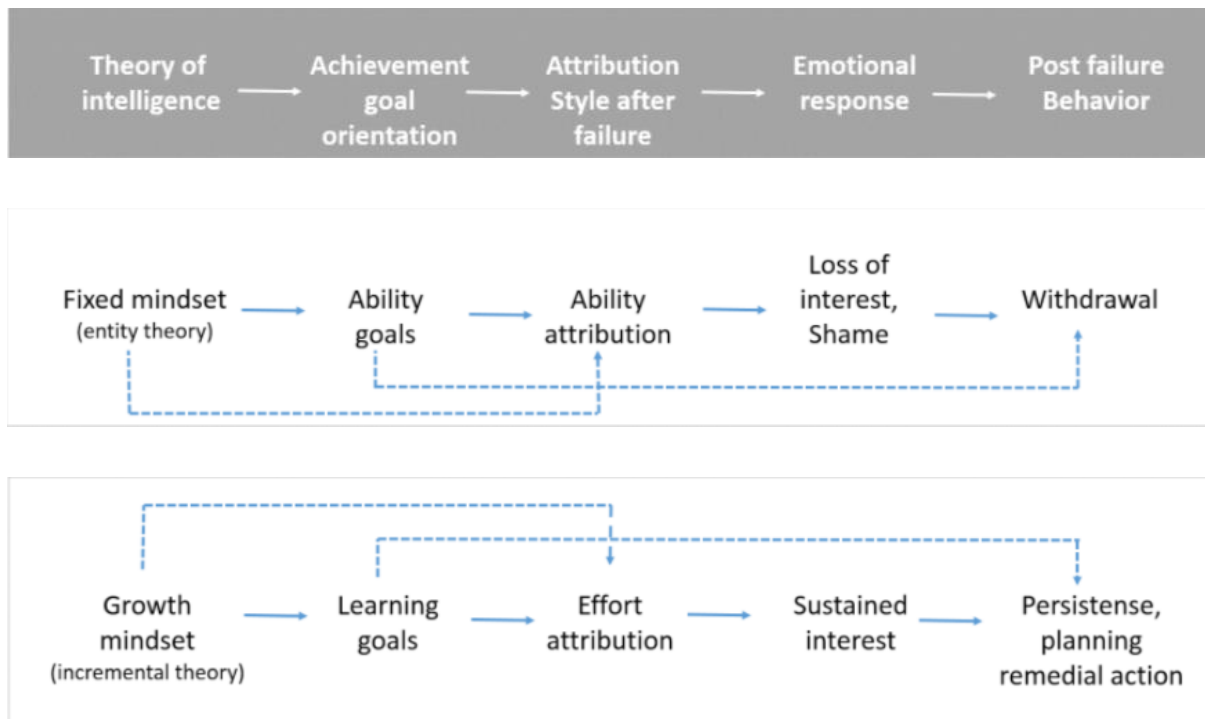
The theory used in this study is **the implicit theory**, which was developed by Carol Dweck. She describes that there are two different perspectives to these mindsets (Dweck cited in Mercer & Ryan, 2009:1), namely:

- a. *Incremental theory – The belief that students with high ability are more likely to display mastery-orientated qualities is a fixed mindset.*
- b. *Entity theory – The belief that praise encourages mastery-orientated qualities is a growth mindset.*

According to Davis et al. (2011:331), “those who believe traits to be fixed (entity theorists) cope more effectively when academic challenges arise, whereas an implicit theory of ability approach to motivation argues that students who believe traits to be malleable (incremental theorists) have a growth mindset.” From these self-theories, Carol Dweck (2000) created her theories on ability which will guide the framework of this study.

Table 1.1 by Smiley et al. (2016) describes that students with a fixed mindset (entity theory) develop their goals around their ability and believe that these goals can be achieved only through their strength of ability. When these students fail at their goals, they lose interest and withdraw from forthcoming challenges. Students with a growth mindset (incremental theory) have learning goals that are achieved through hard work and effort. This mindset does not give up and sustains interest even after failure through persistence and taking action.

**Table 1.1:** Predictions made by Dweck’s theory (Smiley et al., 2016)



The entity theory (theory of intelligence) will guide the research by firstly investigating which mindset each MusEd lecturer has about their abilities, for example a fixed mindset (incremental theory) or a growth mindset (entity theory). The focus will then shift to using these theories to analyse the feedback given by music lecturers to their students. The conceptual and theoretical framework will be discussed in more detail and depth in Chapter 3.

### 1.9. Methodological Approach

Research denotes a scientific investigation of information or circumstances, which involves a method comprising a “systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data to generate new knowledge” (Degu & Yijsaw, 2006:2). A research project requires a clear problem statement and research plan that builds on existing data, which are organised in such a way that the research questions can be answered (Degu & Yijsaw, 2006:2). The scientific inquiry in this study is driven by the research questions. The research design consists of the interpretive paradigm and qualitative semi-structured interviews with document analysis. The research methods involve the role of the researcher, research participants and a data collection plan.

There are “two main philosophical dimensions to distinguish existing research paradigms” (Wahyuni, 2012:69). The first is **ontology**, which implies: What is reality? This is defined as the nature of reality. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:33), every individual has “beliefs and values” that are formed by their interests. We as researchers could enhance “some views of reality” and could neglect others. Therefore, in my research study, I will gather subjective evidence from the semi-structured interviews and feedback analysis.

Secondly, **epistemology** refers to: How do I know reality? This is defined by the assumptions we make of knowledge that we acquire (Al-Saadi, 2014:2). Mason (2017:14) asks the question: “What is the nature of the phenomena, or entities, or social ‘reality’, that I wish to investigate?” These questions make the researcher think about what their “research is about in a fundamental way”. This leads me to ask the question: “What is the very nature and essence of things in the social world; thus, in this study, what is my epistemological position or approach?” (Mason, 2017:14–15). Therefore, my research reports on different perspectives that emerge from the semi-structured interviews and document analysis. My sample consists of five different MusEd lecturers from the same music division at the University of Pretoria. The assumption is that these lecturers will have different mindsets on giving feedback to students.

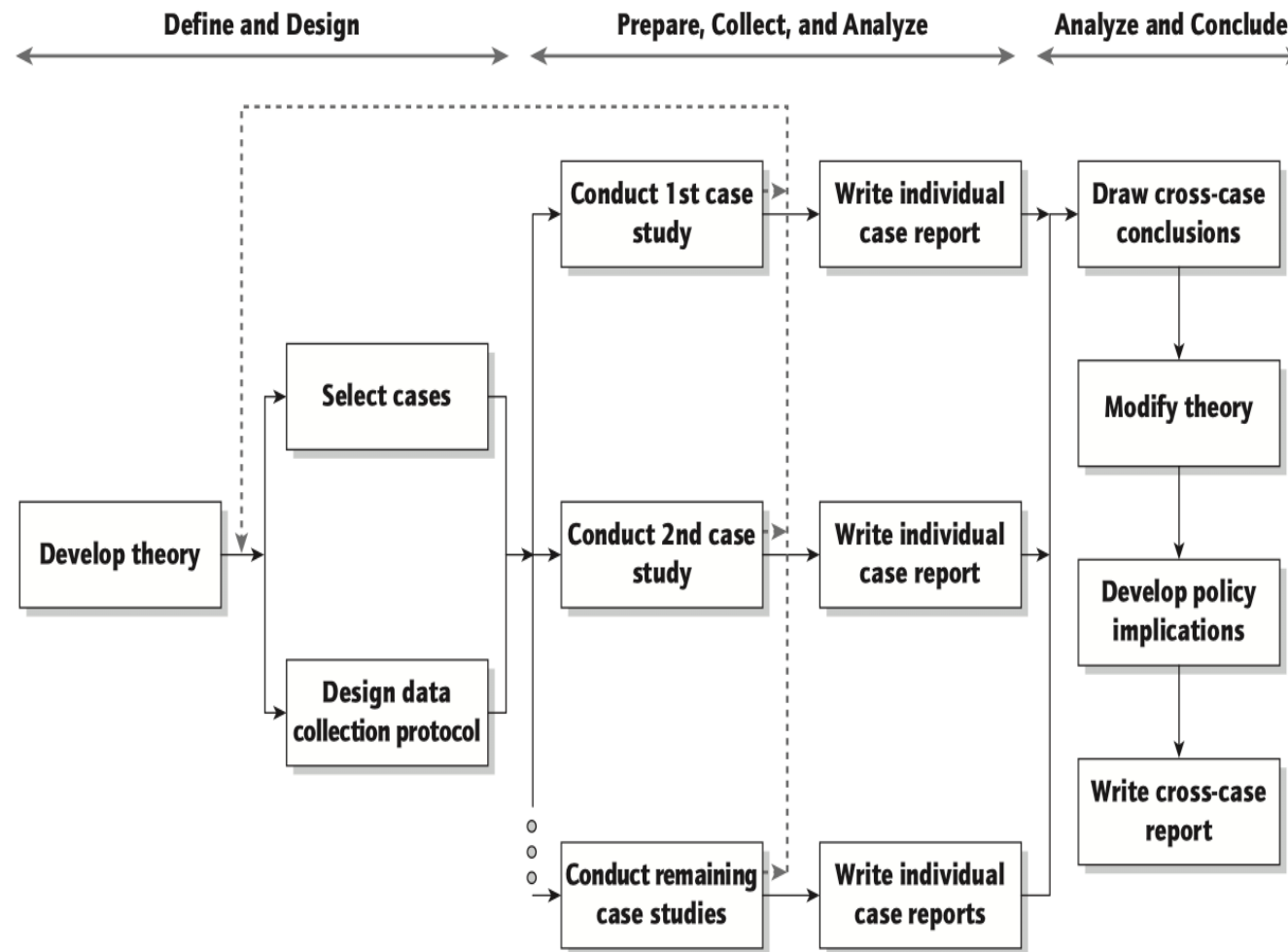
The study follows an **interpretivist approach**. Interpretivists explain that there are different ways of viewing the world other than just describing observations. According to Al-Saadi (2014:3,4), “knowledge is produced by exploring and understanding (not discovering) the social world of people being studied, focusing on their meaning and interpretation.” Mackenzie and Knipe (2006:3) state that interpretivist researchers are “most likely to rely on qualitative data collection methods and analysis”. My study will look through an interpretivist lens by using semi-structured interviews as well as document analysis of the MusEd lecturers’ feedback and mindset feedback instilled in the students. This lens will interpret meaning and understanding of what the MusEd lecturers’ experiences are and give an in-depth look into the feedback they provide to their students (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002:720).

The study follows a **qualitative approach** as “the choice of research design is based on the researcher’s assumptions, research skills, research practices and influences the way in which she or he collects data” (Maree, 2007:70). According to Maree (2010:70), qualitative research provides a “wide range of research designs from which a researcher may select”. This qualitative research involves “interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, and translate” the phenomenon. In this study the mindset feedback is researched by conducting in-



depth interviews with the MusEd lecturers and analysing all the data given to their student teachers (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2012:188). This approach reveals the “what”, “why” and “how” of the MusEd lecturers’ mindsets on feedback. The focus is also on interpreting and comprehending the essence of the “research problem”, which is usually the “what” mindset feedback that is given to students (Baskarada, 2014:1; Bogdan & Bilken, 1997). According to Willig (2001:9), “qualitative researchers tend to be interested in the meanings attributed to events by the research participants themselves” and study “people in their own territory, within naturally occurring settings”. In this study, my interest lies in understanding the feedback given by the MusEd lecturers to their student teachers.

The qualitative research approach uses a **multiple case study** research design. Figure 1.2 depicts Yin’s case study research design. This process consists of (a) define and design; (b) prepare, collect and analyse, and (c) analyse and conclude, and is used as a method of collecting data in this research study.



**Figure 1.2:** *Case Study Process* (Yin, 2003:50)

**Define and design:** This stage is used to identify the research questions and the reason I chose to do a multiple case study (Baskarda, 2014:2). Identifying the research problem is an important part of the planning stage. In this study, the research problem is the feedback that is given to the students by the MusEd lecturers. According to Yin (2014:11–12), the most vital step in doing research is “defining your research question”. This question gives the researcher an “important clue” as to which research method should be used. In my study, the research questions contain the “how” and “why” in: *How and why do the music education lecturers instil fixed or growth mindsets in their student feedback?* When the “how” question is asked in research, the “preferred research methods are: *exploratory, descriptive or explanatory*”. My research study follows the exploratory research method. Yin (2014:215) describes this method as collecting data “to determine whether a topic is worthy of further investigation”. In this study, the feedback of the MusEd lecturers is explored; I take an in-depth look into the kind of mindset this feedback instils in their student teachers.

This stage also “focuses on defining the unit of analysis”. The multiple case study design was used to select cases as well as to pinpoint the case study design (Baskarda, 2014:5). This design requires “intensive study of a single unit (in this case multiple units) for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units ... observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time” (Gerring, 2004:342). When a researcher is dealing with multiple cases, it is crucial that each case be handled as a single case (Dooley, 2002:340). The multiple case study approach works on the same principle as the single case study approach, but there is more than one case that will be presented in different chapters or sections (Yin, 2014:184). According to Yin (2009), case study research is “a linear but iterative process” and therefore “a product of inquiry”, meaning a process that leads to discovery (Creswell *et al*, 2007:245). Cases can be selected based on the following samples: *convenience, purpose* and *probability sampling*. My research applied convenience case sampling. According to Lavrakas (2008:2), “convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling in which people are sampled simply because they are ‘convenient’ sources of data for researchers.” Therefore, my multiple case studies comprised five different MusEd lecturers from the Music Education Division, Humanities Education Department in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria.

**Prepare, collect and analyse:** This stage is used to prepare the researcher for the necessary data collection that happens in the *collect stage* as well as for the data collection techniques that are used (Baskarada, 2014:9). My study made use of multiple methods of data collection,

as this “enhances the validity of case study findings through triangulation” (Dooley, 2002:341). Triangulation is using two or more data collection techniques to “strengthen the design” in order to understand the research problem that the data are revealing (Thurmond, 2001:253).

Case study research comprises qualitative semi-structured interviews. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) state that a semi-structured interview has proved to be versatile and flexible and can be combined with individual and/or group interviews. According to Schmidt & Hunter (2004:204), “researchers orientate themselves according to an interview guide, but one that gives plenty of freedom of movement in the formulation of questions for follow-up strategies and sequencing.” These interview questions will be structured based on the growth mindset questions found in Carol Dweck’s book “Mindset: The new psychology of success” (Dweck, 2016:12–13) (see Appendix A and B). The second data collection method was an in-depth analysis of the MusEd lecturers’ feedback documents to determine student mindset feedback. In each case, student reports such as their weekly feedback, small class tests, semester tests and exam papers (Cohen et al., 2011:299) were scrutinised to understand the research problem and to determine the type of mindset feedback given to music students (Baskarda, 2014:1).

**Analyse and conclude:** This stage is based on the strategies that were used for analysing as well as to showcase the data (Baskarada, 2014:14). There are five different ways of analysing the data, namely: *pattern matching*, *linking data to propositions*, *explanation building*, *time series analysis*, *logic models*, and *cross-case synthesis* (Baxter & Jack, 2008:554). In my study, I use *pattern matching*. According to Sinkovics (2018:1), pattern matching “aims at externalising implicit mental models and assumptions as much as possible” and “requires meticulous contextualisation, clear-cut theoretical formulation, as well as detailed and precise operationalisation”. In the data analysis, I look for the predicted theoretical pattern of the fixed and growth mindset feedback. My data analysis makes use of *cross-case synthesis*. Cruzes, Dybå, Runeson & Höst (2015:1637) identify cross-case synthesis as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes” across the multiple case studies. In this study, cross-case synthesis as a method of analysing identifies the themes that have been found within the five case studies and then identifies similarities and differences. In concluding the analysis, I have written this report in such a way that the reader can decide whether or not they can apply these research findings to their own practices (Baxter & Jack, 2008:555).

The methodological approach will be discussed in more detail and depth in Chapter 3.

### **1.10. Overview of the Study**

Together with this introductory chapter, this study comprises four chapters. In Chapter 2 the literature on growth and fixed mindset feedback is discussed. Chapter 3 entails the research methodology, which includes the research paradigm, research approach and the sampling method and technique. In Chapter 4, an analysis is given of the major patterns collected from the empirical data, and the findings. This chapter also contains the findings connected to the literature review, interprets the results and explains the broader implications of the study. The chapter then finally concludes the study by briefly reflecting on what has been covered in the previous chapters. This chapter gives a review and recommendations to the MusEd lecturers, and discusses the contributions to the research field of education.

### **1.11. Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to briefly outline the focus and aim of the research study. It looked at how the dissertation will answer the research questions of “how” and “why” MusEd lecturers instil fixed or growth mindsets in their student teacher feedback.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an outline of the research, wherein the focus and purpose, research questions, rationale and methodological approach were briefly discussed. Chapter 2 describes and clarifies the theoretical framework of the growth mindset theory within the realm of South African music education and performance feedback. Randolph (2009:1) explains that a literature review is used to demonstrate the knowledge of different researchers on a specific topic. These studies include “vocabulary, theories, key variables and phenomena as well as its methods and history”. Firstly, the discussion is on the theoretical framework, which consists of two parts, namely the fixed mindset and the growth mindset. Secondly, music education and music performance in South Africa are deliberated. Finally, I elaborate on feedback, teacher feedback, performance feedback and assessment feedback.

### 2.2. Theoretical Framework

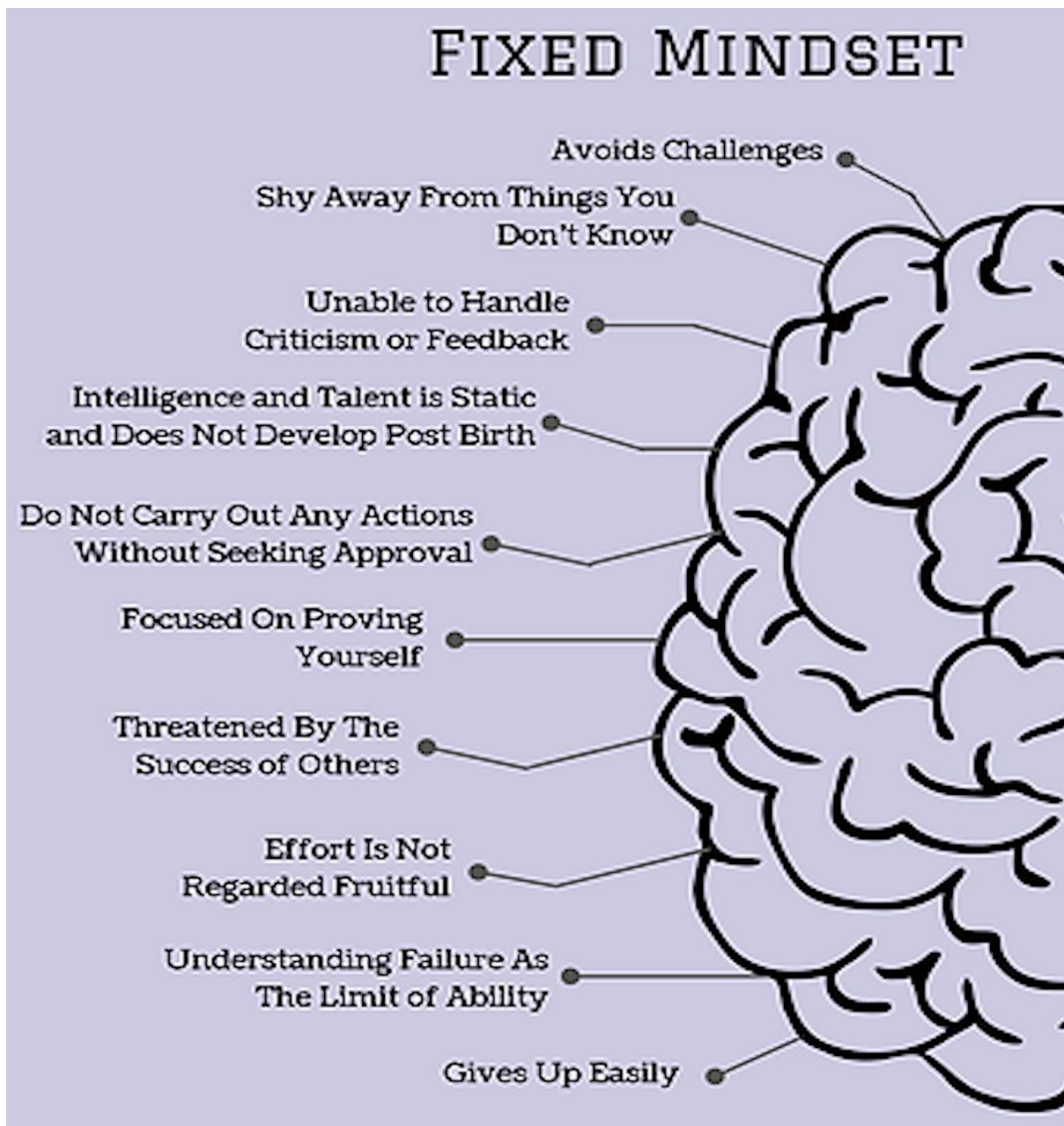
The theoretical framework of this study is guided by the implicit theory of intelligence. A theoretical framework “describes the theory which explains why the research problem under study exists” (University of Southern California, 2013). Dinger and Dickhäuser (2013:39) describe the implicit theory of intelligence as “an individual’s personal conception about the nature of intelligence” (Sternberg, Conway, Ketron & Bernstein, 1981). Each individual has a different belief on how malleable their abilities are and how much they can change. This theory was developed by Carol Dweck (cited in Mercer & Ryan, 2009:1) and states that there are two different perspectives to this mindset, namely:

- a. *The incremental theory, which constitutes the belief that students with high ability are more likely to display mastery-orientated qualities; this is called the growth mindset.*
- b. *The entity theory constitutes the belief that praise encourages mastery-orientated qualities; this is called the fixed mindset (Dweck, 2000:1–2).*

These two theories are described in more detail below.

### 2.2.1. The Theory of Fixed Intelligence (Fixed Mindset)

Having a fixed mindset is believing that one's attributes are not malleable and the amount of ability you are born with cannot change or be altered (Dweck, 2011:615). Students with a fixed mindset strive to not look “dumb” in the classroom and therefore do not want to put in any effort and then fail (Stanford.edu, 2014). Students who have a fixed mindset tend to set performance goals for themselves to display their amount of ability and talent (Vandewalle, 2012:302). Figure 2.1 depicts the attributes of an individual with a fixed mindset.



**Figure 2.1:** The Fixed Mindset (Farrell, 2020)

This figure depicts what a student with a fixed mindset believes. Students with a fixed mindset either avoid challenging tasks or give up along the way. They feel they might not be as successful as others and therefore feel threatened by the talent of other students. Consequently, the student constantly tries to prove themselves better than others. When this student must put in a lot of effort to complete a task, they feel they have reached their limit of ability and regard any more effort as being unfruitful (Farrell, 2020).

Students who possess a fixed mindset choose performance goals and are driven by the aim of successfully performing a task. This mindset can have negative effects on students' "cognitions and behaviour" (Butler, 1987; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; cf Nicholls, 1984). Students who choose performance goals tend to avoid challenging tasks because it has the potential of failing. This fixed mindset develops through receiving feedback on ability.



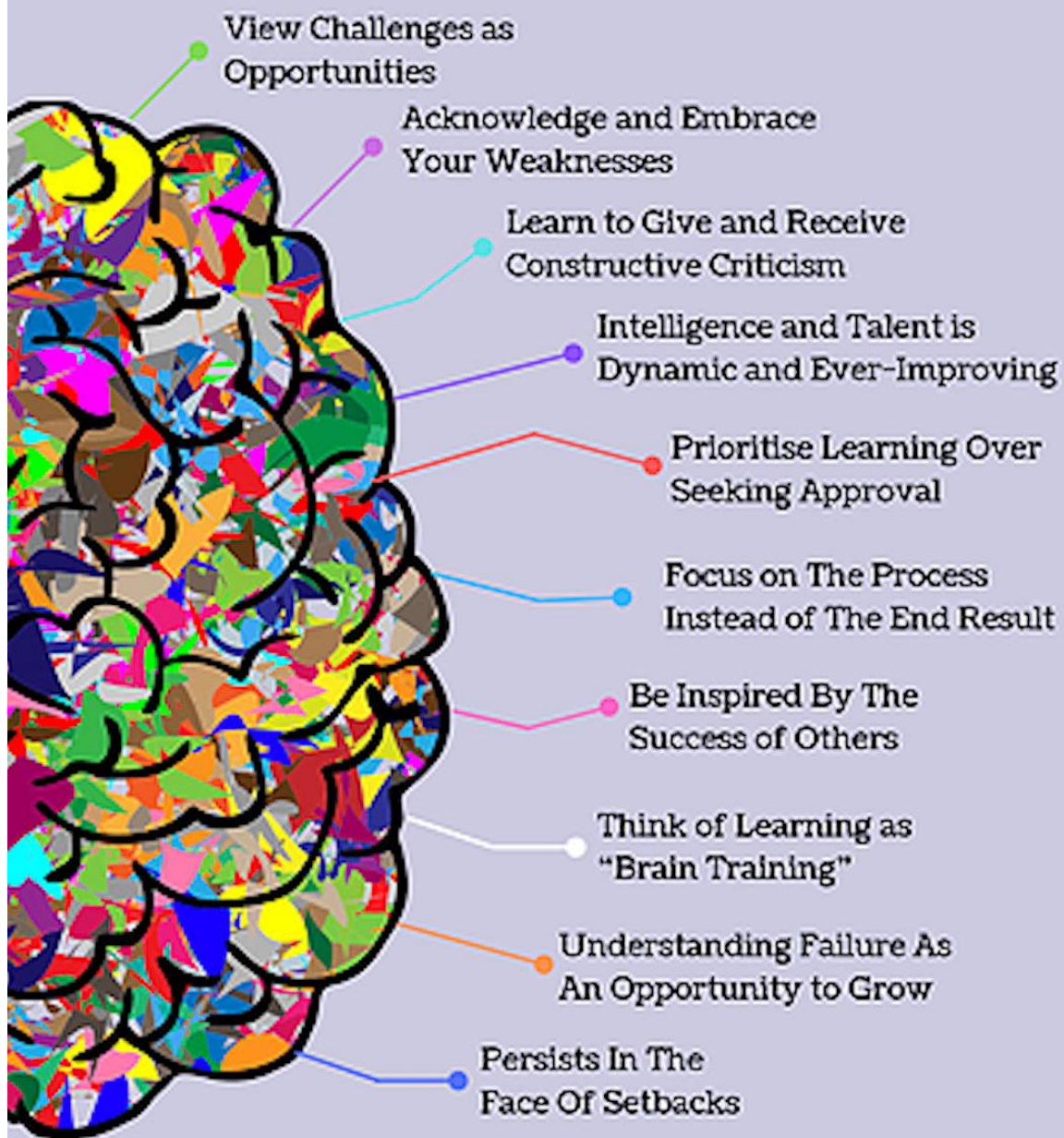
When a student has made little effort to succeed, their ability makes them succeed and they can possibly view their ability as a false “stable trait” that will not let them fail any given tasks. When their ability fails them at a challenging task, they lose interest or give up easily (Mueller & Dweck, 1998:33–34). These students will choose tasks that they know they can succeed in and thus avoid failure. This creates the belief with teachers that giving them fewer challenging tasks will build their confidence and make their learning experience more pleasurable (Druckman & Bjork, 1994:173).

Unfortunately, when students are not challenged enough by their teachers, they become complacent and their thinking or learning experiences become mediocre. Vygotsy (1978) names these zones the “zone of proximal development”, where success can be reached but with support of the teacher (Masters, 2013:1). Masters (2013:1) also explains that when students are given too many success experiences, they become “entitled” to it.

### **2.2.2. The Theory of Malleable Intelligence (Growth Mindset)**

People with a growth mindset believe that one’s ability can increase over time by putting in extra effort with educational support (Dweck, 2011:615). Students with a growth mindset strive to learn within a classroom. When a task is challenging, it means that they are learning and growing with their efforts. When they fail at a challenge, they view it as a learning curve and another opportunity to do better the next time (Stanford.edu, 2014). When students with a growth mindset get stuck on a challenging task, they tend to try find different creative ways to solve the problem at hand. They also tend to push themselves harder when others give up (Suh et al, 2011:169). Students with a growth mindset set learning goals instead of performance goals (fixed mindset) for themselves. As they set these goals to achieve more, they perceive that their ability can grow (Vandewalle, 2012:302). Figure 2.2 depicts the attributes of a student with a growth mindset.

# GROWTH MINDSET



**Figure 2.2:** Growth mindset: attributes of an individual (Farrell, 2020)

Students with a growth mindset view challenges as an opportunity to grow in their ability, even when there are setbacks. They do not seek approval from others as they prioritise their learning first. They feel inspired by the successes of other students. They always give and take constructive criticism well as they perceive talent and intelligence to be something that is ever improving.

Research has revealed that this mindset can be taught to students and, in the long run, has a beneficial impact on the way they react to failure, their drive to learn and their academic success. The growth mindset can be encouraged by the type of feedback given to students when they are either successful or unsuccessful at any given task. Studies have shown that when students receive process feedback, they progress with it in a positive way. Yeager et al.'s (2019) study, "*A national experiment reveals where a growth mindset improves achievement*", proves

that when students are given mindset interventions, it can improve the academic outcomes of students, “especially for low achieving students.”

In one study, Blackwell et al. (2007) had growth mindset lessons incorporated into his mathematics classes, where students were introduced to this theory and taught to understand it. After these lessons, the growth mindset theory had a significant impact on the students’ grades, and their mathematical scores were generally higher. These growth mindset lessons had a great impact on their effort and performance levels. Something as small as teaching students about feedback resulted in increased efforts to improve their academic achievements (O’Rourke, Peach, Dweck & Popovic, 2014:3339–3340). This online study examined 25,000 students who completed five different versions of a brain point intervention. The results proved that students who took part in the growth mindset intervention were more persistent than students who took part in the control study.

In another study, Brooke Maknamara and her research colleagues used a meta-analysis of growth mindset interventions, which is explained as a combined multiple scientific study. The results were that students’ academic achievements improved by 0,10%, concluding that the interventions were meaningful to students’ growth (Sisk et al., 2018). A school from Peru found that there was a significant gap between privileged and underprivileged students. The growth mindset interventions were taken by 50,000 learners aged between 11 and 14 years from schools in departments of Ancash, Junín and Lima in Peru. They had to be part of a 90-minute session where learners and teachers discussed an article about how their brains can grow when they work hard on challenging projects. These learners were then evaluated through standardised tests in mathematics and Spanish. The results were a 0.2% increase in mathematics and Spanish scores (World Bank, 2017).

Professor Jo Boaler at Stanford University developed an online course based on the growth mindset theory. The course includes an introduction and setting up class, classes on open creative, visual mathematics, and mistakes and challenges, as well as productive group work and discussions on mathematical freedom. According to Jo Boaler (YouCubed, 2020) 50% of learners who have completed this course have had an increase in test scores and the course has positively impacted more than 250 million learners’ academic achievement (YouCubed, 2014).

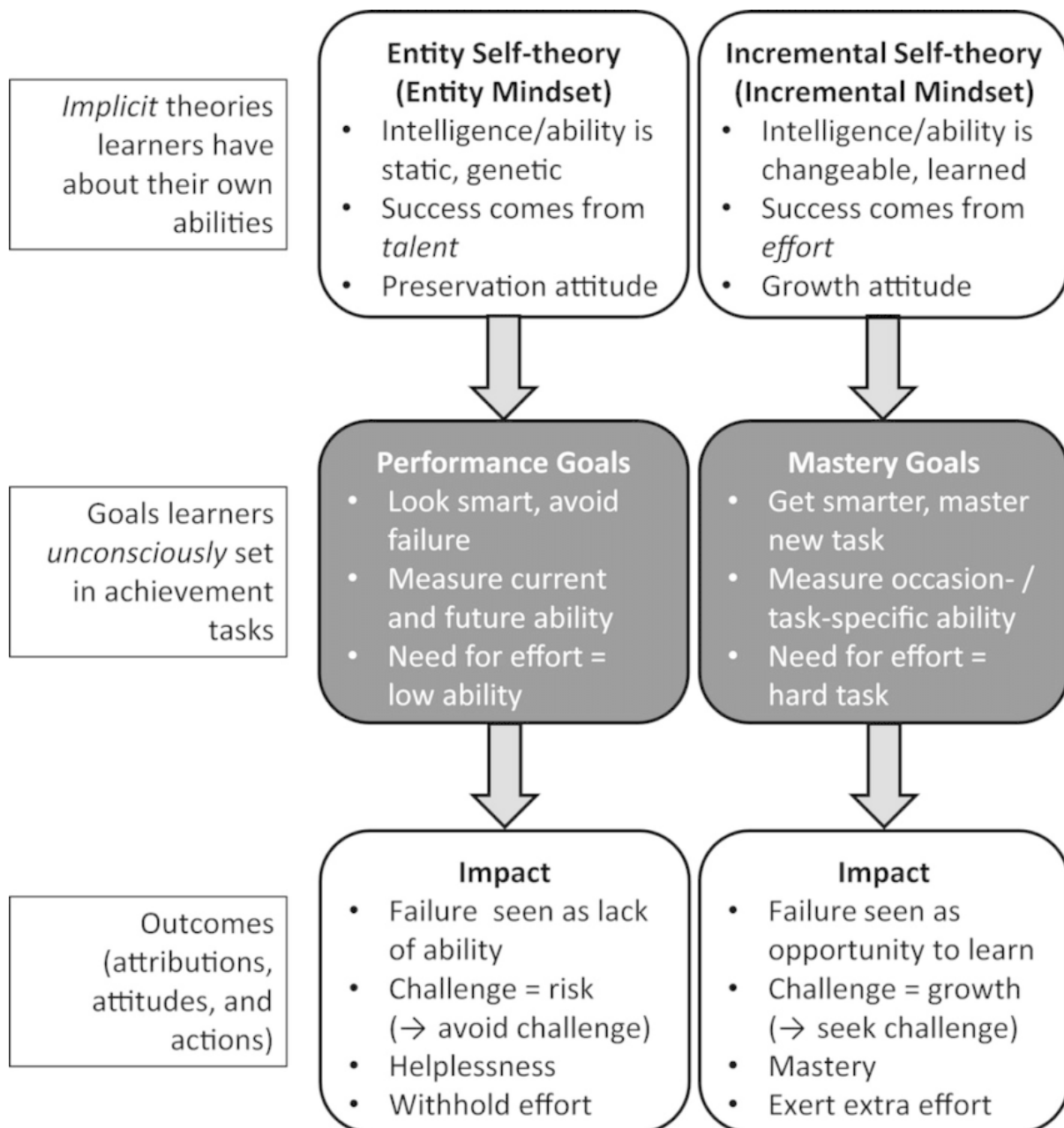
Conversely, there have been many misinterpretations about the growth mindset. One such outcome is students who become too obsessive about their effort and use learning strategies

that are unsuccessful. Another result of this misinterpretation is that students become frustrated the moment they start identifying fixed mindset thoughts and therefore give up on their learning (Papadopoulos, 2020). A study conducted in China found that there is no correlation between a growth mindset and receiving good grades (Li & Bates, 2017:2). Another study measured the mindset of 5,653 university applicants to make a connection between the growth mindset and achievement in academic performance. The results indicated that there were no higher academic results due to a growth mindset (Bahník & Vranka, 2017:1).

Although these interventions and studies were applied on students learning more academic subjects, this study focuses on how and why the MusEd lecturers give feedback to their students and how their feedback can influence the students' mindset. It will therefore either instil a higher performance achievement or reflect no change in performance at all.

### **2.3. Fixed and Growth Goals**

Both the fixed mindset and the growth mindset direct students to choose between two different goals. As discussed in section 2.3.3, performance goals are connected to the entity theory and have a fixed mindset. Learning/mastery goals are connected to the incremental theory, and students who choose these goals have a growth mindset. Figure 2.3 outlines the two different goals within the implicit theory.



**Figure 2.3:** Implicit Theory Goals (Cook & Artino, 2016)

This diagram depicts how students with a fixed mindset (entity theory) and growth mindset (incremental theory) perceive their ability, how they set goals for themselves and what the outcome of these goals is. Students with a fixed mindset believe ability is static and that success comes from talent. Therefore, they set goals for themselves that are easily reachable, and which avoid failure. The reason is that they perceive failure as a lack of ability, and challenges are therefore seen as risks not to be taken. Students with a growth mindset believe their ability is

changeable and can be developed. They believe that by mastering their goals they become smarter and work hard to master and achieve more difficult tasks. Growth mindset students see failure as a learning opportunity and believe that challenging work helps them grow.

#### **2.4. Feedback**

The purpose of feedback is to improve the level of achievement and performance. Feedback informs us of our progress towards a certain goal and how we reach this goal. This could be to perform the music with a near perfect technique or without errors. It also includes the interpretation of the emotional characteristics of a piece. Wiggins (2012:11) lists the following seven keys to effective feedback:

1. ***Progress towards a goal:*** Feedback is what leads a student to reach their goal. Effective feedback for students requires that they have a goal and take the right action to achieve that goal. Receiving feedback on how they completed their actions assists them in achieving their goal.
2. ***Tangible and transparent:*** The desired results should be clear. Teachers should give their students feedback that is specific and avoid vague feedback without evidence.
3. ***Actionable:*** The student should understand the feedback and know how to apply it. Students need clear and concise feedback on what action/s they need to add or take out in order to achieve their goal. This feedback helps the student to take action in the constructive right direction.
4. ***User-friendly:*** The student should always understand the value of the feedback and how to use it. An overload of feedback to a student can be disadvantageous and create confusion; feedback should therefore be short and concise.
5. ***Timely:*** Feedback should not take too long to reach the student. The sooner a student receives feedback, the more efficiently they will apply it, as their work is still fresh in their memory.
6. ***Ongoing:*** The student is given opportunities to improve. Ongoing feedback provides students with time to implement the feedback and reflect on the progress they have made.

7. **Consistent:** Student feedback should always be trustworthy, stable and accurate. The more feedback is given, the better the student receives the feedback (Mshouser.com, 2016).

Throughout this process, we have a goal in mind; we receive feedback on our progress towards our goals as well as feedback when we have reached this goal. The seven keys to effective feedback should all be implemented when giving specific process praise to music students.

#### **2.4.1. Lecturer Feedback**

Research has shown that lecturers' feedback to students far exceeds that of other forms of feedback, such as what they receive from their peers and from their own evaluation (Leki, 1991; Saito, 1994; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006; Zhang, 1995). Research has also shown that positive feedback is more impactful than criticism (Burnett, 2010:5). A study conducted by Lee (2008:144) investigated how students responded to their lecturer's feedback and collected data from two lecturers on how they gave feedback to their students. Lecturer A gave students a mark, feedback and comments. This feedback was 75.8% related to errors and 24% was feedback related to content by using vocabulary such as "interesting content" and "good choice of vocabulary". Lecturer B focused even more on form, gave 98% feedback on error and a mark out of 100. No feedback on assessment criteria was given and written comments consisted of only 1.7% of the feedback, which was also very brief, for instance "good". Lee's findings showed that the students were in favour of Lecturer A's practice; however, they also suggested that the teacher should give more written comments.

According to Burnett & Mandel (2010:6), there are two types of feedback:

- Effort feedback – "You have really been working very hard and putting in as much effort as possible."
- Ability feedback – "You are so talented. Wow! You are really one of a kind."

*"The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism."* – Norman Vincent Peale



We tend to give ability feedback (praise) to students who are not necessarily as successful as their peers so that we can build their self-esteem. In a study done with fifth graders, Mueller and Dweck (cited in Dweck, 1999) found that performance tasks were more likely to receive “ability” teacher feedback and learning tasks received “effort” teacher feedback. This study also proved that when students failed after receiving ability feedback, they associated their failure with their ability and not their effort.

Teachers must be very careful regarding what type of ability feedback they give to students. For example, if a teacher says “good” to one student and “great” to another student, the value of “good” suddenly decreases. For example, when two students who attend music lessons with the same music teacher both play the same piece of music for a concert, the teacher usually praises them for their performance. If one student receives vague feedback, such as “you did a good job” and the other student receives feedback such as “you did a great job”, the first student will devalue the feedback as it is not specific and connected to their ability and the other student received feedback that said great and not good, meaning another student ability is more. Another danger to giving ability feedback is giving it while students are actively participating in an activity by saying “I like how you...” or “you are so awesome”. For example, during the music lesson, teachers tend to express how the music makes them feel. Their focus is on the teacher in feedback such as: “I like how you sustained the final note in the cadenza.” The student could consequently become distracted by trying to please the teacher, rather than develop their self-motivation to focus on the task at hand. The student therefore feels that their efforts are to please the teacher. Instead, teachers should use phrases such as “look at how you musically sustained the note on the cadenza” or casual process statements such as “you really made me understand the importance of the composer’s musical notation by playing the music softer”. This strengthens the student’s voice in the way they learn (Johnston, 2012:37–38). However, feedback is still a vital part of the learning process as it enhances learning (Van den Bergh, Ros & Beijsaard, D, 2014:773–774). This “feedback must inform students about their learning goals, how their current performance relates to these goals, and what activities they can undertake to reach their learning goals” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Feedback should therefore be used as a tool to look forward rather than backward at the work that has already been completed (Price, Handley, Millar & O’Donovan, 2010: 277–278). For example, a student who receives a mark of 70% receives the mark based on efforts that have

already been made. The grading refers to a past assignment, which creates a situation where there is no forward-thinking into their growth process. Consequently, the student relaxes and gets used to a mark that has no meaning to them other than a percentage. However, when the student receives a 70% with feedback on how to progress in future, ongoing future learning growth is encouraged. Woodward-Kron (2004) gives the following example. “If a student lacks the necessary understanding of the disciplinary context,” feedback given such as “your style should be more academic” will not allow the student to see the possible growth learning curve. This kind of feedback will be meaningful to the student only if they have an understanding of the context and if they consider how to react on the feedback given.

Students may also respond or reject certain feedback given to them based on their trust or distrust of the teacher giving the specific feedback (Price et al., 2010:279). Feedback is connected to “power and control” and the more a student values the teacher, the more impactful it will be. The students’ interest in the feedback also comes from an awareness that the teacher is in control of the grades. A study done by Zacharias (2007:38) on teacher and student attitudes toward teacher feedback indicated that students preferred feedback that was more detailed and specific, as this will support students when reflecting and revising their work. Within the learning process, feedback is a vital part for the student and the effect of the feedback should be more important than how it is given (Price et al., 2010:277–278).

In an experiment by Skipper and Douglas (2015:277), students were given three different types of feedback on the success of a specific task. This included either ability praise, process praise or no praise at all. The students were then given two different types of feedback to read where the outcomes were that they had failed at a task. In a second experiment, students were informed in three readings that they had failed; they received either ability praise, process praise or no praise at all. These students were then given two scenarios where they were successful. The students scored how much they thought the teacher valued them and how much they valued their teacher. The results revealed that students felt more positive about the student-teacher relationship following success rather than failure. The type of praise did not influence perceptions of the student-teacher relationship following success or failure. However, criticism of the individual led students to view the student-teacher relationship more negatively following failure and they maintained this negative view even after the first success. Students who are more confident in their work tend to find less meaning in ability feedback. When a seventh grade student receives praise on how well they know their alphabet, ability feedback

will not be of interest. When teachers give praise on a challenging task, the praise will be interpreted positively; yet, in the long term there can be consequences to these types of praises (Johnston, 2012:40).

*“In Kindergarten, Tatiana has figured out how to write a difficult word with invented spelling. She takes it to her teacher. Her teacher does not say ‘good girl’ or ‘nice job’, which would be common responses in other classrooms. Instead she asks, “how did you do that?” – a response that prompts Tatiana to tell the story of her efforts.”*

According to Johnston (2012:36), in this process “she rehearses a narrative in which she acts and makes choices that have desired consequences – an agentic narrative that identifies her as a person who accomplishes things by acting strategically”. Tatiana’s teacher then suggested to her to go and show a friend. By suggesting this, the teacher has given Tatiana the opportunity to “rehearse the agentic narrative again”, therefore learning twice and giving her peers the opportunity to learn how to interpret and apply feedback. In the music classroom, an instrument player would rehearse and perform a challenging arpeggio passage in their music piece to their teacher. Instead of saying “well done”, the music teacher will ask, “how did you do that?” This will give the music student the opportunity to talk about how she had worked hard in order to play the challenging part. The music teacher could then suggest that the music student play the challenging piece to a friend. This will encourage the music student to learn twice, build confidence and give her peers the opportunity to give feedback.

Research has shown that feedback given by lecturers to their students is an important part in shaping a student’s mindset and how they go about taking on challenges. The more confident a student is, the less they concentrate on their ability and more on their process.

#### **2.4.2. Performance Feedback**

There are currently more than a dozen music competitions in South Africa. These competitions give feedback to performers and award the most talented musicians with prize money and scholarships. However, these music competitions and scholarships are to foster students’ love for and enjoyment of music. The purpose of these competitions and scholarships is to award the performers who showcase the most ability and praise them for their talents. I am of the opinion that these participants are thus being rewarded cash prizes for their ability and not their effort. Below are a few competitions that take place in South Africa, their purpose and how

these participants are being praised for their ability by being awarded prize money instead of feedback.

- *National SASMT Pretoria Ensemble Competition* – “The competition is aimed at developing young musicians through collaborative participation and by encouraging the enjoyment of performing with others.” The prize money is awarded as follows:

**Table 2.1:** National SASMT Pretoria Ensemble Competition

Categories	1 <sup>st</sup> prize	2 <sup>nd</sup> prize	3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize
10 years and under	R5,000	R2,500	R1,000
13 years and under	R5,000	R2,500	R1,000
16 years and under	R5,000	R2,500	R1,000
19 years and under	R5,000	R2,500	R1,000
Open	R10,000	R5,000	

(SASMT ENSEMBLE COMPETITION, 2020)

- *The National Youth Music Competition* – “The competition is intended for young classical musicians who are pianists or orchestral instrumentalists. The purpose of the competition is to identify and promote the talent and abilities of young classical musicians. This competition exposes the competitors to the requirements of professional careers as soloists and orchestral musicians. This also develops the stage and performing abilities of young classical musicians.” The cash prizes are R145,000 in cash; gold, silver and bronze medals are awarded in three categories (Nymc.co.za, 2018).
- *The Philip H Moore Music Competition* – The aim of this competition is “to encourage, support and uplift classically trained music students from diverse cultures and backgrounds up to 25 years of age in solo performances”. The prize money for this competition is as follows:

**Table 2.2:** The Philip H Moore Music Competition

Category	Age	1 <sup>st</sup> prize	2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize	3 <sup>rd</sup> prize	4 <sup>th</sup> prize
A	8–10	R1,500	R1,000	No 3rd prize	No 4th prize
B	11–12	R1,800	R1,200	No 3rd prize	No 4th prize
C	13–14	R2,000	R1,500	No 3rd prize	No 4th prize
D	15–16	R4,000	R2,000	No 3 <sup>rd</sup> prize	No 4 <sup>th</sup> prize
E	17–18	R6,000	R3,000	No 3 <sup>rd</sup> prize	No 4 <sup>th</sup> prize
F	19–25	R20,000	R10,000	R5,000	R3,500

(*Philiphmoore.co.za*, 2012)

- *The Mimi Coertse Scholarship Competition* – “The purpose of the scholarship is to provide financial aid to singers from the Gauteng and North West regions who are not older than 30 years of age, to further their studies. The University of Pretoria’s School of the Arts awards this scholarship in the form of a singing competition as part of the annual UP Music Enrichment Festival.” The prize money for this scholarship competition was R30,000 for one year in 2015 and a further prize of R10,000 awarded with preference to a finalist who is a singing student at the University of Pretoria (University of Pretoria, 2019). Students are granted this scholarship based on their financial situation and on their musical ability, and do not receive feedback on their effort.
- *The Voices of South Africa Trust* – This competition discovers outstanding young performing artists and helps them towards their development in the early stages of their journeys. They do this through existing workshops, masterclasses and the national singing competition. The first prize winner gets R60,000 (voices-of-south-afri, 2018). Students are therefore rewarded for their performance and do not receive feedback based on their efforts.

There are also many music examination platforms used to assess music students’ ability and talent. One example of such an examination is the UNISA music exam. This examination system originated in 1872 in England and the first examinations were conducted in Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Paarl, Worcester, George and Kimberley in 1894. This programme is now called the Directorate Music programme and is officially accredited as Short Learning Programmes which take place throughout the year. These examinations can be done at any age, as long as

the candidate is successful in reaching the set standards of performance for each level (University of South Africa, 2019).

Another platform that is very popular under young learners is the National Eisteddfod, which originated from Welsh music and poetry festivals in 1997 and takes place from August to October every year. The purpose of the National Eisteddfod is for learners to go through training lessons by either private music educators or school programmes that prepare them to be adjudicated on their performance by a professional panel. Learners then receive grades and feedback on their performances. If a learner receives a diploma award, they qualify to take part in the Young Performer Awards Competition (National Eisteddfod Academy, 2020).

What happens when a singer's natural singing ability is praised for effort or ability? Below are three examples of recent South African voice competition winners, including the praise they received from credited sources. Ability praise and process praise are evident in the feedback.

***The Voice South Africa*** – The winner of the 2018 was “the beautiful and talented” Tasche Burger, as stated by MNET (M-Net.TV/THEVOICE, 2018). This type of praise given to Tasche Burger is categorised as ability praise. Her beauty and talent are praised, although this is something she was born with and not acquired through effort. Nowhere in the article does it describe her efforts and hard work or the emotional strain she went through to win this competition. She received praise (feedback) only on her ability.

***The UNISA National Voice Competition*** – The winner of the 2017 round was Cecilia Rangwanasha. The University of Cape Town News gave a report on “Soprano Cecilia Rangwanasha who captured the crowd with an expressive performance of Franz Lehár’s ‘*Meine Lippen sie küssen so heiss*’, where she projected with the capacity of a seasoned performer” (University of Cape Town, 2017). The type of praise (feedback) given to Cecilia Rangwanasha can be categorised as ability praise as she is being praised to project like a professional singer. Cecilia is a young singer and therefore has little or no experience as an opera singer. Receiving this type of praise (feedback) can instil a fixed mindset in her.

***The 2018 Grand Prix Vincenzo Bellini Competition*** – The winner was Nombulelo Yende. The University of Cape Town News stated that “she enchanted the judges and the audience” (University of Cape Town, 2019). This type of praise given to Nombulelo Yende is also ability praise. The article does not describe the process of hard work and dedication which she had to accomplish in order to achieve the ability to “enchant the judges and audience”.

These competitions and scholarships aim to foster students' love and enjoyment of music. However, the performers who showcase the most talent are awarded and praised for their performance talent. When connecting this research to the praise feedback given to the winners of the singing competitions, one can only ask one question. Since they received ability praise for their performances, was the process they had followed challenging (they had to put in a lot of effort) or an easy process (talented individual born with a natural singing ability)?

### **2.4.3. Teacher Assessment Feedback**

The most important part of assessment is the assessment process, though many students desire to receive more feedback. However, when they receive feedback, they pay little attention to it and, in some cases where they do read it, they do not understand it clearly (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Lea & Street, 1998; McCune & Entwistle, 2004). Although students are the best tool to test the effectiveness of the feedback they receive from their teachers, they do not always understand the benefits of feedback.

Droe (2013:64) explains that “the field of music is closely associated with the term *talent*” and therefore his investigation examines the function of praise in a music setting. Droe’s study closely relates to the purpose of this research because of its musical nature and how praise for ability and praise for process can affect the outcome.

Droe had a fourth grade class participate in a *Rhythm Workout* by teaching the class rhythmic strategies and skills. These strategies for rhythmic performances covered “scanning, feeling the beat, saying rhythms while playing, and looking ahead”. This was followed by a *SmartMusic* assessment. Students were then asked to perform two easy rhythmic pieces and two challenging rhythmic pieces. These were assessed by the *SmartMusic* assessment software. The first set of rhythms recorded from the students were simple so that they could reach success. They received feedback such as: “You really played those rhythms well. You got an 82% according to the computer. That’s a very good score.” All students were given the same feedback, although they did not have the same scores. One-third of the students were then given ability praise such as “you must be talented in music”; the second third were given effort praise such as “you must have focused hard on the strategies before you played them”. The last third was the control group. The fourth grade learners were then given two verbal options to choose from, without mentioning to them that it had a performance goal. An example of the performance goal is: “I think I’m pretty good at rhythms, so I can show how good I am in music.” A learning

goal is portrayed in: “Challenging rhythms that I can learn from even if I don’t play them correctly” (Droe, 2013:69). The results were that 90% of the 30 students who received effort feedback chose learning goals. Of the 29 students who received talent feedback, only 41% of them chose learning goals. Students in the control group were 50% divided.

The main focus of students who set learning goals is to work on increasing their skill and mastery that their project requires. Students who set performance goals use their natural ability to show how talented they are and out-shine other performers. Researchers who focus on goal theory agree that when students set learning goals, they are more productive. There have, however, been some discussions around performance goals being productive in some cases and linked to the outcome of the learning goal (Brophy, 2005:167).

## **2.5. Music Education and Music Performance in South Africa**

Music education is an integral part of students’ learning process. Research has shown that music can increase brain development, enhance human interaction and relieve anxiety and stress (Guest blogger, 2017). The National Curriculum Statement of South Africa (NCS) describes music education as the following (Sahistory.org.za, 2018). *“Music is the art of organising sounds and silence, expressing intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects of human experience. Music is an art form that can be combined with other forms, and is often enhanced by technology. It can communicate a broad range of historical, cultural and socioeconomic ideas and issues. Music has the power to unite groups and to mobilise community involvement for the improvement of quality of life, social healing, and affirmation of human dignity.”*

The next section gives background into the curriculum and performance expectations for music students in high school.

### **2.5.1. Music Education in High School**

The following paragraphs describe the history and examples of the old and new high school curricula used for music education programmes.

In 1997, an outcomes-based education (OBE) curriculum was introduced in South African schools. Known as Curriculum 2005, the intent was to give equal educational opportunities to all people of South Africa, regardless of their background. In 2004, this curriculum was



amended and named the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2013:31). In 2011, the NCS was reviewed and is now called the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement NCS (CAPS). One of the main concerns for this curriculum is the underperformance of students (Du Plessis & Marais, 2015:115).

The RNCS specifies the following four learning outcomes for the Grade 9 learning area of Arts and Culture in music:

1. Learning Outcome 1: Creating, interpreting and presenting
2. Learning Outcome 2: Reflecting
3. Learning Outcome 3: Participating and collaborating
4. Learning Outcome 4: Expressing and communicating

Each learning outcome had an assessment standard that needed to be reached in order to be met successfully (Westerncape Government, 2020). Learning Outcome 1 was the only performance-based criterion that was assessed. In the RNCS, each outcome weighed 25%. Therefore, the performance aspect of the students' learning carried only a quarter of the assessment weight.

The current curriculum, CAPS, has the main goal for Grade 10–12 music learners to develop the following skills:

1. Technical control over one or more music instrument(s) or the voice;
2. Performance skills by way of performing a wide variety of musical works in solo and group (ensemble) context, ranging from Western art music and jazz to indigenous African music (IAM);
3. Ability to read music notation(s);
4. Creativity through improvisation and working with own music ideas;
5. Understanding of existing works of music with regard to compositional techniques used, application of musical elements in existing musical works and placing these in a specific historical and cultural context;

6. Awareness of various musical traditions; and
7. Appreciation for various styles of music (Sahistory.org.za, 2018).

Table 2.3 offers an overview of the topics covered in the Grade 10–12 curriculum according to CAPS.

**Table 2.3:** Overview of topics covered in the Grade 10–12 music curriculum (Sahistory.org.za, 2018)

	<b>Broad Topics</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Time Allocated</b>
1.	Music performance and improvisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Development of skills in solo and ensemble performance</li> <li>● Development of skills in improvisation</li> </ul>	2 hours per week – practice time to be added as needed by learner according to level and skill
2.	Music literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Music theory and notation</li> <li>● Aural awareness of theory</li> <li>● Sight-singing</li> <li>● Harmony and knowledge of music terminology</li> </ul>	1 hour per week
3.	General music knowledge and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Form and structure</li> <li>● History of Western art music or jazz or indigenous</li> <li>● African music and their composers or performers</li> <li>● Music genres</li> <li>● South African music industry</li> </ul>	1 hour per week

Based on the table containing the topics discussed in the CAPS Grade 10–12 curriculum, music performance is given the most time and attention to be developed. Students receive two hours of class time to work on their performance skill and material as well as receive instruction to practise further at home. Compared to the music literacy and general music topics, the music performance of the student in music education carries the most weight in the CAPS music curriculum.

## 2.5.2. Music in Higher Education

The following paragraphs will focus on describing what tertiary music courses are available from two credible institutions in Pretoria and how these institutions assess the musical ability of music students through lecturer feedback.

### 2.5.2.1 *Tshwane University of Technology*

At the Tshwane University of Technology, the National Diploma for Vocal Art consists of the following courses in Performance for first year students: Acting and movement for singers, Ensemble and conducting, History of music, Keyboard, Music theory and aural, Practical musicianship for singers, Practical languages for singers, Physical development, Stagecraft and production, Singing technique, Vocal performance literature and vocal pedagogy. Of these modules, six modules are performance based, namely Acting and movement for singers, Ensemble and conducting, Keyboard, Physical development, Stagecraft and production, and Singing technique. These modules are also assessed based on their performance in front of a panel, which will give feedback on their performance, ability and accuracy (Tswane University of Technology, 2020).

### 2.5.2.2 *University of Pretoria*

A student in their first year of BMus at the University of Pretoria will be required to take core modules such as Aural training, General music studies, First instrument, History of music, Music theory, African music and an elective module that can be either Music education, Second instrument, Methodology of first instruments, Psychology, Mathematics or Languages. Of these modules, two are performance-based modules, namely the First instrument and Second instrument modules. These modules are assessed based on their performance in front of a panel. The panel will give feedback on the student's performance, ability and accuracy (University of Pretoria, 2020).

At the University of Pretoria in the Faculty of Education, there is also a BEd Music programme. This programme includes Piano and Theory modules for first year students, and Guitar, Theory, Music history, Methodology and Music education in the second year. In the third year, modules include Theory, Music education, Singing and Choir training. Each year of study contains a performance-based module which assesses ability, accuracy and performance (BEd Programme Inform, n.d. 2019). Each of the three music curricula has performance-based

subjects/modules that will be assessed in front of a live panel and given grades with feedback. In this research study, the focus will be on the lecturers of the BEd student teachers at the Faculty of Education, Humanities Education Department, at the University of Pretoria and how they give their students performance feedback. Focusing on these student teachers in particular is important because their field of study is in music education, and therefore determines our future music teachers.

## **2.6. Concluding Remarks**

In Chapter 2, the theory of the fixed and growth mindset was discussed. Students will inevitably manifest a fixed or growth mindset about their personal ability. The mindset of the lecturer plays a crucial part in how students perceive their ability. When a lecturer has a fixed mindset, their feedback can be towards the students' ability and therefore instil this mindset. When a lecturer has a growth mindset, their feedback will focus on the efforts of the student and therefore instil this mindset.

The value of feedback was also discussed to show the impact it has on the development of students' mindsets and how they grow in their ability. Ability and effort feedback can shape students' mindsets and therefore should be carefully approached by teachers and lecturers. Building on effort feedback in the classrooms, teachers can create projects that are more meaningful and engaging to foster the development of growth mindsets (Dweck, 2010a:18). The importance of the lecturers' mindsets and the feedback they give to their students has been considered. Consequently, the need to study these mindsets in the MusEd lecturers and how they give feedback to their music students became the focus of this study.

*“It's hard to beat a person that never gives up” – Babe Ruth*

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Introduction**

The focus of this study is on analysing what fixed mindset or growth mindset feedback was given by the Faculty of Education, MusEd lecturers to their student teachers. This chapter describes the research methodology together with the research questions and what methods are used to answer these questions. This chapter is composed of five main parts, namely the research questions, research design, research methods, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

### **3.2. Research Questions**

For any research project to be successful, it partially depends on how well the researcher can translate the research question by making it “appropriate, meaningful and purposeful” (Bryman, 2007:71–72). The following research questions guided this study:

- a) How do the MusEd lecturers instil a fixed or growth mindset in their student feedback?
- b) Why do the MusEd lecturers instil either a fixed or growth mindset in their student feedback?

### **3.3. Research Design**

The research design is “the basic methods” of how our evidence is collected. Evidence can be collected by “surveys, interviews, experiments, observations, archival research” or a mix of these methods (Vogt, Gardner & Haeffele, 2010:3). The research design is “fundamental because everything ultimately flows from the design choice, and because this choice is the most closely tied to the investigators research questions and theories” (Vogt et al., 2010:3). The research design is also considered to be a plan to get from point A to point B. Point A is the set of questions and point B refers to the answers to the questions (Yin, 1994:19). This research design used an interpretivist paradigm with a qualitative approach that had multiple case studies.

#### **3.3.1. The Interpretivist Paradigm**

The interpretivist paradigm was based on trying to understand and find knowledge in humans and social sciences, as each human has different experiences and interprets their experiences

differently. This paradigm does not adopt one truth of measurement but may rather have multiple interpretations (Pham, 2018:2). According to Mac Naughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford (2001) the interpretivist paradigm can be divided into two parts. Firstly, the epistemology is “a belief about the nature of knowledge”, which can be described as human beings’ will to understand the world around them and create theories that give meaning to their world (Britannica, 2020). Secondly, the ontology is “a methodology and criteria for validity”, where we determine if things are real and if they exist (Study.com, 2020). Ontology can also be described as something that could exist and gives understanding of what is going on in the universe (Smith, 2012:155). Paradigm comes from the Greek and Latin word meaning “to display side by side” or “a model of pattern” (Macmillan Dictionary Blog, 2017). Creswell (2003) and Neuman (2000) describe a paradigm to be epistemological or ontological.

Researchers who use the interpretivist paradigm believe in “the world of human experience” (Cohen *et al*, 1994:36). Creswell (2003a) and Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2015) believe that the interpretivist “discovers reality through participants’ views, their own background and experiences” (Thanh & Thanh, 2015:24). Interpretivists' perceptions of the world are seen through the eyes of individuals and usually select their research participants who “have their own interpretations of reality” (McQueen, 2002:16–17). By placing the research participants in their social environment, “there is greater opportunity to understand the perception they have of their own activities” (Kelliher, 2011:123). This research looks through an interpretivist lens by using semi-structured interviews as well as document analysis of the MusEd lecturers’ feedback and the mindset that this feedback instils in the student teachers. This lens will interpret meaning and understanding of the MusEd lecturers’ experiences and give an in-depth look into the feedback they provide to their student teachers (Fossey et al., 2002:720).

Table 3.1 describes Wahyuni’s “two main philosophical dimensions to distinguish existing research paradigms”, the ontology and epistemology (2012:69) as well as the research methodology (Creswell, 2003a; Neuman, 2000).

**Table 3.1:** The interpretivist paradigm described as in this study

<b>Interpretivist paradigm</b>	<b>In relation to this study</b>
Ontology (what is reality?) is defined as the nature of reality (Cohen et al., 2011:33).	In this research study, I gathered subjective evidence from the interviews, feedback and document analysis. These findings are discussed with my study supervisor in order to determine what is perceived as knowledge.
Epistemology (how can I know reality) is defined by the assumptions we make of knowledge (Al-Saadi, 2014:2).	This research reflects and reports on different perspectives that emerged from the document analysis and semi-structured interviews. I chose to use five different MusEd lecturers from the same music division, as each of these lecturers has a different mindset on giving feedback to student teachers.
Methodology: This approach is defined as the concentration on understanding, interpretation and understanding the meaning of the phenomenon (Perkins, 2020).	The research was documented and analysed to answer and understand the questions of: “How and why do the music education lecturers instil either a fixed or a growth mindset in their student teachers’ feedback?”

The interpretivist paradigm in this study encompasses the ontological, epistemological and methodological approach.

### **3.3.2. The Qualitative Approach**

This research followed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is an approach that gives the researcher the trustworthiness and validity they seek by giving attention to data by sequential preferences (Silverman, 2016:12). “The choice of research design is based on the researcher’s assumptions, research skills, research practices and influences the way in which she or he collects data” (Maree, 2007:70). A qualitative approach was used in this study to provide authentic data of the research. This qualitative approach is used to understand how the research participants see the world around them; this is created through their interactions and experiences within this world. The role of the researcher is to understand their life-world views

(Hesse-Biber, 2010:455). According to Maree (2010:70), qualitative research provides a “wide range of research designs from which a researcher may select”. Qualitative researchers can select from ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, historical research, case study, feminist research and action research. These qualitative research designs involve “interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode or translate” the phenomenon. In this study the case study research is based on mindset feedback that is scrutinised. The data are accumulated from in-depth semi-structured interviews with the MusEd lecturers and analysing all the feedback data given to their student teachers (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2012:188). Document analysis is used to enrich the data collected.

Creswell (2003) has identified four characteristics of a qualitative approach, namely: 1) natural setting; 2) multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic; 3) emergent questions and 4) interpretive characteristics. Table 3.2 describes how these four characteristics are used in this research as described by Hossain (2011:148):

**Table 3.2:** Characteristics of qualitative approaches

<p><b>Natural setting</b> – When qualitative research is conducted, the researcher will go to the home or office of the participant to collect the data (Cresswell, 2003).</p>	<p>Due to unforeseen circumstances of COVID-19, I was unable to perform the interviews at the participants’ homes or offices. The safest and most convenient option for me and the research participant was to interview via an online platform, while the participant was in the comfort of their home or home office.</p>
<p><b>Interactive and humanistic methods</b> – There are many ways of collecting data; therefore, the anonymity should be guaranteed while the research is still conducted in an engaging manner (Cresswell, 2003).</p>	<p>Each participant is guaranteed the anonymity of their interview by signing an ethical letter of consent (see addendum). Each participant is given the option to receive their interview on a transcribed document for the participant to read through, add or change any information that is part of the interview recording.</p>
<p><b>Emergent questions</b> – As the researcher asks the research participants questions in</p>	<p>In the beginning of the interview, I first inquired about the musical background of the</p>



<p>the interviews, more questions could emerge to gather more information from the participant (Cresswell, 2003).</p>	<p>participant before starting the semi-structured interview questionnaire. This gave me the opportunity to ask more specific questions relating to what practical subject the MusEd lecturer teaches and how they perceive a student's ability and skill regarding practical instruments.</p>
<p><b>Interpretive characteristics</b> – All research gathered by the researcher will now be analysed for interpretation (Cresswell, 2003).</p>	<p>The data were interpreted personally and theoretically by looking at each case individually and then drawing a cross-case report by analysing for themes and categories.</p>

All four of the qualitative approaches are used throughout the research process. Each approach was used in the research method of each case study.

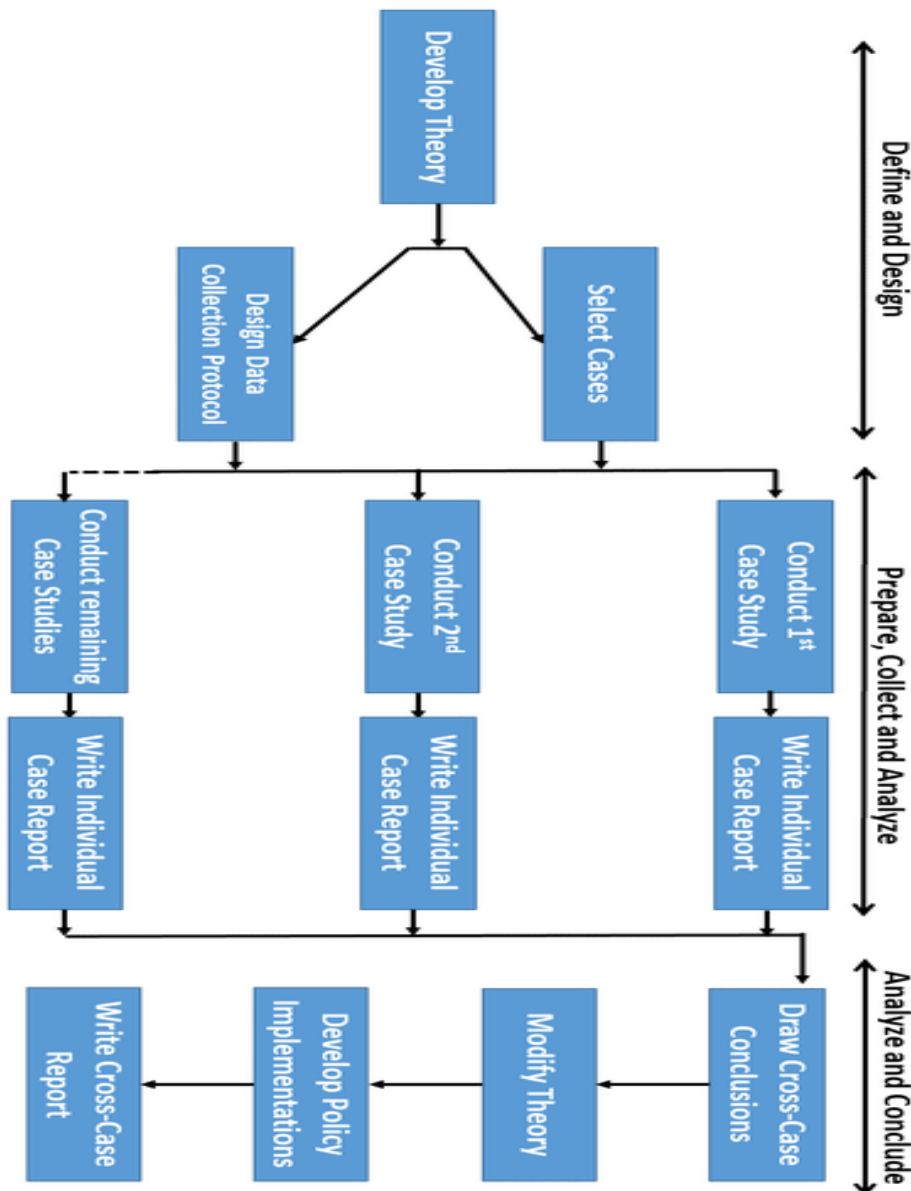
### 3.4. Research Method

Walliman (2017:1) states that “research methods are the tools and techniques for doing research. Research is a term used liberally for any kind of investigation that is intended to uncover interesting or new facts.” The research technique that I used was the multiple case study research method to investigate and discover the mindset of the MusEd lecturers and the mindset feedback they give to their student teachers.

#### 3.4.1. Multiple Case Studies

The qualitative research approach makes use of a multiple case study research method. Case study is a research methodology that is used to analyse a single person or multiple people, event or group. In this study, the growth and fixed mindset theory were used (PressAcademia, 2018) in case study research, which is the preferred qualitative research method when the research questions are “how” or “why” (Yin, 2009:2). This research approach uses multiple data collection methods within each case. These multiple case studies are analysed through semi-structured interview questionnaires and document analysis to uncover the growth and fixed mindset theory evident in the MusEd lecturers' practice.

This qualitative research was conducted within an imperative view. I investigated how and why the selected MusEd lecturers instil a fixed or growth mindset in their student teachers. Yin's multiple case study design (Figure 3.1) was used to collect and analyse the data from the case studies. This process consists of: (a) define and design; (b) prepare, collect and analyse; and (c) analyse and conclude, and is used as a method of collecting data in this research study.



**Figure 3.1:** Multiple Case Study Design (Yin, 2013)

### 3.4.2. Define and Design

The case study research method is firstly about the define and design stage. This stage comprises three parts: developing theory, selecting cases and the data collection protocol.

### 3.4.2.1 *Developing Theory*

The theoretical framework of this study is guided by the implicit theory of how a person views their inherent ability. As described in Chapter 2, the implicit theory has two mindsets, namely the incremental theory (fixed mindset) and the entity theory (growth mindset). With a fixed mindset, people believe their ability and talent are a fixed trait and cannot be improved. With a growth mindset, people believe their abilities and talents are malleable and see challenges as learning opportunities (Develop Good Habits, 2017). These theories are tested by investigating how and why feedback from MusEd lecturers can influence the mindset of their student teachers. The beliefs that MusEd lecturers have about a student who was born with a “natural gift” or “remarkable talent” as well as a student where these talents are not evident can result in feedback that alters students’ mindsets about their ability (Mercer & Ryan, 2009:1). When student teachers receive ability feedback on their natural talent, the MusEd lecturers instil a fixed mindset. When given feedback on their effort, student teachers develop a growth mindset (O'Rourke, Peach, Dweck & Popovic, 2016:42).

In this research, the research questions investigate the “how” and “why” of the growth and fixed mindset. The “how” is approached using the implicit theory of “how a fixed and growth mindset is instilled”. This is answered by investigating how the MusEd lecturers give feedback to their student teachers through the lens of the growth and fixed mindset theory. Why they instil a fixed mindset or a growth mindset is explored by the interview questions, which are based on the growth mindset questionnaire in Carol Dweck’s (2006:12–13) book “Mindset: The new psychology of success” (Addendum 1).

### 3.4.2.2 *Select Cases*

This research study made use of the multiple case study method. According to Yin (2009), the case study research is “a linear but iterative process” and therefore “a product of inquiry”. This refers to a process that leads to discovery (Creswell, 2007:245). Cases are selected based on either convenience, purpose or probability sampling. My study used convenience case sampling. According to Lavrakas (2008:2), “convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling in which people are sampled simply because they are *convenient* sources of data for researchers.”

The selection criteria I used for the participants were the following:

- The participants had to be current or previous MusEd lecturers at the Faculty of Education Department at the University of Pretoria;
- The participants had to work with student teachers within the MusEd Department;
- The participants had to be from diverse backgrounds;
- The participants had to be diverse age groups; and
- The participants had to be of different genders.

Five MusEd lecturers from the Faculty of Education Department at the University of Pretoria were selected to take part in this research. The “how” and “why” of the research questions were answered by collecting data from these five different case studies. The biographical background information of each diverse participant from the selection criteria is described next.

Participant 1 is a black male in the 40–50 age range. As a young boy in grade 9, he often played an imaginary piano in church. An older member of the church saw him and asked him to join his music band. He then joined the band as a tenor singer and later learned to play the piano, more specifically the keyboard. The participant discovered his love for music while being part of this band and decided to follow a career path in music. After applying at Wits University, the participant was told that he needed a Grade 5 in music theory. A friend advised him to study music at the University of Venda, where he studied piano and music up to Grade 5 music theory level. The participant then went back to Wits University and completed two years of training in classical singing and piano. The participant then followed his passion for jazz music and completed his Bachelor of Music (Jazz and Education) Honours at the University of Cape Town. He then went on to complete his Master’s in Music Education at the University of Pretoria and is currently completing his PhD in Music Education through UNISA.

Participant 2 is a white female in the 50–60 age range. The participant grew up in a musical family with her mother being a music teacher. She started playing piano at the age of five and had already started composing music at the age of four. The participant has completed her Bachelor of Music Education degree, Master of Music degree and PhD in Music Education. She has more than 30 years of experience in teaching music from Foundation Phase to Grade 12 level at schools. The participant has been teaching at a higher education institution to undergraduate student teachers for ten years in piano, music theory, music history and music education. She also teaches on a postgraduate level to the Postgraduate Certificate in Education student teachers, and supervises Med and PhD music students. She has international music

collaboration networks with the Mozarteum and other higher education institutions between South Africa and Austria.

Participant 3 is a black female in the 30–40 age range. She studied music at school and went on to complete her Bachelor of Music degree while teaching music part-time at the UNISA Music Foundation. She then went on to teach general music to Grade 0 to 3 learners and, in this time, completed her Master of Music degree at the University of Pretoria. She is currently busy with her PhD in music and teaches methodology of music at a higher education institution.

Participant 4 is a black male in the 60–70 age range. He started receiving formal music lessons at the age of 10 in a private capacity and completed his bachelor in music degree with piano and organ as his practical instruments at the University of Cape Town. His extensive experience includes being subject advisor for music in the Western Cape province and later senior curriculum planner in choral music, orchestral music and instrumental music. He has also been an Umalusi moderator and a moderator for the senior certificate examinations for music. He then started teaching music methodology for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education students, and supervised Med students at a higher education institution. He has completed an Med and PhD degree in music and has now retired.

Participant 5 is a white female in the 50–60 age range. She started playing piano when she was seven years old and started her training in organ in Grade 11 at school. She completed her Bachelor of Music degree in organ as well as a licentiate at the University of South Africa. The participant has extensive experience in music performances, namely playing in a band as well as a solo performer playing clarinet, piano and organ. She has experience teaching in primary and secondary school and now runs her own private studio with piano students. She has completed her Masters and PhD degrees in music.

All five participants selected suit the research selection criteria and were discussed in detail.

### **3.4.3. Data Collection Protocol**

According to NPC Research (2014), data collection protocol refers to how the researcher will gather the data. When the researcher creates and follows this protocol, the data become more reliable and efficient; this saves time when analysing the information. Table 3.3 outlines the data collection protocol and describes the method used to collect data for each research question.

**Table 3.3:** Data Collection Protocol

Research Questions	Collection Method	Method Described
<i>How do the MusEd lecturers instil a fixed or growth mindset in their student teacher feedback?</i>	1. Document analysis 2. Semi-structured interviews	The student teachers feedback documents are collected from the MusEd lecturers to determine their mindset feedback. In two case studies, the student teachers gave their weekly feedback, small class tests, semester tests and exam papers to be analysed.  The MusEd lecturers were given a semi-structured two-question questionnaire about their verbal feedback to their students when they perform with high or low ability in the classroom (Addendum 2).
<i>Why do the MusEd lecturers instil fixed or growth mindsets in their student feedback?</i>	1. Semi-structured interviews	The MusEd lecturers are interviewed. These interview questions are structured based on the growth mindset questions found in Carol Dweck’s book “Mindset: The new psychology of success” (Dweck, 2016,12–13) (Addendum 1).

3.4.3.1 *Semi-structured interview questionnaire*

Semi-structured interview data collection is divided into two questionnaires. The mindset questionnaire aims to answer the research question: *Why do the music education lecturers instil either a fixed or growth mindset in their student feedback?* The feedback questionnaire aims to answer the research question: *How do the music education lecturers instil fixed or growth mindsets in their student feedback?*

**i. Mindset Questionnaire**

The questions from Carol Dweck’s book “Mindset: The new psychology of success” (2006: 12–13) inspired the semi-structured interview questionnaire which determined whether the

MusEd lecturers have a growth or a fixed mindset. Dweck's questionnaire was adapted to a musical point of view and connected intelligence with the ability to play and perform an instrument. The purpose of changing Dweck's questionnaire into a semi-structured questionnaire is to develop a deeper understanding of why the MusEd lecturers answered either "yes" or "no" to the question. The semi-structured interview questionnaire comprised eight questions. Each question was asked in each case study. If the participant needed clarification of the question in its relation to music, an example or a life scenario was given to them. The following examples or scenarios were given to the participants in relation to each question of the mindset questionnaire:

8. Do you think your music ability is something very basic about you and cannot change much? Why?
  - a) When a student learns their musical repertoire throughout the years, this repertoire will become more challenging. Do you think their musical ability in being able to play more challenging repertoire will reach its limit at some point?
  - b) When a student finds a piece of repertoire extremely challenging and have failed multiple times, would they still be able to play it in the future, with more practice and time put into it?
  - c) Do you think that some students just cannot play certain pieces, and will never be able to play those pieces, it is just not in their ability to ever play them?
2. Can you play a more challenging repertoire, yet not change your amount of ability? Why do you say that?
  - a) If you used your professional judgement about a student's ability and decided the student will never be able to play a certain high-performing piece of music due to their ability, would you still give that piece to the student?
3. If you were born with a certain amount of ability, do you think you can change it quite a bit? How and why?
  - a) If a student does not showcase that they have a high ability in the musical instrument, do you think they can over time increase that ability and become a high-performing musician?
  - b) You have two students aged 13 who have taken violin for three years and practise the

same amount of time each day. One student showcases a high ability by playing a more advanced repertoire, and the other student plays a less advanced repertoire. Do you think the student that is playing a less advanced repertoire would over time increase their ability and play the same advanced repertoire as the other student or will their ability stay the same?

9. If you are a certain kind of person, do you think there is much one can do to change that? Why?
  - a) If you are a person who practises your instrument only every other day, can you change that and start practising every day?
  - b) If you are an introverted person who enjoys a quiet evening alone to recharge, could you change that and become an extroverted person who enjoys recharging around the company of people?
  - c) If you are a stubborn person, can you become a more docile person?
  
5. Do you think that no matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially? Why?
  - a) If you are someone who wants to be a more academic person, can you change that?
  - b) If you grew up to be kind to human beings, could you change that and start being less kind to humans?
  - c) If you are the kind of person who does not have dreams or ambitions, could you become that kind person?
  
10. Do you think you can always substantially change how much ability you have? Why?
  - a) If you are unable to play one of the most challenging piano repertoires, such as Liszt's La Campanella, after years of playing piano, will you ever be able to play it?
  
11. Do you think you can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are cannot really be changed? Why do you say that?
  - a) Every person is brought up a certain way. One such example is their religion. Would a person be able to change their beliefs, but certain core principles of their previous religion will stay?
  - b) If you are a person who grew up in a poor family, but became rich as an adult, would



you live a lavish life or would you live a rich life but still remember where you came from and be conscious of your spending?

12. Do you feel that you can always change basic things about the kind of person you are?

- a) If you grew up as a person with a low self-esteem, can you become a more confident person?
- b) If you are a disorganised person who forgets your things, could you change that?

Each semi-structured question was asked according to the questionnaire and then followed by giving a reason for their answer. The aim of these semi-structured interview questions was to determine the extent of the MusEd lecturers' existing growth and/or fixed mindsets. These questions were based on and adapted from the growth mindset questionnaire by Dweck (2006:12–13).

## ii. Feedback Questionnaire

The following semi-structured questionnaire was developed to answer the research question: *How do the music education lecturers instil a fixed or growth mindset in their students through feedback?* The questionnaire comprises two questions: Question 1 determines how the MusEd lecturer gives feedback to a student teacher when high ability is portrayed in a one-on-one music lesson; Question 2 determines how the MusEd lecturer gives feedback to their student teacher when low ability and mistakes are presented in their one-on-one music practical lesson (Addendum 3).

**Question 1:** *How do you give feedback to a student in a one-on-one lesson when the student has shown mastery performance / high ability after playing the musical piece?*

This question looks at what feedback the MusEd lecturer gives to their student when the student has shown high performance or ability. Does the lecturer give praise for ability or praise for their effort and how could that impact the students' mindset when they showcase this high ability?

**Question 2:** *How do you give feedback to a student in a one-on-one lesson when the student has shown low mastery performance / low ability after playing a musical piece?*

This question also looks at the feedback the MusEd lecturer gives to their students, but when the student has shown low performance or low ability. This time, does the lecturer give praise for ability or praise for their effort and how could that impact the student’s mindset when they showcase this low ability? The aim of these semi-structured feedback interview questions is to determine the extent of the MusEd lecturers’ feedback to their student teachers.

#### 3.4.4. Prepare, Collect and Analyse

As explained in Table 2.4, my study used multiple methods of data collection, as this “can enhance the validity of case study findings through triangulation” (Dooley, 2002:341). Triangulation is using two or more data collection techniques to “strengthen the design” in order to understand the research problem the data are finding (Thurmond, 2001:253). This stage is explained by the case study, the data collected and the case report. Each case study received a brief overview of the study and its purpose as well as both the mindset and feedback questionnaire. Table 3.4 lists what data were collected from each participant from the three data collection methods.

**Table 3.4:** Participant Data Collected

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Mindset Interview</b>	<b>Feedback Interview</b>	<b>Feedback Documents</b>
Participant 1	All eight questions were collected	Both questions were collected	Music puppet performance grades and feedback documents were collected
Participant 2	All eight questions were collected	Both questions were collected	Micro lessons grades and feedback and third year concert feedback documents were collected
Participant 3	All eight questions were collected	Both questions were collected	Feedback documents were not made available for analysis

Participant 4	A total of seven of the eight questions were collected	Both questions were collected	Feedback documents were not made available for analysis
Participant 5	All eight questions were collected	Both questions were collected	Feedback documents were not made available for analysis

### 3.4.5. Analyse and Conclude

The data analysis and data collection process are connected and influenced by each other (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014b:395). After the researcher has collected the data, the data are analysed. During the analysis of the data, the researcher should become familiar with the findings by reading the findings multiple times and by reflecting on them.

There are five different ways of analysing qualitative data, namely *pattern matching*, *linking data to propositions*, *explanation building*, *time series analysis*, *logic models* and *cross-case synthesis* (Baxter & Jack, 2008:554). In my study, I make use of *pattern matching*. According to Sinkovics (2018:1), pattern matching “aims at externalising implicit mental models and assumptions as much as possible” and “requires meticulous contextualization, clear-cut theoretical formulation, as well as detailed and precise operationalization” (Baxter & Jack, 2008:555). Pattern matching in qualitative research is an important part of the data analysis process as it guides the researcher to trace their thought process and better understand “how and why they arrived at the presented conclusions” (Sinkovics, 2018:469).

I used the following steps to utilise the pattern matching for data analysis:

- I first familiarised myself with the case studies responses in the mindset questionnaire, feedback questionnaire and the feedback documents.
- Each case study was then broken up into the three data methods, namely the mindset questionnaire, the feedback questionnaire and the feedback analysis (Table 3.5). Each data method point has descriptive and reflective notes that display the fixed mindset and/or the growth mindset that is evident from their interview.

**Table 3.5:** Cross Case Notes

<b>1. Mindset Questionnaire</b> <b>2. Feedback Questionnaire</b> <b>3. Feedback Documents</b>	<b>Descriptive Notes</b>	<b>Reflective Notes</b>
<b>Fixed mindset</b>		
<b>Growth mindset</b>		

- Each case study’s three data points are then put next to each other to look for any patterns to better describe the answers to the how and why research questions of this study.

My data analysis also used cross-case synthesis. Cruzes et al. (2015:1637) identify cross-case synthesis as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes” across the multiple case studies. In my study, this method of analysing is to identify the themes that have been found within the five case studies and to look for similarities and contrasts.

I used the following steps to utilise the cross-case synthesis:

- In the pattern matching process, each case study was independently analysed using three data collection methods, namely the mindset questionnaire, feedback questionnaire and feedback documents. This gave me great insight to how and why each researcher instils either the fixed or growth mindset.
- The data of each individual case study were then placed next to all the other case study data:

**Table 3.6:** Cross Case Comparison

	<b>Mindset Questionnaire Notes</b>	<b>Feedback Questionnaire Notes</b>	<b>Feedback Documents Notes</b>
Case Study 1			
Case Study 2			
Case Study 3			
Case Study 4			
Case Study 5			

- The mindset questionnaires data of case studies 1–5 were collated to be analysed for common themes.
- The feedback questionnaires data of case studies 1–5 were collated to be analysed for common themes.
- The feedback documents data of case studies 1 and 2 were collated to be analysed for common themes.

According to Ryan and Bernard (2003:2–12), there are 12 distinct techniques to analyse themes in qualitative data. My research study used three of these techniques:

1. Word repetitions – The first thing I did was to look at the words each participant used across each data method. The words which participants used the most convey the most meaning and are important to them (Horwitz, 2015). All repeated words were categorised into themes.
2. Key-words-in-context (KWIC) – Semi-structured questions, such as Question 1 from the mindset questionnaire, were used. “*Do you think your music ability is something very basic about you and cannot change very much? Why?*” is an open-ended question that does not only gather the data from the participants but also conveys the information. Question 1 makes the participant aware of music ability and the change involved in it

(Kronberger & Wagner, 2000:300). The KWIC are used to look for themes on how these MusEd lecturers use these words in context.

3. Compare and Contrast – This technique is used to see how the mindsets of the MusEd lecturers are the same and different from each other (Ryan & Bernard, 2003:4).

The main themes that arose in the pattern matching and cross-case synthesis are discussed in Chapter 4.

### **3.5. Trustworthiness**

“A study is trustworthy if and only if the reader of the research report judges it to be so” (Pilot & Beck, 2014). Trustworthiness or rigor refers to the trust and confidence the reader has in the data methods used by the researcher to collect and analyse their research data (Pilot & Beck, 2014). Trustworthiness in qualitative research can be categorised in four parts, namely 1) credibility, 2) transferability, 3) dependability and 4) confirmability (Gunawan, 2015:10). In this study all categories of trustworthiness were used.

#### **3.5.1. Credibility**

Credibility is defined as the belief and trust one has in the findings of the research (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; Macnee & McCabe, 2008). Credibility is also defined by how the researcher interprets the participants information and if the information is correct and truthful. There are eight different strategies to establish credibility of the findings. These are prolonged and varied field experience, time sampling, reflexivity, triangulation, member checking, peer examination, interview technique, establishing authority of researcher and structural coherence.

Member checking was used to strengthen the credibility of this study as my supervisor checked this study multiple times. This study used the triangulation method. Triangulation is used to validate the trustworthiness of the data. According to Maree (2007:39), triangulation “reduces the risk of chance associations and systematic bias and relies on information collected from a diverse range of individuals, teams and settings using a variety of methods” (Maxwell, 1992:93). Triangulation can be divided into three main categories: 1) multiple researchers 2) multiple research instruments, and 3) applying different research methods (Anney, 2014:276). This research acquires credibility by using triangulation in the research findings. The triangulation in this study makes use of multiple research instruments by collecting three

different data points from five different case studies. The three data points used to strengthen the credibility of this study are the a) semi-structured mindset interview, b) semi-structured feedback interview, and c) feedback documents.

### **3.5.2. Dependability**

Dependability is where qualitative researchers use the method to show that the research findings would be similar when the exact same research questions are asked, with exactly the same research participants and with the exact same method of data collection (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014:5750).

The findings of the research should include the following (Shenton, 2004:71,72):

- The research design and its implementation, describing what was planned and executed on a strategic level;
- The operational detail of data gathering, addressing the details of what was done in the field; and
- Reflective appraisal of the project, evaluating the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken.

The research technique that I used was the multiple case study research method to investigate and discover the mindset of the MusEd lecturers and what mindset feedback they give to their student teachers. This method was described, planned and implemented in the research design (section 3.4.2).

### **3.5.3. Confirmability**

Confirmability implies that an “adequate amount of distance exists between observer and the observed” and that “distinction [is] maintained between researcher’s and participants’ values” (Ulin, Robinson & Tolley, 2005). In confirmability “the researcher can offer a transparent and self-critically reflexive analysis of the methodology used in the research” (Finlay, 2006:321). Each interview of both the mindset questionnaire and the feedback questionnaire interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim as recorded. Each transcribed interview was then sent to all research participants to confirm its accuracy.

### 3.5.4. Transferability

Transferability is used to prove that the research results can be connected to other “contexts, situations, times, and populations”. It is the researcher’s duty to find a way to prove these connections (Statistics Solutions, 2017). Anney (2014:278) states that when the researcher gives an in-depth look into the inquiry and the research participants are chosen “purposely, it facilitates transferability of the inquiry”. The participants in this study were of different ages, genders, ethnicities and backgrounds. All participants were MusEd lecturers at the University of Pretoria and could therefore be connected to different university lecturers teaching music in South Africa. According to Bitsch (2005:85) the “researcher facilitates the transferability judgement by a potential user through ‘thick description’ and purposeful sampling”. All participants were selected based on their involvement in teaching MusEd at the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education. They therefore served the purpose of collecting the correct data to answer the research questions and elucidate the phenomenon.

According to Bertram & Christiansen (2014:206), interpretivists widely use trustworthiness in their research. I used the trustworthiness of this qualitative research to strengthen the credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability.

### 3.6. Ethical Considerations

The required ethics process was followed. This included obtaining permission from the Head of the Humanities Department as well as the Dean of the Faculty of Education before any data collection took place. The following prescribed ethical principles by the University of Pretoria (2013) guided my study:

- *Social Responsibility* – I am part of a bigger community and I should serve to the development and needs of my community, especially the MusEd community.
- *Fairness* This was used for the fair treatment of all MusEd lecturers in this study in the form of contractual justice, distributive justice, contributory justice and retributive or affirmative justice.
- *Benevolence* – No MusEd participant was harmed during the research process, nor was their well-being in jeopardy.
- *Respect for the individual* – MusEd participants’ opinions were respected without restricting any actions.
- *Professionalism* – I ensured integrity, quality and accountability from myself.



- *Privacy* – All data collected from the MusEd participants were treated confidentially and their identities were protected.
- *Informed consent* – All MusEd lecturers gave consent for their participation in the research.
- *Voluntary participation* – MusEd participants had the right to withdraw from the research at any time.
- *Trust* – MusEd participants were never subjected to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research processes or its published outcomes.

(De Vos *et al*, 2011:115–119)

The research was conducted with the University of Pretoria’s Faculty of Education, Humanities of Education, Music Education Division. According to Udo-Akang (2013:55), “informed consent is considered the most important of all ethical principles.” I started conducting my research only when I received the consent forms from the Head of Department of Humanities Education as well as permission from the MusEd research participants. The consent forms stated that the research participants had the freedom to discontinue their participation at any stage of the research. Elias and Theron (2012) dictate that the researcher needs to maintain professional standards of conduct and behaviour throughout the research process. In this instance, all the participants had prior knowledge and experience of ethical research guidelines at this higher education institution. Each participant signed a letter of consent before any interview or analysis processes started. I assigned pseudonyms (codes) to each research participant to ensure their anonymity and their contributions remained confidential in all the subsequent research procedures. Pseudonyms are when the researcher uses a fictitious name for each participant. In this study, each participant is referred to as “case studies” to protect their identity (Wiles, 2010:7).

Confidentiality was maintained when the findings in this study were explained and no information gave hints as to who the research participants were. The confidentiality was strengthened as all the MusEd participants were always referred to as a “case study” and a number. Secondly, whenever the research participant asked me not to add certain information gathered from data, I obliged (Wiles, 2010:6–7).

The ethical considerations of this study were of high priority. The study protected and respected the participants' views and identities throughout the process and ensured that no harm was done.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND RESULTS

### 4.1. Introduction

In Chapter 3, the research design and all ethical considerations regarding the research participants and trustworthiness were outlined to answer the research questions stipulated in section 1.6.

The data collection process involved multiple case studies with qualitative semi-structured interviews, as well as the MusEd lecturer's feedback documents to their student teachers. In this chapter, the findings from the mindset interview, feedback interview and document analysis from all five case studies are presented and discussed.

I have explored how the MusEd lecturers instil either a fixed or a growth mindset in their students by looking at how and why they instil a specific mindset. The implicit theory was applied in the planning stages of the semi-structured interview questions, serving as a lens through which data were interpreted and analysed. Each research participant received the mindset and feedback questionnaires via email well in advance to prepare for their interview. This email included the aim of the study, the research questions and a brief introduction to the growth and fixed mindset theory. These qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted online at a convenient time for the participant. The interviews were recorded on an audio device and later transcribed.

Each interview started with an explanation of the purpose of the research as well as the rationale for the study. Each participant was then asked to give background on their own musical exposure with reference to the instruments they have played as well as their musical teaching background and higher education teaching experience. This information was then used to personalise their mindset and feedback interview questions to fit the musical background of that specific participant as well as help clarify the questions with specific musical practical examples.

Chapter 4 is divided into four parts. Part one covers the data analysis and interpretations. This part both discusses the individual case study report and gives a cross-case analysis. The second part discusses the arising themes that were found in the data. In part three, I share my reflection on the research and, finally, I conclude the study.

## 4.2. Data Analysis and Interpretations

### 4.2.1. Individual Participant Report

The empirical findings of each individual participant are discussed in their relation to the theoretical framework of this study, as discussed in section 2.2.

#### Participant 1

**Mindset interview** – Participant 1 believes a person can improve and enhance their ability; he has worked hard to be where he is today. He mentioned that one can improve one's ability with practice and by applying what one has learned while performing. A teacher can also improve the ability of their student if they put the effort forth and believe in their student. This participant feels that a person gets stuck in their ability when they do not receive more challenging works. He believes that *one cannot change your ability but rather enhance or improve it*. He believes that a student can change when they know what the opposite looks like. When you put your mind to it, you can change. Later in the interview, this participant mentioned that *a student can improve with training but a person who cannot sing, cannot sing*. This participant also mentioned that a student with low ability and a student with high ability should not be in the same class as the latter will have to catch up in the long run.

**Feedback interview** – The participant explained that it is hard to give feedback to a student that has shown mastery level of their performance work. The participant would commend the student on their achievement and give specific examples of skills learned from previous lessons that contributed to the student's performance. The participant would mention that he is happy with what his student has done and that he is a good student. When a student has shown low ability in their performance work, the participant would give the student specific feedback to what the student needs to do within the musical piece. If the student continued to fail to play the piece, the participant would investigate to determine if they did not put forth the effort at home to practise and master their piece or if the piece is beyond the student's capabilities. If the piece is challenging to the student, the participant would tell the student that they trust in their capabilities.

**Feedback documents** – In the feedback document, the MusEd lecturer gave four grades with four assessment criteria, namely music, choreography, costumes and décor, and general presentation. In the music feedback, the participant wrote the following: *The singing was captivating and lovely* and *the clicking of fingers was effectively used*. Neither form of feedback reflected a specific reason or process mentioned as to why the participant had felt that way. In the choreography feedback, the participant again used feedback such as *the introduction was hypnotising and confident; group members worked well together; script was well rehearsed and performed* and *transitions were smooth throughout the show*. Again no referencing was made to specific detail as to why this feedback is given. In the costume and décor feedback, the participant complimented their props by saying it was *well built and complemented the theme with detailed information*. In the general comments, the participant gave more detailed feedback to the process the students followed by mentioning that all students were involved in the process by *clapping, running and moving*.

Participant 1 exhibited a growth mindset in his mindset interview. As illustrated in Figure 2.3, a growth mindset views challenges as an opportunity to grow; therefore, this Participant study mentioned that if a student is not challenged, their ability will become static. However, the participant study later in the interview expressed a change in mindset. They explained that if a student is not born with a singing ability, they will never be able to sing and therefore exhibit a fixed mindset according to the theory in section 2.2. In the feedback interview, the participant exhibited how they instilled a fixed and growth mindset in their student teacher feedback. When the participant had high-ability students perform as described in section 2.4.1, the participant would commend their ability and then give process feedback. This could instil either a fixed or growth mindset in the student as the participant is not aware of the effort brought to class by the student. The participant also used feedback such as *he is happy* with the student. This type of feedback can cause the student to become distracted by then trying to please the teacher, rather than develop their self-motivation to focus on the task at hand (Johnston, 2012:37–38). When the participant gave feedback to their low-ability students, the participant would encourage the student to keep on trying and keep on making an effort. This exhibits a growth mindset in the lecturer and encourages the student to develop a mastery goal. This is seen in Table 2.1, where failure is seen as an opportunity to learn and therefore the participant instils a growth mindset in their student.

When the feedback documents and feedback interview findings are compared to each other, there are some contrasts. In the feedback interview, the participant would mostly give feedback that explains the process. However, in the feedback documents, this was not the case. The feedback documents revealed that the participant mostly did not mention the process of how the outcome was successful. It used feedback such as *lovely, hypnotising and confident performance*. Therefore, as mentioned in Table 2.1, when feedback is given to a student without praising the process, the student will develop a fixed mindset and believe their ability is static and that success comes from talent. Therefore, they will set goals that are performance orientated.

Participant 1's data revealed that they instil both a fixed and growth mindset in their student teacher feedback.

## **Participant 2**

**Mindset interview** – The participant believed that a student's ability can increase when a student does *more research on a theoretical side as well as practise more*. They also believed that when a student received a more challenging repertoire, their ability would increase. However, if a student had suffered any physical trauma or damage to their vocal cords, it could not be changed. Anyone can become a better musical performer and that ability is not static. Yet, the participant mentioned that they were born with a good intonation and this is not something you can teach a student. The participant also believed that who you are cannot really change but rather be managed. Later on, the participant mentioned that you can change when you grow older and more mature, as your paradigm to life can change and be influenced.

**Feedback interview** – When a student has shown high performance ability, the participant will commend them on the efforts they have brought forth as well as give specific details as to what methods they had used to be successful. The participant felt that when a student did not show success during a performance, it was either because they did not practise enough or that the participant had to use different teaching and learning methods during the lesson to help the student.

**Feedback documents** – In the third year, in concert feedback to the students, the participant complimented the students on their organisational skills and teamwork. The participant gave specific reasons as to why they worked well as a group, attributing this success to their lack of disagreement in the group as well as their unity. The participant gave critical feedback on the

presentation of the flowers for the concert and meticulously mentioned that they did not suit the atmosphere. A minor change was suggested that would suit the harmony and unity of the performance better. In the micro-lesson feedback documents, the participant gave feedback to five different students. All students received specific feedback as to why their PowerPoint presentations were good. The feedback they received included *not too much writing* and *short explanations* and contained pictures with *baroque characteristics*. The students were also given specific details about their questions to their students and how it should have been more complex to instil higher thinking brain development in them. Two students received specific suggestions from the participant on how to approach their activities to make them more engaging.

This participant mostly exhibited a growth mindset in the mindset interview. The participant proved the incremental theory by mentioning that students can grow in their ability (section 2.2.2) as their ability is malleable. Creating mastery goals and believing success comes from effort also supports incremental theory. However, the participant mentioned that if a student is born without any intonation, the ability to hear the pitch of the music cannot change through effort. Therefore, ability is regarded as static, as seen in section 2.3, which reveals a fixed mindset. In the feedback interview, the participant revealed they instilled a growth mindset in their students as they commented on the efforts they have brought forward when they showed high-ability performance. When a student did not show high ability, the case study continued to challenge the student teacher by changing their approach to teaching to fit the student's needs. When the feedback documents were analysed, they revealed that the case study mostly gave growth mindset feedback to their student teachers. This was because the case study referred each success of the student teacher to the process which they followed and gave specific details. Therefore, the student develops a mindset that their success was due to their efforts and process and not their ability, thus instilling a growth mindset.

participant 2's data revealed that she mostly possesses a growth mindset and instils this mindset in her student teachers through feedback.

### **participant 3**

**Mindset interview** – This participant believes that people are born with a certain set of ability and that music ability skill can be perfected over time. If not enough effort and practice is put into the music of students who were born with a high ability, they will not *become as good as*

*they can*. The ability a student is born with should be refined and their perspective should be that they can do anything and they can reach their full potential with effort and determination. With more practice, a student can play more challenging pieces, but students would not have to put in as much effort as students with less ability. The participant believes that students who lack effort to achieve playing the more challenging pieces can change and become more resilient. The participant also believes that if a student does not have a physical limitation and they put forth the effort and follow the guidance of the teacher, they can become a virtuoso.

**Feedback interview:** When a student performs with high ability, the participant's first response would be positive by saying *well done*. If the student found the piece challenging in previous classes, the participant would make specific reference as to what techniques they used to be successful, the time and effort they had put forth and how far they had come from playing the piece the first time around. However, the participant did not mention what specific feedback would have been given to a student who did not find the piece challenging and received a *well done* comment. When a student performed with low ability, their feedback would be to go and work on a specific skill within the piece. The participant will also research whether the student put in any effort to be successful in their piece or whether the student needed more time to master the piece. The participant expressed that they would show disappointment in the student if they did not make an effort.

In the mindset interview, participant 2 exhibited a growth mindset. This participant mentioned that although a student teacher has high ability and can easily play challenging music, if the student teacher does not put in the effort, their ability can become static. The participant explained in their conversations to the student teacher that they can overcome any challenge through hard work and determination. This refers to the growth mindset goals (section 2.3) and that these learning goals are set to be achieved through hard work. The feedback interview revealed that the participant would at first praise the ability as stated in section 2.4.1 by saying *well done*. Then the process which made the student successful, who found the musical piece challenging at first, would be referred to. This instils a growth mindset in the student that first showed low ability in their performance work. However, the participant does not reveal the process feedback given after saying *well done* to a student who has shown a high ability; therefore, this type of feedback as revealed in section 2.2.1 would instil a fixed mindset.



participant 3's data revealed that they instil both a fixed and growth mindset in their student teacher feedback.

#### **participant 4**

**Mindset interview** – This participant believes that a person's ability is something very basic about themselves, but with hard work and practice this ability can change. With discipline, by working on the technical aspects of music and by practising, one can develop their musical skill. If a student is born with a good inherent ability, *they will be able to change it, but not if they are lazy*. With this effort, the student will be able to play more challenging pieces and *might reach the performance tempo that is acceptable*. A teacher can also identify when a student does not have a high ability and, *therefore, with excellent teaching, the teacher is the most important factor in increasing the ability of the student*. The participant believes that if the student does not work hard and has a mindset that does not assist them in putting forth the effort, they can change their mindset by learning new habits and changing the environment.

**Feedback interview** – When a student shows high ability in their performance work, the participant would praise them for the work they had done well. They would have a conversation with their student on how they improved from their previous lessons and what technicalities and interpretations the student used to be successful. When a student showed low-ability performance, the participant would try to find out if the student was not disciplined enough or not focusing on things that were important to improve. The participant would then refer back to the skills taught in the previous classes and give demonstrations in order for the student to be more successful in future.

In the mindset interview, the participant revealed a growth mindset. This participant believes that every student teacher has a certain ability but that this ability can change with hard work, discipline and practice. The participant does, however, use the words *might reach* when referring to a student reaching their mastery goal in their performance work. It could be suggested that the participant sometimes has the belief that one's ability will reach a certain point where it starts to become static and therefore reveal a fixed mindset, as discussed in section 2.2. One could speculate that the participant could move from a fixed to a growth and back to a fixed mindset when working with students with different abilities. The feedback interview revealed a growth mindset in their feedback to the student teachers. They used specific detail to outline what the student teacher had done throughout the process in order to

reach success in their performance. The participant also revealed that when a student teacher showed low ability or had not reached their goal yet, that they would continue to challenge them to improve their skills through practice.

participant 4's data revealed that they instil a growth mindset in their student teacher feedback, but might have a different mindset about different student teachers' ability to change or improve their personal ability.

### **participant 5**

**Mindset interview** – This participant believes that a person is born with a certain amount of ability, but with practice they can increase their ability. If a student is not a hard-working student, but has the will to become more hard-working, the participant believes that the student can change. They believe that the more experienced a teacher is, the better equipped they are to support the success of a student's performance by finding new ways of working through challenging pieces. Their musical ability can be moulded and increased only by the extent of experience and knowledge a teacher has. However, the participant changed their mind about a person changing the amount of ability they have when they were asked if one could change the amount of ability a person has. They believe that because some students were born with disabilities, they have limitations. Therefore, the participant would not challenge these participants to play more challenging pieces due to their limitations, resulting in a more confident student.

**Feedback interview** – When a student performed with high ability in their performance work, the participant would *immediately tell them, well done, and that was excellent* and move on. When a student showed low ability in their performance work, the participant would *ignore their mistakes because they do not matter*. They explained that *if it is a beginner, they would not mention it, but if it is someone who had an UNISA exam in 3 weeks, they would mention it*. The participant feels that the experience for the beginner is more important than why they played two wrong notes.

In the mindset interview, participant 5 revealed a growth mindset. The participant believed that a student teacher's ability can increase through practice and hard work. The participant also revealed that they believe only a teacher with a lot of teaching experience can help a student to increase their ability. The participant did, however, reveal that there are certain limitations to how certain students can increase their ability due to a mental or physical disability. The

participant would therefore challenge students who do not have any limitations but would not challenge students with limitations. This could suggest that the participant had a fixed mindset to a certain extent. The feedback interview revealed that the participant instils a fixed mindset in their student feedback. This is due to the lack of revealing the evidence as to why the student teacher was showing high ability, as described in section 2.4.1, as this does not benefit the ongoing learning growth. The participant also revealed that when a student is a beginner, they would praise them only for the outcome, even if the outcome was not the desired outcome. This was done to build the student's confidence. However, as section 2.3 suggests, the student will start to focus on developing performance goals and develop a fixed mindset about their ability.

participant 5's data revealed that they instil both a fixed and growth mindset, but that the fixed mindset might be more dominant than the growth mindset.

The individual participant reports have been discussed in detail. Each report revealed either why or how the participant instilled a fixed or a growth mindset in their student teachers.

#### **4.2.2. Cross-Case Analysis**

The key findings of all five individual case studies were discussed in section 4.2.1. The cross-case analysis discusses the key findings of the differences and similarities between all five cases in depth (Marie H el ene Par e, 2019).

##### *4.2.2.1 Mindset interview*

#### **Question 1:**

*Do you think your music ability is something very basic about you, and cannot change very much?*

All five participants agreed that one's ability is not basic about you and can change. One participant used the words *enhance and improve on one's existing ability that you were born with*. This participant mentioned a musical experience where, as were a young child, they wanted to study music and enhance their singing capabilities. Through classical training and with practice every day, it is a growing process. Two participants mentioned that music is a skill set, with one participant saying: *a student can increase their ability when they do more research on a theoretical side as well as practice to improve their skill set. One can always*

*become a better keyboard player, teacher or lecturer.* The other participant mentioned that *this skill set is something you can perfect over time.* There are people born with a certain level of talent and, with practice, the student can get to a certain level or even a higher level. Consequently, people who are born with a high level of talent also need to practise reaching their optimum potential.

Two more participants go on to say that with hard work and practice, one can change your ability and that one cannot rely on your ability alone. One needs continuous practice and work on musical aspects, such as technical exercises, including scales and sight-reading, tackling new works and being disciplined by setting enough time aside for concentrated practice time. Only then one can develop one's music skill. This participant does, however, believe one receives inherent abilities from one's family, but one still needs to work hard to perfect the various skills.

Question 1 in the mindset interview revealed that all five participants believed that their ability can change, especially when effort and hard work are put into it. Therefore, all five participants have a growth mindset.

### **Question 2:**

*Can you play a more challenging repertoire, yet not change your amount of ability?*

None of the five participants mentioned that ability changes with a more challenging repertoire. Yet, they explained how they perceive ability with a challenging repertoire or gave an account of a personal experience to explain their view on the question that was asked. One participant explained that a challenging repertoire and ability are interlinked; the more you practise, the more challenging pieces you can play, calling it *intellectual participation*. The two aspects are connected in a way that the more challenging your piece of music is, the more your amount of ability grows. Another participant believes that, especially in orchestral music, the more challenging it becomes the more hours of practice you must put in to be able to play those difficult pieces. The participant does, however, believe that students with higher ability would not need as much practice to be able to play the more challenging pieces and would be able to sight-read the pieces. Students with a lower ability would need to practise more.

Two participants mentioned that younger musical pieces were much easier. Musical pieces aimed at university level become more challenging and therefore they had to put in more effort.

One participant mentioned that they enjoyed the challenge because it made them feel like they were always stuck at the same skill level and could now push themselves to a higher level. The participant encourages their students to take on a more challenging repertoire beyond their ability. This participant did, however, mention that there are students who have the ability to perfect a piece within 30 minutes, where it will take another student 4 hours to be able to play it on a good level.

The final participant believes that only a more experienced teacher can help a student work through more challenging pieces and that, unfortunately, a less experienced teacher does not have the ability to do this. They stated that *the musical ability of a student can be moulded and changed only by being taught by a teacher that has more experience and knowledge*.

All five participants have acknowledged that when students have a more challenging repertoire, they can reach success in playing it when they put in time and effort to practise. The data reveal that the intent of the participant is for a student to have a mastery goal. However, because they do not feel that a challenging repertoire can increase their ability but only change the outcome of the performance, it guides the student to develop more performance-based goals, as discussed in section 2.3. This results in the participant having a growth mindset but possibly instilling a fixed mindset in their student teachers.

### **Question 3:**

*If you were born with a certain amount of ability or talent, do you think you can change it quite a bit?*

All five participants believe that one's ability can change, with one participant mentioning that they would rather not use the word *change*, but the words *enhance and improve* ability. One participant mentioned that a person can change their amount of ability with *mindful practice and intellectual growth*. A person is not born with a certain amount of ability and it does not stay that way. In comparing both musical instruments and the voice, it was stated that they could both increase, yet a student who has intonation issues can have a lot of challenges learning this, and *sometimes it is unlearnable. Therefore, the ability to intonate cannot increase*. This participant grew up in a musical family and felt like they were born with the ability to intonate and therefore, with practice, this ability was able to increase. Students who usually were not able to sing in the choir were asked to play an instrument. Another participant also believed that *if you were born with the inherent ability from your parents, you can change*

*it but not if you are lazy. Only a dedicated and disciplined student will be able to increase their ability.* This participant also mentions that teachers can identify a student's ability, and therefore their ability increases with good teaching. When referring to the voice, one participant believes that even if a student does not have an angelic voice, with good teaching, the teacher can bring forth the natural voice of the student and uplift the musicality. The participant referred to this method as *sensitive teaching*, when the teacher cares for the natural sound of the voice and does not manipulate it to sound, for example, like an operatic voice. Another participant also mentioned that with good guidance and an experienced teacher, their ability can increase.

The final participant took the example from Suzuki's book, *Mottled Ability development from age zero*, that if Mozart did not grow up in the musical family he did, his musical talent would have been questionable. The participant believes that what you are born with must be refined. Some students are born with a high music ability, but the environment they grow up in plays an important role in their musical practice and development. When comparing the voice to an instrument, they mentioned that if a student thinks they cannot sing, they must change their perception. They believe that *positive psychology can help a student to sing as everyone does singing and it is an easily accessible instrument. Any person is able to sing if they have a positive attitude and if they listen to good quality music.*

The results of this question are matched with Question 2's results. Question 2 revealed that the participants did not believe that with more a challenging repertoire you can increase the amount of ability a student teacher has, but that you can enhance and grow the ability by hard work and effort. However, one participant mentioned one can change one's ability and then, immediately after, mentioned the word *enhance*. The results are again questionable as to whether the participants believe the student teacher can change their ability as mentioned in section 1.7, thus holding either a growth or fixed mindset.

#### **Question 4:**

*If you are a certain kind of person, do you think there is much one can do to change that?*

Three out of the five participants believe one can change the type of person you are. Two participants believe one is changed by one's environment and that people adapt to how other people function in other cultures, but that you retain your personality. The environment in which a person grows up shapes their personality. The conclusion is therefore that we do not change; we adapt. One can change when exposed to the opposite experiences, and when one

knows what is opposite, one can change to have a different experience. People can adapt to situations; for example, if a person tends to talk a lot and is placed in a situation where they need to think before they talk, they can adapt to the situation. Another participant believes one can change with determination and positive psychology. One can also change when you put in effort and energy towards changing the kind of person you are.

The final participant believes one's personality traits are stable and cannot change. One can improve on negative things about your personality with management, but basic things about one's personality stay the same.

The findings in Question 4 are congruent with the findings in questions 2 and 3. However, this time only three of the participants believed that one cannot change but rather adapt and grow, again giving questionable results about whether or not they have a fixed or a growth mindset. However, in this question, two participants changed their mindset. One participant revealed a growth mindset as they explained that a person can change with hard work and determination. The final participant finally revealed a fixed mindset by answering that one cannot change.

#### **Question 5:**

*Do you think that no matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially?*

All participants believe that a person can change. Two participants mentioned that if a person has had physical trauma to their vocal cords or have any physical limitations, such as a disability, that person cannot change that about them. However, if they are a perfectly normal person, they will be able to develop and grow. One participant mentioned that if a person had a mental illness such as depression, they would need professional help to change. Another participant believes that the brain is amazing and if a person practises being mindful, they will be able to change.

The data in Question 5 revealed that four of the participants who took part in this question had a growth mindset. However, when mentioning physical trauma to a vocal cord or trauma to the physicality of the student, it was questionable since this is quite a delicate matter. The vocal cords are instruments within the body. If the vocal cords have been damaged, it would change the sound of the voice as well as the capabilities of the voice, just like any other muscle in the body. However, there can be permanent damage to a vocal cord that would result in vocal limitations. With therapy, surgery and hard work, the vocal cords could possibly heal and return

to their natural state. This is different with instruments. In the case where an instrument breaks, it can immediately be replaced and the student can continue where they had left off. However, if a student's instrument is in perfect condition, but they have a permanent physical limitation such as a disability, the student might not be able to play that instrument.

### **Question 6:**

*Do you think you can always substantially change how much ability you have?*

Four out of the five participants believed that one can substantially change how much ability one has. One participant refers to their own teaching and tries to motivate student teachers by showing them *how far they have come* and *to believe in themselves*. One participant worked with a student to sing in key for two years and she eventually became one of the top students. Another participant believed that this is possible through practice. The more time and practice one puts in, the closer one will get to their desired potential level. If a student has a goal in mind and they work towards this goal and follow the guidance of the lecturer, they can reach a higher level. This participant did, however, also mention that it could be different for a student teacher who has a physical limitation (See Question 5's participant's responses). The other participant also felt that with good guidance from a lecturer and correct methodologies, the student teacher can increase their capabilities if they work hard, learn and practise new techniques.

The final participant did not believe a person can increase their abilities. The participant gives easier pieces to student teachers who are at a lower ability so that they do not feel discouraged and build self-confidence in this way. Student teachers who have certain disabilities cannot change that and therefore have limitations to playing instruments at an excellent performance level. The participant changes music pieces to fit the physical capabilities of the student teachers and the results have been happier students that can perform easier pieces well.

Question 6 revealed that four out of the five participants had a growth mindset; they believed that through hard work of the student and motivation from the teacher, the student teacher can change their ability. However, one of these participants went back to mention that this could be a different outcome if the student had a physical limitation, as mentioned in Question 5. The final participant revealed a fixed mindset and did not believe in challenging students with lower ability, as seen in section 2.2.1. They believed more in the confidence of the student than developing a master goal with the student, as seen in Table 2.1. They also mentioned the



physical limitation of the student teacher that can cause them to not change their musical abilities.

**Question 7:**

*Do you think you can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can't really be changed?*

Three participants agreed that one can do things differently. One participant explained if a person moved from one genre of music to another, they would need to change their outlook and natural instinct on how they should play to incorporate a new style of performing. An example would be playing classical music and then changing to play jazz. One participant also believes that a person can change, but they will stay within the belief system in which they were brought up. They will maintain a specific viewpoint because of their culture, social upbringing and family background. Another participant believes that if a person wants to do things differently, they must have the will to change. People do what makes them happy; if changing makes them happy, they will have the motivation to improve themselves.

One participant believes that there are some things that one cannot change but that one can influence by how one nurtures it. They explain that a person's musical experiences from an early age can determine if they can embrace change. There are many influences that can also have it go both ways. For example, some people grow up listening to good quality music and others not. Some people can be influenced, but others not. Some believe that they have the capabilities to manipulate things to be able to change.

The final participant found the question to be very challenging to answer. The participant mentioned that there are people who simply cannot sing, even though they are provided with ample training. The participant also mentioned that one can have the best singing lecturer, but if they were not given the talent by God, then they should rather play an instrument. The participant used an example of choir students who had high ability that were given solo parts, and students with a lower ability singing together in a group. The participant finally mentioned that when a person is born with a singing ability, they can improve on it, but if they were not born with that ability, they will not be able to sing well.

The data collected revealed that three of the participants had a growth mindset and believed one can change the style of music they play or change within the bounds of one's religion and

the will and motivation to want to change. The fourth participant did, however, reveal a growth and fixed mindset as they mentioned that some can change and others cannot, depending on their life experiences. He also mentioned, and congruent to questions 2 and 3, that one cannot grow your ability but rather manipulate it. The final participant revealed a fixed mindset when they referred to singing students in particular. This can be referred to the capabilities of the vocal cords, mentioned in Question 6. However, the participant did not mention any damage done to the vocal cords but rather that *they were not given the ability by God*, as mentioned in sections 1.7 and 2.4.1.

### **Question 8:**

*Do you feel that you can always change the basic things about the kind of person you are?*

All participants responded with a *yes* to this question. One participant believes that with age and maturity, a person's life paradigm can change. This then influences the way you are, the way you teach and the way you connect with people. Another participant felt that growth in life played an important part and people change with growth. The participant referred to a young adult leaving the family home for the first time, mentioning that this young adult can be independent and live by their own set of rules because they are no longer living with their parents. Therefore, through independence and influence, a person can change.

One participant believes that bad attributes about one's personality can change and be unlearned if they work hard, while another participant believes a person must have self-motivation to change. Finally, the last participant believes that a student teacher with a high ability and one with a low ability should not be in the same class. The student teacher with low ability can work on their skills and catch up to improve in the long run.

Four out of the five participants revealed a growth mindset in Question 8. They believed that one can change the basic things about the kind of person one is. However, one participant revealed that low ability and high ability students should be separated so that the lower ability students could catch up to where the higher ability students are. This refers to the event that happened in Carol Dweck's childhood and how this event inspired the implicit theory to be developed, as discussed in section 1.7. These are traits of a fixed mindset, and the participant does not believe in challenging students with low ability, as seen in Figure 1.1.

In the mindset interview, the data revealed mixed results on why the participants instilled either a fixed or growth mindset in their students. During the interview, a participant would reveal a growth mindset, but later when the question was asked in a different way, they would reveal a fixed mindset. The data also revealed that a participant could have a fixed mindset in their responses but later reveal a growth mindset.

#### 4.2.2.2 *Feedback interview*

The data of the semi-structured feedback interview are analysed and discussed next, question by question.

##### **Question 1:**

*How do you give feedback to a student in a one-on-one lesson when the student has shown mastery performance/high ability after playing a musical piece?*

Four out of the five participants would give specific feedback to their student teachers on their performances. One participant explained that it can sometimes be challenging to give feedback to a student when they have shown mastery performance, but that they would commend them for their hard work in a continuous process. This participant would then use vocabulary such as *well done* and tell them they are *a good student*. The participant will then show specific examples of their good work. Two more participants would also mention that they could see they had practised and then discuss the specific method the student used, such as technicalities and interpretation, to perform successfully.

The final two participants would give feedback such as *well done*, with only one participant giving specific detail about the success of the peer students and how they are developing. The participant who gave specific feedback would let the student know that if this was something they struggled with in the past, they would let them know how they have progressed, remind them of where they had started, and encourage them to keep going. The participant would also give specific feedback on effort and time as well as technique.

In Question 1 of the feedback interview, it was revealed that three out of the five participants instilled a growth mindset in their students through feedback. These participants praised the process and not the outcome (section 2.4.1). The final two participants revealed fixed mindset

feedback given to their students as students were praised for a successful performance, as discussed in section 1.7.

**Question 2:**

*How do you give feedback to a student in a one-on-one lesson when the student has shown low mastery performance/low ability after playing a musical piece?*

All participants would give feedback after low mastery performance while one participant would *ignore* mistakes. This participant feels that it depends on the student's level. If a student is a beginner, they would not mention any mistakes made during the performance. The participant feels that the *musical experience* of the beginner student teacher is more important than pointing out two wrong notes. If a student teacher makes mistakes in their music right before an examination, the participant will not mention anything to the student.

Participant 1 of the four participants who gave specific feedback would talk to the student about things they need to go work on, with specific reference to certain aspects in the musical piece. If the student returns to the next lesson and finds the new learning parts difficult, the participant would investigate to try and find out if the student did not work enough or if it is really challenging. The feedback from the previous lesson would then be repeated. The participant would *get disappointed* if the student did not put in the time and effort to work on it but would give them more time to practise when it is too challenging. Participant 2 would also *investigate and try to understand* why the student did not perform with mastery. The reasons include *demotivation, too little time to practise, maybe they do not like the piece and do not want to practise*, and then they will address the problem. If the piece proves to be challenging for the student, the participant would spend more time on assisting with helping the student teacher to practise section by section. If the student was bored by the piece, the participant would change it or try to motivate them. The participant believes a student should be motivated and uses positive encouragement to fix the problem.

Participant 3 believes that it could have been that their student was *not disciplined* and focused enough on becoming better, while not practising the technique that should have been included from the previous lesson. The participant would then give feedback from the previous lesson and add some practical demonstrations. The final participant felt that it could have either been that the student teacher *did not practise* or that the student found *specific things* challenging. The participant would try and use *different teaching methods* to help the student during the

lesson. The participant would then give the student some time to go and practise on their own. The student would then come back to the lesson to see if it had worked.

In Question 2 of the feedback interview, data revealed that four out of the five participants had a growth mindset. These participants prefer to look at the effort brought forward; should the student have not given much effort, they would encourage them to work harder and be more focused and dedicated (section 2.2). If the student had put in a lot of effort to play the musical piece but was not yet successful, the participants would change their teaching practices to better fit the need of the student but also motivate them to continue persevering if the musical piece was challenging, as in section 1.7. The final participant revealed that they gave fixed mindset feedback to their students. This type of feedback praises the ability of the student, as seen in section 1.7 and the participant encourages the student teacher to develop more performance-based goals rather than develop mastery goals.

In the feedback interview, the data revealed that mostly four out of the five participants instilled a growth mindset in their student teacher feedback, and one participant mostly instilled a fixed mindset.

#### **4.2.3. Feedback Documents**

Out of the five case studies, only participant 1 and participant 2 revealed their feedback documents from their students.

In the feedback documents, both participant 1 and participant 2 used vocabulary such as *lovely*, *beautiful* and *captivating*, while only one participant described the reason for this type of praise. When praise is given to a student without explaining the process, this student could develop a fixed mindset about their ability. This causes students to develop performance goals instead of mastery goals, and they do not link their feedback to the effort they have put forth but rather to their ability. Therefore, the student could avoid challenges in the future, instilling a fixed mindset in them. The other participant gave more specific feedback and praised the students for their process. This would ultimately affect the student to create more mastery goals in the future and view challenges as learning curves. They will put in more effort, instilling a growth mindset through their feedback.

### 4.3. Findings: Theme Discussions

In the analysis of the data, pattern matching was used to analyse the patterns from the data to see whether or not they matched. Pattern matching is an integral part in theory-testing when case studies are used in qualitative research (Hak & Dul, 2020:1). Cross-case analysis was also used as it is a common data analysis method used in qualitative data. This method compares any similarities or differences between the different data collected within each case study (Cruzes et al., 2015:1637). In the sections that follow, all case studies in the mindset interview, feedback interview and document analysis are discussed as individual case studies and then as a whole using word repetitions, KWIC and comparing and contrasting technique to find themes.

#### 4.3.1. Theme 1: Musical Praise

As discussed in section 2.4, feedback informs a student of their progress towards a certain goal. However, student praise sometimes arises before feedback. In all five of the case studies, the student teachers praised first and then only some case studies followed their praise with feedback. Mueller and Dweck (1998:33) (section 1.7) explain that when a student receives praise such as *well done* or *that was really good*, the student can find the praise of the teacher to be empty, causing the student to feel pressure to have a successful performance every single time. This was the case with one participant that felt the confidence of the student was more important. This participant commends only their performance, regardless of whether the student teacher performed successfully. This could cause an early onset of a fixed mindset in the student, thus creating performance goals from the start of their musical learning. One of the participants gave praise to their students but follows the praise by describing the process followed and the progress made. Although the participant followed their praise with feedback, the participant should be mindful of how they praise the student teachers, since praise could distract the student teacher from their own self-motivation. They then try to please their teacher in order to get a reaction to a specific outcome. This could also cause the student to not pay attention to the feedback that follows the praise, as explained by Johnston (2012:37–38) in section 1.7.

The three remaining participants also praised their students but not on the performance outcome but rather on the effort that went into the performance outcome. This causes the high-ability student teacher to connect their outcome of their performance to the process and effort they

made towards their goal. When the case studies gave feedback to the student teachers that showcased low ability, the participants revealed a growth mindset. Their approach to these low-ability students was to investigate whether the student teacher did not give enough effort towards their goal or whether the student teacher needed more time to master the musical piece due to its complexity. Alternatively, the participant had to try a different teaching strategy to better assist the students' needs to achieve their goal.

It was evident that all five participants had a different approach to how they praised their student teachers for their musical ability. How the participants instil the fixed and growth mindset in their praise can be known only by how they follow their praise with feedback. When praise is not linked to feedback, the participant instils a fixed mindset in their student teacher. Conversely, when the participant follows their praise with feedback, it instils a growth mindset in the student. However, it is questionable how the student will view the praise when it is followed by the lecturers' feedback.

#### **4.3.2. Theme 2: Musical Repertoire**

Selecting a musical repertoire for one's music student is an important part of their learning process in music. This repertoire is chosen for the student so that they can showcase how they have grown in their skill set, as well as their musical ability to perform the repertoire. When music lecturers select the specific repertoire for their student teacher, they take many things into consideration:

- The level of difficulty achievable by the students; and
- The level of difficulty required to showcase in the examinations and performances.

In the data collected from the mindset interview, feedback interview and the feedback documents, three selection criteria came forth regarding how the participants chose a musical repertoire for their students. These are discussed next.

##### *4.3.2.1 Physical ability of the music students*

When music lecturers assign a repertoire to their students, there are physical attributes that must be kept in mind. If a student plays the violin and the student has a physical limitation, the participant has to take this into consideration when selecting the pieces. Some physical limitations that can affect the repertoire chosen for students are:

- Cerebral palsy – This limitation affects the movement of the student teacher and the muscles are weak. There are different types and degrees of extremity to this disorder and each case is personal and unique (CDC, 2020).
- Amputation – This condition is when a student has lost one of their limbs due to physical trauma or illness and disease. However, some babies are born without specific limbs (Anon, 2020).
- Down’s syndrome – Students who have Down’s syndrome have different degrees of disabilities. They can have a weak muscle tone, poor hearing and vision and a poor working memory (Healthline, 2015).

These are the most common limitations found in the music class. When a participant has to select a repertoire for students with these limitations, they need to take into account how the students' limitations will affect their performance of the musical piece. This is the same for students who have chosen singing as their instrument. If the student has undergone surgery in their vocal cord or has laryngeal cancer, it could change the quality of the voice by giving it a more hoarse sound and by limiting the vocal range of the singer (*American Cancer Society*, 2017). Therefore, three of the case studies revealed that it is questionable when students with limitations are not given challenging pieces in order to preserve their confidence or when they do not have a successful performance outcome of the piece what mindset the participant is instilling. The implicit theory goals in Table 2.1 state that performance goals are fixed mindset traits. However, this is questionable when students have physical limitations.

#### 4.3.2.2 *Musical effort of music students*

All five participants revealed that without effort and discipline, the student teachers will not reach a successful performance or succeed in mastering the challenging piece. In the musical class, music teachers teach different musical skills to their students. These musical skills taught by teachers are very important to the musical progress of the student. One such example is musical scales. Scales are musical notes following each other in order to form a certain pitch. These scales are used by instrumentalists to exercise their fingers and to understand chord sequence. For singers, this practises the vocal transition from one note to the other as well as develops musical pitch. These skills will be taught in class and then asked to be practised at home. In order to master these skills and successfully play them within challenging musical pieces, the student needs to put in a lot of effort outside the musical classroom to master the



skill. The teacher would then give a piece of music that contains this skill for the student to master the piece.

Musical students, on average, are expected to practise their musical pieces as well as the skills, such as the scales that they were taught in the classroom, for at least one hour every day. Lecturers expect students to focus on the skills they have learned in class for at least 20 minutes and on the musical piece for 40 minutes of their one-hour practice time. These are, however, not set times; the student can practise more or fewer hours a day. When the student is less disciplined and does not put in the expected practice hours, they will not reach their desired goal due to the lack of effort. When a student puts in the expected one-hour practice time a day and focuses on the skills and technical work that needs attention, they will reach the expected outcome to play the musical piece at the desired time of completion. However, students could reach their desired goal quicker and move on to a more challenging repertoire, thus showcasing a growth mindset. This is done when a student puts in more time to practise every day and focuses not only on the skills taught in class and mastering them in their musical piece but also on pushing themselves to learn new skills outside the classroom.

#### 4.3.2.3 *Music teachers*

The data revealed that the participants feel that a music teacher has a big impact on how their student's ability can grow.

Music teaching qualifications revealed in section 2.5.2 that there are two major higher education institutions in Pretoria where the MusEd students can receive their musical qualifications. Both these institutions look at the theoretical and practical performance of the students who study there. Tshwane University of Technology focuses more on the practical performance building of the student, whereas the University of Pretoria aims to develop both the practical performance and the music education practices. The various programmes of the institutions could play a major part in music teachers' approach to teaching their student teachers. Music teachers who have more experience, who qualified in a more practical programme, could possibly find different teaching practices and methods of teaching challenging. On the other hand, the teacher who qualified in a more all-round programme would be able to find different teaching methods to assist in developing different methods for the student to acquire the musical skill.

Music teaching experience also plays a vital role. Compared to a music teacher who has just started teaching, a music teacher who has years of experience can assist in developing teaching methods that would improve the student teacher's ability. Music teachers with less experience have not had the chance to work with students with multiple abilities. Therefore, they would not yet know how to differentiate their teaching methods to assist in developing the ability of the student.

Each MusEd teacher could bring a different set of skills and experiences to the classroom when working with students. The data revealed that the participants felt that music teachers with more qualifications and experience can increase the ability of the music student.

### **4.3.3. Theme 3: Teacher Motivation**

When students set out to reach their musical goals, they would set either a performance goal or a mastery goal, as depicted in Table 2.1. Teachers would encourage their students to reach these goals. When music students show low-ability performance in their music work, the instinct of the participant is to investigate why the student teacher had shown this low performance. The participant would then give feedback to their student teacher in order for them to know on what they need to work harder. Four out of the five participants chose to motivate their student teachers by giving them feedback that gave specific detail regarding what they need to work harder on. However, one participant chose to ignore low ability performance. When the participants gave feedback to their student teachers, their feedback contained encouragement, and therefore motivated the student to work harder by developing mastery goals. When the musical student feels motivated, they work harder. According to Brookhart (2017: 1–2), as mentioned in section 1.7, feedback given to a student by their teacher is a very valuable tool used to address the students' motivational abilities; therefore, the student feels motivated to achieve their musical goal.

When the student teachers showed high-ability performance, the participants would commend them on their performance. However, as explained by Dweck (1998:33) in section 1.7, there is a misbelief amongst teachers that when the ability of the student is praised, it builds confidence and motivation in the student to continue succeeding. This, however, creates the fixed mindset in the student that their ability is what makes them achieve. They could possibly avoid challenges in the future, thus lacking the motivation to work through those challenges.

>Teachers motivate students when they commend their hard work and give them specific feedback on what they have done to be successful or what to do in order to be successful next time. This teacher motivation reveals a growth mindset in the participant and encourages the student teacher to have a growth mindset.

#### 4.4. Summary of Key Findings

The research produced multiple results which relate to how and why the MusEd lecturers instil a fixed or growth mindset in their student feedback. All participants have both a fixed and a growth mindset, and they have instilled both of these mindsets in their student feedback. The mindset interview revealed why MusEd lecturers instil either a fixed or growth mindset in their student teachers. The mindset interview revealed the mindset of the MusEd lecturer and how they perceive their student teacher’s ability. The following results were found (Table 4.1)

**Table 4.1:** Mindset Results

participant	Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
Participant 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Believes that one’s singing ability is static; if you cannot sing, you cannot sing.</li> <li>● Students with a high or low ability should be divided.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Believes one can improve and enhance one’s musical ability.</li> <li>● The lecturer can enhance the ability of the student if they believe in them and motivate them to work harder.</li> </ul>
Participant 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Intonation is something that cannot be taught to a student.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Believes ability can increase through more theoretical and practical practice.</li> <li>● Ability of a student increases when challenged.</li> <li>● A person can change when they manage their life and grow in their maturity.</li> </ul>
Participant 3	The participant did not display a fixed mindset.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Music ability can be perfected over time.</li> <li>● High-ability students should also bring forth</li> </ul>

		<p>effort.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Challenging repertoire increases the ability of the student.</li> <li>● Effort results in achieving mastery level.</li> </ul>
Participant 4	The participant did not display a fixed mindset.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ability can change through hard work.</li> <li>● With effort a student can play a more challenging repertoire.</li> <li>● Believes one can change their mindset by changing their habits and environment.</li> </ul>
Participant 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Does not challenge students who have limitations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Practice and hard work can increase your ability.</li> <li>● Believes a student can change their outlook on their work and start working harder.</li> </ul>

The results found that three out of the five case studies moved between a fixed and a growth mindset in their mindset interview. Two of the five participants revealed only a growth mindset.

The feedback interview and feedback documents revealed how MusEd lecturers instilled a fixed or growth mindset in their student teachers. The following results were found.

**Table 4.2:** Feedback results

participant	Fixed mindset	Growth mindset
Participant 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Uses feedback such as <i>I am happy or you are a good student.</i></li> <li>● Feedback documents do not contain detail as to why the student was successful.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In the verbal feedback, they are commended on their achievement and give specific examples of why.</li> <li>● Ask students to give more effort towards achieving their goal.</li> </ul>
Participant 2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal and document feedback commend the students for their effort when mastery performance is</li> </ul>

		<p>shown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Low-ability performance is due to lack of effort and practice.</li> </ul>
Participant 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal feedback contains vocabulary such as <i>well done</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Makes specific reference to skills used in order to have been successful.</li> <li>● Time and effort of student teacher is praised.</li> </ul>
Participant 4	The participant did not reveal fixed mindset feedback to their student teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have a conversation with the student on why they were successful with specific details.</li> <li>● Low-ability performance is due to lack of effort or teacher demonstration.</li> </ul>
Participant 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal feedback contains <i>well done</i> or <i>that was excellent</i> to high-performing students.</li> <li>● No verbal feedback is given as to why the high-performing student was successful.</li> <li>● Ignores mistakes of low-ability students.</li> </ul>	The participant did not demonstrate growth mindset feedback to their student teachers.

As found in the mindset interview, three out of the five participants move between a fixed and a growth mindset. However, this time the results differed from the case studies as stipulated in Table 4.1.

The results from the mindset interview, feedback interview and the feedback documents revealed that only one participant mostly had a growth mindset. All four other participants revealed that they move between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset.

#### 4.4.1. Significance of the Study

The research was based on analysing the power of mindsets of the MusEd lecturers. The participants were selected based on their diverse backgrounds, their different age groups, ethnicity and gender and their current or previous involvement in lecturing at the Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education. Each participant was unique in their own way

and different from all the other participants. The significance of this study revealed that four out of the five participants mostly had both a fixed and growth mindset. One participant was significant and revealed only a growth mindset but had a questionable and unclear answer in one of the mindset questions. However, it can be suggested that the MusEd lecturers move between a fixed and a growth mindset with the exception of significant cases. Therefore, the student teachers will display either a fixed mindset and a growth mindset towards developing their performance or mastery goals, and their approach to their learning. It has become apparent that the MusEd lecturers need to find a common ground as to how they give feedback to their students in order to instil a growth mindset. However, it could be challenging to find this common ground in how they give feedback, since the fixed mindset of a particular MusEd lecturer could be more dominant than their growth mindset.

#### **4.4.2. Limitations and Recommendations**

After much time reflecting on the literature reviewed, the research process and the findings, a few limitations of the study became apparent. Firstly, all participants had taught at the Department of Humanities Education's music department. However, some had moved on to different positions or had already retired and had to recall feedback given to student teachers quite some time ago. Secondly, not all participants were experts in all fields of teaching musical instruments. Their fields of practice were either within piano, violin, keyboard, singing or recorder. Although the fundamental part of music teaching is the same for each instrument, each instrument and their technicality should be approached differently.

I would recommend that during a follow-up study, participants should all teach the same instrument and have extensive experience in teaching that instrument, since each instrument is unique in their own way. I would also recommend that the mindset of the student teachers should be analysed and compared to the data found from the MusEd lecturers to investigate if there are contrasts or comparisons.

#### **4.4.3. Further Research**

As mentioned in section 4.4.3, there are technical differences between different instruments and therefore the mindset of the MusEd lecturer within their respective instrument expertise should be compared. I would suggest that further research also be done on the various mindsets of the students. This could then not only reveal how the lecturers have moulded the mindset of

student teachers but also show how the different backgrounds of the students agree to the mindset of the MusEd lecturers.

#### **4.4.4. Conclusion**

MusEd lecturers hold and give both a fixed and a growth mindset. However, one mindset might be more dominant than the other. The music lecturer's mindset constantly moves and changes between the two. Carol Dweck has published decades of research exploring the implicit theories of how students view their abilities. The fixed mindset is when students believe their abilities are static and cannot change very much. The growth mindset is when students believe their abilities can grow when they work hard and challenge themselves. In the end, it is beneficial for both the student teacher and the MusEd lecturer to have a more dominant growth mindset as this mindset sees challenges as learning opportunities and sets mastery goals. Though this study looked at only the musical ability and why and how it is entitled in student teachers, the growth mindset should be valued in all aspects of life and how we perceive our ability to succeed in life.

## ADDENDUMS

### Addendum 1: Carol Dweck's original mindset questionnaire

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you cannot change very much.				
2. You learn new things, but you cannot change how intelligent you are.				
1. No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.				
2. You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.				
3. You are a certain kind of person and there is not much that can be done to really change that.				
4. No matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially.				
5. You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are cannot really be changed.				
6. You can always change basic things about the kind of person you are.				



**Addendum 2: Semi-structured questionnaire used in this research, inspired by Carol Dweck's mindset questionnaire**

**SEMI-STRUCTURED MINDSET QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Do you think your music ability is something very basic about you and cannot change very much? Why?
2. Can you play more challenging repertoire, yet not change your amount of ability? Why do you say that?
3. If you were born with a certain amount of ability, do you think you can change it quite a bit? How and why?
4. If you are a certain kind of person, do you think there is not much one can do to change that? Why?
5. Do you think that no matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially? Why?
6. Do you think you can always substantially change how much ability you have? Why?
7. Do you think you can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are cannot really be changed? Why do you say that?
8. Do you feel that you can always change basic things about the kind of person you are?

### **Addendum 3: Feedback Questionnaire**

#### **SEMI-STRUCTURED FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. How do you give feedback to a student in a one-on-one lesson when the student has shown mastery performance/high ability after playing a musical piece?
2. How do you give feedback to a student in a one-on-one lesson when the student has shown low mastery performance/low ability after playing a musical piece?

## **Addendum 4**

### **RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

The title of my study is: **An analysis into the power of mindsets of music education lecturers.**

Carol Dweck has over the past few decades conducted research on ability mindsets. Students with a fixed mindset believe they are born with a certain set of talents and skills and this cannot change. When these students are faced with challenging tasks, they would rather miss the learning opportunity because they do not want to show any weaknesses or shortcomings in any learning area. Students with a growth mindset believe that through hard work and persistence they can further develop their abilities. When these students are faced with a challenging task, they believe that challenging tasks develop and grow their abilities (Dweck 2010:16).

In this research study, I will focus on analysing what mindset feedback is given to Music Education students. According to O'Rourke, Haimovitz, Ballwebber, Dweck and Popovic (2014:3339), "praising a student's inherent ability has been shown to promote the fixed mindset or the belief that intelligence is unchangeable while praising a student's strategies or effort promotes the growth mindset or the belief that intelligence is malleable."

For the purpose of this study, I kindly request permission to conduct an interview with you, which will take place at a place, date and time which will be convenient for you. I also want to request access to student feedback documents given to students over the past year.

I have received permission from the Ethics Department of the University of Pretoria to conduct this study, and it will, therefore, be guided by the following principles:

- Voluntary participation, which also means you can withdraw your participation at any stage;
- You will be fully informed at all times about the research process;
- You will not be put at risk or be subjected to the harm of any kind.
- All information will be treated confidentially and anonymously.

Should you be willing to participate, please complete the permission slip. Please also be aware that you have the freedom to discontinue your participation during the research, so please carefully consider your decision as this could be of an inconvenience to my research.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

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Andrea Claudia Pike

Mobile 076 290 6035

Email: [clauds@live.co.za](mailto:clauds@live.co.za)

### **PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH**

Your participation in this research is voluntary and confidential. If you have any questions about the research, you are welcome to contact me,

Andrea Claudia Pike, at 076 290 6035.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, lecturer in Music Education at the University of Pretoria, hereby agree to participate in the study, titled: A critical analyses into the fixed and growth mindset feedback from the Music Education lecturers by Andrea Claudia Pike.

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