CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools

Melbourne — 15 April 2013

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Associate Professor N. Jeanneret, Assistant Dean, Research Training, and Head of Music Education, Melbourne Graduate School of Education.
The CHAIR — I welcome you, Neryl, to the committee. I need to point out a couple of things. Firstly, the microphones are for the purpose of recording the evidence by Hansard. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript and fix any typographical errors that there may be. Also, the evidence that you give is covered by parliamentary privilege, which is the same privilege afforded to members of Parliament; it only applies to the hearing proper and not anything said outside of the committee. We might throw over to you for some opening remarks, and then we will get into a few questions that we have.

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — Actually, when I spoke to Anita I said I did not particularly want to make any opening remarks, apart from thanking you for the invitation, and I have some documents to table that I will refer to.

The CHAIR — Fantastic. Then I will kick it off. We have heard many key stakeholders suggest that music should be taught by specialist music teachers in primary school rather than classroom teachers. Who do you think should be responsible for teaching music in schools, and why?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — I think I need a definition of what is meant by a specialist primary music teacher.

The CHAIR — Yes, absolutely. Somebody who is trained as a specialist teacher in music, as opposed to a classroom teacher who teaches a whole range of things, music being one of them.

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — I think it should be both. I am a strong advocate of the classroom teacher teaching music, and I think they are capable. I have been teaching pre-service teachers for a bazillion years. But the other thing is that as a result of that report — with which you are familiar, I believe, which is great — I have found that whether you had a music degree or not did not have that big an impact on your effectiveness in the classroom. However, having said that, these people had a background in music of some description. They may have played an instrument and they could read music and so forth, but the actual fact of having a degree or not did not seem to make that much difference.

Ms TIERNEY — We have received a number of submissions that have argued that pre-service teacher training courses do not equip primary classroom teachers with the skills and confidence to deliver quality music education. What is your view about the readiness of graduate teachers to deliver music education in primary schools?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — It depends largely on what they bring to the course in the first place. If they bring musical knowledge — it might be informal or formal — they are going to be more engaged in teaching music in the classroom. If they come to us with virtually nothing — at Melbourne we have 12 hours with them — that 12 hours is to build music skills and teaching skills, so it is pretty much an uphill job. Having said that, we do develop confidence. There are students who come in and say, ‘I’ll give it a go, I’ll try it’ and ‘I didn’t think that I could do this’, and there is that sort of thing. But when you have 12 hours to try to do not only basic music skills but also the pedagogy, it is a bit difficult.

The other thing I would say about the pre-service course is it depends where you position those subjects in the degree. If you can catch them the semester before they actually go out teaching, you might have a greater impact in the classroom because they are still carrying that newly acquired confidence. If it is, for example, in the first year of their degree or early in the piece, some of that impact — a lot of it actually — is dissipated by the time they get out there.

Ms TIERNEY — That is an interesting point. In your submission you advocate for an intensive graduate certificate in primary music education. First of all, what are the benefits; and how do you think it would be promoted to attract teachers to undertake it?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — I have seen that kind of upskilling of people work in the past in New South Wales. In the 1980s there was a 10-week intensive for primary generalist teachers. They were heavily subsidised, of course; they were totally subsidised by the department of education to do that. Their job was to go back into schools and act as a resource for a whole cluster of schools — not just one school...
but a whole cluster of schools — and to assist in upskilling other teachers and provide a local reference point.

They were people who had an interest in music education in the first place. That is one way of thinking about that kind of resourcing — bringing in people who might already be doing something and giving them greater skills and greater breadth. I do not know how successful you would be in encouraging complete novices to come in without some kind of support from the department or some government support in what is in it for them, basically. I have thought about it a lot, and I see it as potentially intensive with online components and all that. It is not about coming in for a once-a-week class or what have you; I think there are lots of ways you could do it. That would then tap into the regional problems where there is not so much support.

The CHAIR — Can I pick up on Gayle’s question as well. You mentioned that there are currently 12 hours at Melbourne. Is that more or less the same? How long has it been 12 hours? Did you have more at some point?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — We did have more when we had a bachelor of education. Since Melbourne has gone to the Melbourne model and education is now a postgraduate degree we have two years, and there is a lot to cram into those two years. Prior to that with the bachelor of education, where you had four years, they did a semester in each of the Arts; they then did a semester in integrating the Arts; and then they could choose to do electives on top of that. Over a four-year period somebody could become quite specialised, particularly if they had a musical background or a musical interest.

The CHAIR — So effectively that could cause some further diminishing of activity in schools when the hours of teaching have been reduced.

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — Definitely. Prior to this appointment I was at Newcastle University, and that has a four-year degree. I look at the amount of music that is potentially in that four-year degree; it looks like a specialist degree by comparison these days. But that is one of the rare configurations that four-year undergraduates seem to go more and more towards.

Ms MILLER — In terms of the music in the curriculum, how much time do you think schools should allocate to music on a weekly basis?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — Ideally something should happen every day.

Ms MILLER — Every day.

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — Yes.

Ms MILLER — And how much every day?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — We often think about allocating a lesson to music in the week — two hours or what have you. I think if we thought a bit more creatively about how music could be integrated into the curriculum, you could see that five minutes could be a lesson break between one discipline area and moving to another. There could be some singing or what have you. There are a whole range of activities that can take up little more time, which could be a music lesson. I think one hour a week is the absolute minimum.

Ms MILLER — There is a second part to the question. What is the optimum balance in the curriculum between music and other forms of the Arts — visual arts, drama or dance?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — I think all the Arts should be represented. For many children their only access to various art forms is via school; that is the only opportunity they get, so they should have that access. I think it is difficult for some schools. They are not equipped to offer all the Arts.

Ms MILLER — If you could put a number to it, ideally at what age do you think they should introduce music to children in the education system?
Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — Prep, day one.

Ms MILLER — Day one?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — Or in early childhood centres.

Ms MILLER — Does that happen though?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — Not necessarily. It is pretty ad hoc across the state. Even so in the early childhood centres music has diminished in the preparation of teachers as well. Twenty years ago it was a feature; you could not imagine early childhood being without the Arts, but increasingly we are seeing centres that have no access to it.

Ms MILLER — Is that because the teachers coming through either are not informed, educated or interested compared to those who trained as a teacher in previous years?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — I think again it is a reduction in the time you have allocated. We are offering a two-year postgraduate degree, and the classic crowded curriculum applies to universities as much as it does elsewhere. I need to add to that. Of course, being in that situation I advocate strongly and I put forward cases like, ‘Surely they are literate and numerate when they come into university; they are not necessarily musical’. I get howled down on that one actually. There simply does not seem to be the room to put that in there. However, if it was legislated in some way; if it was part of teacher registration to have a component in the Arts or more specific requirements, then universities would respond to that. At the moment if you look at VIT registration, I think the Arts is mentioned maybe three times, and twice is in relation to a bachelor of arts.

Mr CRISP — In relation to teacher PD, in your submission you commented on the lack of ongoing professional training opportunities for teachers in music. Where are the gaps and what strategies can you suggest to improve the provision?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — What is being provided is generally very good, but again I think it is a bit ad hoc, and I do not think there is a sense of what happens across a whole year. If we are talking largely about primary teachers, they might be interested in doing something to upskill in music, but they would be put off by an aMuse conference because they think it is for specialists. I think there could be a greater collection and promotion of what is already available.

From my investigations not enough is available regionally. It is about a three hour or four hour trip to Melbourne to get something, and what is offered is not differentiated enough. Those teachers who are designated specialists in the primary schools we looked at said they felt isolated and that they wanted something that was about where they are at — more ideas and that sort of thing. They are quite different from somebody who might be at a more novice level.

The CHAIR — I want to touch on your review.

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — Yes.

The CHAIR — The review you did for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development obviously covered a number of things regarding primary school music education. Could you give us some of the key lessons for policy-makers arising from the review?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — Yes. I think some of the highlights for me were that in the schools we investigated there seemed to be no noticeable difference between those with a music degree and those without, which I mentioned before. What was most outstanding was that those people — who had been teaching in a school and who were quite experienced teachers in the primary area and had an interest or background music and were then invited to take on a specialist role — were really effective because they knew the school, they knew the kids and they knew the primary classroom. Whereas I have seen some of our graduates go out from our secondary degree into primary schools and they are floundering in some
ways. They are secondary and they are not used to the primary scene, and they are coming to grips with getting their own teaching skills together.

These experienced classroom teachers taking on the role of specialist seemed to work very well in a lot of cases. I think the importance of the support of the school and leadership, which came out of the national review, keeps coming up all the time. The specialists in those schools, and you know I mean by that somebody who had the title of music teacher — —

The CHAIR — Yes.

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — The support of the principal and the leadership of the school was critical, because most of them took on P–12, and that is a pretty heavy workload across a week — to be catering to that difference. They also endeavoured to assist classroom teachers in taking something back into their classrooms or vice versa. They would look to have a support for what they were doing in the classroom from a musical point of view; that also was a heavy load. Some of them were saying, ‘Even though I am incredibly capable and experienced, I think I might go back into the classroom as a generalist for a while, because the workload is doing my head in’. As a result of that I thought, ‘Could you think about rotation? Could you think about having two people take on, say, P–3 and then 4–6, or ways of doing that?’ So that isolation of those teachers and burnout is an issue, but it has been an issue in music education since I can remember — taking on this extracurricular load on top of the classroom load.

I guess the other thing that came out of it was the lack of differentiated PD, so the difference between the novices and the more experienced. But the other thing that came through was the lack of special ed support. One of the schools we went to look at was a special school and the teacher there was saying, ‘There was virtually nothing out there for me’. So I think that it might assist the isolation and the burnout if there was a bit more support. But the other thing I had tabled was a chapter out of a book the arts people did at Melbourne, and that concerned a variety of partnerships that schools can develop and tap into. It is not just about partnerships with existing NGOs or what have you; it is about partnerships you can develop in the community. I think that kind of came out of that review too that some people actually are unaware of the potential or the possibilities in the community that would help them.

The CHAIR — Did you look at some of those partnerships and some of the programs that are done by external providers coming into schools where there is absolutely nothing, like Musical Futures or Musica Viva? What is your feeling about those sorts of things?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — You have to look at what the program is. Musica Viva I have done a lot of research with and worked with for years, and we did a project with a metropolitan school where we took it in and gave it to them for free. The teachers were incredibly positive and it was great, la-di-da. I said to the principal at the end: ‘Would you do it again next year and pay for it?’, and he said, ‘No’. So I went, ‘Right’.

The CHAIR — Why not? Did you ask why?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — The cost.

The CHAIR — The cost, yes.

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — It came down to the cost. I am always concerned about sustainability of those partnerships. That is a key issue all the time. I have looked at the department’s partnerships program with Arts Victoria and so forth. It can have a huge impact on students and teachers in those schools. That is not to say it should not happen, but it still has a tendency to be a parachute. They go in and then they leave. I admire The Song Room; it endeavours to be in there at least six months so that the program becomes established enough that it might stay there. But I think they are not the answer to music education as an ongoing and sustainable thing. They are certainly important, and I put all sorts of details in that chapter about what the potential is and so forth. Is that enough?

The CHAIR — Yes; thank you.
Ms MILLER — Your submission states that some high schools are placing too much emphasis on instrumental music at the expense of classroom music. Could you elaborate on your concerns and outline what you would like to see high schools offer in terms of music programs?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — What I have seen is that sometimes there is a greater emphasis on the school bands and those external groups and so forth and perhaps the classroom is neglected. I am a great advocate for social justice and I think music education is for everybody. As I said before, it might be that child’s only access. I guess I go back to: what about if your entire musical education was playing third clarinet and that was all? I think we need to give children a broad experience. I want to see the integration of composition and listening and musicology, because we are not all going to be performers. We should be given the opportunity, and you can do that, but there should be a greater focus on integration in the classroom of all those things. It is only in isolated areas, but sometimes I think there is an overemphasis on the outcomes of the band and those things.

If we go back to Musical Futures, which you brought up before, I do not so much see that as an external provider even though it ostensibly is, because of the way they provide intensive professional development for teachers. I think that two-day immersion in music making, for some of those teachers I have seen, just has a huge impact. They say, ‘That’s right, I remember. I am a musician as well as a teacher’. They are taking that back into the classroom. I have seen in some of the schools that we have looked at that it has been sustainable, and they are taking that enthusiasm back to those children. In a sense, you have already established your sustainability by empowering the teachers again in those situations, and it is designed for 7 and 8; it is for everybody.

The CHAIR — You have mentioned the Musical Futures program as being something that is not external but something that the powers will provide through PD to teachers. They are the sorts of things that you would suggest we should be looking at. If there was anything, would you be recommending that that is something we could be working on?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — I do, because I did a research project for them and it was fascinating, the impact. We were looking at disadvantaged schools, low SES schools, the 10 in the pilot study. The impact it had in some of those schools was extraordinary, and some of the students that I interviewed at Year 8 level — I was bowled over by the way in which they could articulate what they had been learning. So that is a further aspect that we are going to look at. They came away with musical skills and knowledge, but the level of engagement and the children’s empowerment in this was quite extraordinary, and it supports what the UK found, too. I see it as initially being for low SES schools, but having said that, I did speak to ADMIS, the independent schools music directors, at one point and talked about that research. We already have this music program sitting there that caters to all these kids; this is in fact a way in which you could tap into the ones we are not reaching. It is not an alternative pathway; it is just trying to spread that appeal right across the school.

Mr CRISP — Just a very quick one to finish, on instrumental music teacher training. You talk about accelerated training. I am interested as to how accelerated and if you could elaborate as to why there is a need for instrumental music teachers to be trained.

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — If instrumental music teachers are going to have VIT registration, the bottom line is that that assumes you have classroom music skills and you could end up in a classroom, and they should have those skills. That is basically what I was saying.

Mr CRISP — How long? We have received some evidence to suggest that people who are masters at their craft as instrumentalists are not going to go back to university and study for any great length of time to achieve that. They will walk away. What I am trying to work out is whether there is a balance. Have you done any work to suggest what skills they need and how long it is going to take to impart those skills to achieve that VIT recognition versus the inelasticity of the patience of these specialists?

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — Again, that is about trying to work it out with VIT, which has a very strict list about it. It says, ‘You must have done this’ — non-music but general education subjects. If you
add onto that a small amount of classroom-specific discipline stuff, it takes a while. I just have a problem with that. If you are going to have VIT registration, you need the basics. You need to learn about assessment and about pedagogy, social justice and those kinds of skills that we equip other general teachers with. If there was another category that was not about having full VIT registration but was something else that said that they are not going to be put into a classroom, necessarily — they ostensibly could be put in front of a VCE class — that might be a way to go and you could reduce the sort of training they might need to go into it.

The CHAIR — I think we have concluded our questions. Thank you very much for appearing before the committee today and for all the work you have done. We have a copy of your additional information. Good luck with the rest of the work that you are doing.

Assoc. Prof. JEANNERET — Thank you.

Witness withdrew.