

Submission to the
Inquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of
Music Education in Victorian Schools

The material in this submission is (for the most part) a summary of masters research by Jenni Heinrich titled: “The provision of classroom music programs to regional Victorian primary schools” (2012). Surveys were emailed to principals of all (847) state, Catholic and independent primary schools outside of the DEECD metropolitan regions. A link to a further survey was attached to be forwarded to the classroom music teacher in the event of the school employing one. In addition, data were gathered in relation to tertiary music education options available to undergraduate teachers in the state of Victoria.

Literature review

The literature reviewed examined the reasons why music education should be offered in primary schools. This exploration provided authoritative justification for music educators’ belief that music is of benefit to children and school programs. The review also examined the role of undergraduate teacher education and government policy and curriculum.

Music education for children: why provide it?

When examining the value of music in education, the literature revealed a number of reasons why the discipline should be taught at primary school level. Studies into community attitudes showed that the majority of public would like to see music and the arts occupy a more central role in school education (Australian Music Association, 2001; Costantoura, 2000; DEST, 2005). It was also argued that all children, regardless of where they live or what type of school they attend have equal rights to a quality music education (DEST, 2005; Global Access Partners, 2011).

Despite links often being made between the study of music and success in other subject areas, there were mixed findings in this area. Some suggested that this is likely (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Ilari, 2003; Scripp, 2003), while others remained more reserved in their conclusions (Forgeard, Winner, Norton, & Schlaug, 2008; Hetland, 2000). There was no conclusive evidence showing that the connection is direct rather than indirect, though current research is seeking to establish this (Forgeard et al., 2008). The literature did however, strongly support the links between the study of a musical instrument and the accelerated development of some parts of the brain (Gazzaniga, 2004; Geoghegan, 2004; Ho, Cheung, & Chan, 2003). Classroom music programs, it was found, are more likely to positively influence other areas of student well-being such as self-esteem, ability to work in a team, improved school attendance, increased confidence, ability to persist and decreased anger and stress (Bryce, 2004; Caldwell, Vaughan, & Harris, 2011; Davies-Splitter, 2009; Fiske, 1999).

A strong argument was made for the value of music in its own right as part of a well-rounded education (Coulter et al., 1995; Eisner, 1998; Stefanakis, 2002) as well as for the purposes of vocation (Global Access Partners, 2011). There was a considerable body of literature on the importance of arts education in fostering creative and innovative leadership (Sharp & Metais, 2000; Temmerman, 2006b; Winner & Hetland, 2007) and on the shift away from traditional teacher-dominated learning to curricula with a greater emphasis on social and emotional learning (Clouder et al., 2008; OECD, 2001; UNESCO, 2007). In addition, it was pointed out that no type of education can intrinsically be considered of value without taking into consideration the appropriateness of content and the quality of teaching (Bowman, 2010; Hodges & O'Connell, 2005; Temmerman, 2008) .

Policy, curriculum and funding

To understand how policy and curriculum affect music education in Victoria, the study examined how they are represented in the broader context of Australian education policy. How music is represented was found to have a bearing on how it is perceived by the community together with staff and students in schools. (DEST, 2005). The literature showed that music is grouped with four other subject areas in a Key Learning Area that is not currently regarded as compulsory in schools except in Queensland (MCEECDTA, 2008). This is part of a Western world trend to combine related disciplines, possibly because of economic rationalism, the redistribution of scarce resources and a fear of falling educational standards (Watson, 1999, p. 221). In many cases this has resulted in music “all but disappearing from the radar” (DEST, 2005, p. 106). It was found that there is a degree of ‘lip service’ paid to the importance of the subject in policy documents that is not followed through in curriculum or its implementation (Bamford, 2006, p. 11) and it was noted that policy without appropriate funding and infrastructure does not produce positive outcomes (Champion, 2011; Kelly, 1999, pp. 6-7). In addition, the Victorian Essential Learnings were seen to be too general to be useful to teachers in writing curricula for their schools (Gill, 2007; Watson & Forrest, 2005).

The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) *Specialist Area Guidelines* require a music teacher in Victoria to have a:

- (a) Major study in Music which includes Practical Music *or*
- (b) Major study in Music *together with* AMEB Grade VI or Year 12 Practical music *or*
- (c) Major study in Music which includes Practical Music specialising in one or more musical instruments (2008, p. 4).

When the Institute refers to a “major”, they require a study of six discipline units (single semester subjects) throughout a four-year Bachelor of Teaching degree (2008, p. 2). However, the integrity of the guidelines is undermined by the opening statement which reads:

Nothing in the following implies a requirement by the Institute for employers to insist that a registered teacher should hold particular specialist area qualifications to teach in particular areas (2008, p. 1).

Therefore, despite the guidelines being the *preferred* background for music teachers, principals are in no way obliged to insist that the staff they employ to run music programs

have these qualifications. It is possible to conclude that the Institute itself is aware of how difficult it can be to employ teachers that meet the specifications.

Some literature argued that the emphasis on literacy and numeracy has had a negative impact in Australian schools on other subject areas, including music and the other arts (Alter, Hays, & O'Hara, 2009; Gibson & Anderson, 2008; Lierse, 1995-6). This was shown to be the case in several other countries also such as the United States, UK, France, Hong Kong and Canada (McMurrer, 2008; Sharp & Metais, 2000). The emphasis on literacy and numeracy was seen to be exacerbated by NAPLAN testing and the *My Schools* website in Australia (Gill, 2011; Lierse, 1997; Santiago, Donaldson, Herman, & Shewbridge, 2011).

Pre-service teacher education

Within the theme of teacher education, several areas of concern arose in the literature. One was the reduction of time allotted to arts study within generalist primary teacher education (Coulter et al., 1995; DEST, 2005; Munday & Smith, 2010; Temmerman, 2006a). This theme was linked to the issue of funding reductions and the amalgamation of music with other art forms in the curriculum (Global Access Partners, 2011). The reduction of music from undergraduate teaching courses applied to both generalist and specialist music teaching with the emergence of generic “arts amalgam” subjects and less opportunities to specialise (Temmerman, 2006a). These factors resulted in inadequate levels of confidence and experience for generalists particularly and in some cases specialists, to effectively deliver classroom music programs (Andrews, 2004; Sharp & Metais, 2000). A further disadvantage was that students often come to their tertiary studies with little or no school experience of music and the arts (Dinham, 2007; Jeanneret, 2007). In addition, the literature raised questions about the appropriateness of too much discipline-style content in teacher education courses (Holden & Button, 2006; Joseph & Heading, 2010; Temmerman, 1997) and whether or not it is practical to expect generalist teachers to deliver appropriate levels of music education to primary school students at all (Holden & Button, 2006; Stevens, 2003).

This is a brief summary of the material examined in the original thesis.

Main Findings

Findings show that tertiary specialist music education has all but disappeared from regional Victoria. There are three institutions in Melbourne which provide opportunity to qualify as a music specialist according to VIT *Specialist Area Guidelines*: Monash, Melbourne and Victoria Universities. In rural Victoria however, Deakin University in Geelong is the only institution to offer music electives and these not in quantities to meet VIT requirements. All other universities offer only arts amalgam subjects giving a ‘taste’ of several arts subjects and run as a one – semester compulsory subject.

A closer examination of regions found to have offered music specialization in the past, showed a possible link between such courses and the number of classroom music programs operating in the local area. Ballarat and Bendigo teacher education institutions were found to have offered similarly rich opportunities to study music at tertiary level in the 1970s and 80s yet while such opportunities continued in Bendigo until 2008, most electives were

discontinued in Ballarat in the 1990s. Correspondingly, 83% of responding schools in the Bendigo region were found to have been operating classroom music programs, while the figure for the Ballarat region was significantly lower at 31%. While definitive cause and effect cannot be drawn, the apparent link is too striking to be ignored.

Results from the principals' survey showed that 62% of schools in regional Victoria offer a classroom music program. While the state and Catholic schools' figure sat very close to the overall average, independent schools showed a significantly higher percentage at 84%. Principals indicated overwhelmingly that insufficient budget and lack of availability of qualified staff were the two main reasons why music programs were not being offered. While 98% of principals indicated that opportunity for undergraduate students to study music was either moderately or very important, 38% indicated that they had struggled at one time or another to find a music teacher to employ. The northern regions struggled most with both funding and staffing (Hume, Loddon Mallee and Grampians) while Gippsland and Barwon South West in the south, struggled least. Hume had the most difficulties with budget and Grampians with staffing (this was the only region to have more schools without a music program than with – 55% without versus 45% with).

Results from the music teachers' survey indicated that 22% of participating staff had a music degree. More than a quarter of participants were dissatisfied with the music component of their undergraduate teacher education, citing lack of both quantity and quality as reasons for their discontent. Teachers overwhelmingly indicated that material delivered was too theoretical in content and not useful in learning how to structure a classroom music program for young children.

Nearly 40% of teachers indicated that they were not offering a sequential music program in their school and singing and games were most often selected as regular activities in classroom music programs, giving some cause for concern as to the discipline content in some participating schools. More than half (60%) of participating teachers indicated that they do not have access to enough professional development and a large number indicated a preference for Orff and Kodaly-type teacher education to be made available in regional areas.

Music was seen as a subject area to have suffered in status as a result of being grouped with other subjects under the Arts Key Learning Area and participating teachers were adamant that reporting under the current regime is not only difficult, but inappropriate. It was strongly suggested that the subject areas involved (particularly art and music) required skills that were far too different to be grouped under the one heading/progression point.

Recommendations for universities

If there are insufficient qualified teachers to meet demand, as revealed by principals in this research, then it follows that attention must be given to the origin of music teachers – universities, particularly in this case, regional universities. If we are to have adequate numbers of music teachers in the country, we must educate them here. There are precedents for this way of thinking in the establishment of dentistry and medical schools in country areas

to cater for a lack of these professionals outside the metropolitan area. While it is true that many music students from the country go to Melbourne to study, it is also true that many of them do not return as the opportunities for employment are so much greater and more varied in the city than in the country. Likewise, many who simply do not wish to live and study in Melbourne elect to stay in the country and either give up on becoming a music specialist or end up becoming one with the unsatisfactory access to music education experienced by a quarter of music teachers in this research. It is also possible that if quality music education was available in rural universities, many may not choose to leave in the first place. Study in the city after all is a daunting and expensive option for most country students and their parents.

It is crucial to the provision of music education in regional Victorian primary schools that rural universities provide quality music education opportunities for undergraduate teachers – both generalists and those wanting to specialise. Literature examined for this study and data from principals show that generalist teachers do not have the expertise and confidence to implement quality music education in schools. More than a quarter of music teacher participants in this research were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the music component of their undergraduate course. If education is available locally in regional universities, then country regions have an opportunity to retain young people in their area and enable links with local country schools.

At recommendation 4.4, the NRSME suggests that universities “Enhance or transform courses for specialist music teachers” (DEST, 2005, p. 117). This study shows that there have been no moves in regional Victorian universities to make this take place. There has been no sign of a return to the period of music education in the 1970s and 80s referred to in qualitative data provided by participants in this research. Quite the contrary, opportunities to specialise in music have continued to decline since the review was released, universities claiming they are unable to fund small elective subjects. Viability of class sizes at university level is an issue that continues to plague many specialist areas of education, including music. A close examination of the history of tertiary music education in Victoria’s 3 largest cities in Chapter 6 of this research though, has shown that just a small number of graduates with extra music education emerging from a regional teacher education institution annually, may make a marked difference to the numbers of schools providing classroom music programs in the area.

It is recommended that regional universities apply for government assistance specifically for the purposes of funding small subject areas like music so that opportunity to specialise at undergraduate level is not lost for regional Victorian tertiary students.

Recommendations for providers of professional development

For all practicing music teachers in country regions, but particularly those who have found themselves unexpectedly in the role of music specialist or feel inadequately prepared to carry it out, professional development needs to be made more accessible. This study showed that 60% of responding music teachers felt that they had inadequate access to opportunities for professional development. Organisations referred to by music teachers in their qualitative data such as The Victorian Orff Schulwerk Association and The Kodaly Music Education

Institute of Australia, make visits to regional areas, mostly on request from local teachers, but these days are “one-offs” – inspirational at the time, but not providing the ongoing support remote area teachers require nor the instruction on how to structure a sequential music program from prep to grade 6. While opportunity for professional development of this rigour and intensity is offered regularly in Melbourne by these organizations, it is not available in country areas.

It is entirely possible to offer Orff and Kodaly training courses as part of post graduate study in a university setting as data from Australian Catholic University show. The availability of courses such as these outside of Melbourne would make an enormous difference to skill levels of practising music teachers and interested generalists in the country. Furthermore, such courses offer an excellent opportunity for regional universities to attract fee-paying post graduate students.

Recommendations for policy makers

There is an urgent need for bridging the gulf between so called “lip service” paid in education policy documents and the ground-level implementation of arts programs in schools. While it is the responsibility of government to produce policy, it also holds the responsibility of providing appropriate funding to implement its policy.

Government indicates very clearly that it is aware of the virtues of arts education in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEECDTA, 2008). The wording suggests that music and arts education are a very high priority in Australian education. There is a major gap however, between the ideals espoused in this document and the ground level implementation of music education at both university and school level.

This research has shown that universities lack adequate funding to provide appropriate music education to undergraduate students in Victoria. The provision of music teachers to country schools is at the heart of the problem of lack of classroom music programs in country schools. Until adequate funding is provided to support music education in regional universities, there will be no increase in the number of schools offering quality music education to their students. Furthermore, principals have indicated overwhelmingly that “insufficient budget” is the main reason for not operating a music program in their school. If and when an appropriate teacher can be found, schools still need funding for appropriate space and equipment to run music programs. This research would indicate that currently, this funding need is not being met in at least 66 % of schools.

Funding is the issue at the heart of inequality of access to music education in regional Victorian primary schools. It is therefore recommended that budget be allocated to universities specifically for the purposes of re-creating and maintaining appropriate subjects for undergraduate teachers wishing to study specialist subject areas like music. Also, funding should be made available for schools needing to provide appropriate facilities, equipment and staff to run quality music and arts programs.

Recommendations for curriculum writers

This research found that 45% of participating music teachers believed music education to be negatively affected by its placement with drama, dance, media and visual arts within the Arts Key Learning Area. Common objections were that the subject areas – particularly visual and performing arts, are simply too different to be combined under one discipline and that this has led to a “watering down” of subject content and a lack of appropriate time within the curriculum in which to teach music. By far the most overwhelming feedback came in reference to reporting within the Arts KLA. More than a quarter of comments about this topic pertained to the inappropriateness of being asked to report on music in conjunction with (even under the same progression point as) other arts subjects, particularly visual art.

Clearly music teachers would prefer to see music as a stand-alone subject but it is recommended that in the interim, the Arts Key Learning Area be separated at a minimum, into two separate strands known as visual arts and performing arts. Even this degree of differentiation within the learning area would be an improvement, particularly in the area of reporting.

There is an inherent danger in trying to do too many things and it is simply not possible or realistic to expect primary schools to teach all five specialist areas represented under the current Arts KLA (music, dance, drama, visual art and media). The attempts within the current Arts Shaping Paper to cater for all arts areas equally within the curriculum are understandable but cannot be achieved in view of limited finances, timetable space and teachers. Traditionally, there have been more visual arts and music teachers available within the primary sector than there have been drama, dance and media, yet we have seen that there are not even enough of these to meet the demand from schools in rural areas. It would seem to make far more sense to reduce the broadness of what is being asked and at least aim for something closer to being achievable. To make one visual art and one performing art compulsory for all primary school students would still present staffing challenges, but schools would at least be able to choose which two they were best situated to run. Furthermore, with two rather than five arts subjects to cover within the time frames suggested by ACARA, it would be realistic to expect to teach the subjects with some kind of rigour.

It is therefore recommended that ACARA review the expectations of schools outlined in the Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts to teach all five subject areas included in the Arts KLA and suggest instead that schools compulsorily offer one visual arts and one performing arts subject.

International and local (Queensland) experience has shown that it is possible to raise the number of music programs in operation by making the subject compulsory. While it is true that Queensland still struggles to fill teaching positions in the most isolated of locations, with 87% of schools having classroom music programs to Victoria’s 62%, it is clear significant gain is possible. It would take many years for teacher numbers to grow sufficiently to fill positions in other states, but as the representative from Queensland contacted for this study pointed out, greater numbers of school music programs lead to greater demand for music specialisation at tertiary level which leads to greater numbers of music teachers and so forth

(Barton, personal communication, 2012). The facts revealed in this study would suggest that no other measure besides making music compulsory will increase the profile and priority of the subject, thereby attracting appropriate funding at school and university level.

It is therefore recommended that the compulsory implementation of arts subjects in the curriculum, hinted at in *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts*, be made clearly compulsory, with an appropriate amount of time per week in the timetable specified as in the case of physical education. In time, it is proposed, the student beneficiaries of a prep - year 8 compulsory music education would take up student tertiary music education positions and satisfy most of the demand for music teachers, as is the case in Queensland.

In the interim, sound argument could be made for a return to the specialist advisory centres available to teachers in rural Victoria in the 1970s where consultants and resources were available to support schools on a full-time basis. These could help 'tide over' schools struggling to fill music teaching roles. The demise of such facilities and resources is discussed in the NRSME in its final report (DEST, 2005, p. 47) and would require considerable funding to re-establish. Alternatively or in addition, mobile music support services centre(s) staffed with one or two trained specialists (akin to mobile libraries) regularly touring remote areas could be a useful strategy.

Conclusion

The research provides empirical evidence for what has long been suspected in professional circles – that there is far from equal opportunity for access to quality music education for children across all Victorian schools. The study explored each of the elements present in the 'chain' of music education provision to regional Victorian school children. At the centre of provision is a difficulty with supply of qualified music teachers. This supply is largely the responsibility of regional universities who declare themselves unable to fund quality music-specific arts education. If universities do not prioritise music education and get funding to reinstate music electives for undergraduate teachers in the country, music teachers are in danger of disappearing from rural areas altogether. As long as music is represented as an optional extra in the curriculum, there is no impetus for this to change. The study reveals that the places in Australia and overseas that have the highest percentages of schools with classroom music programs are those where the subject is a compulsory component of the curriculum with appropriate amounts of time allotted in the timetable. Given that a report the size and significance of the NRSME saw no change in the way music was funded or represented in Australian education, the findings in this research would suggest that *compulsory inclusion of music in curriculum* is likely to be the only measure to bring about long-term, significant improvement in equality of access to music education in Australia.

Brief additional submission re: local school instrumental tuition

This thesis was written largely from the perspective of my (former) role as university lecturer. Sadly, I started writing the thesis in response to concerns over cuts to music electives, but by the time I had finished 5 years later, they were no longer operating. Now days my concerns are primarily connected with primary music. Many primary schools in the Bendigo region operate high quality classroom music programs through which staff discover students with exceptional aptitude and enthusiasm for music. These students are ideally placed to undertake specialised tuition in an instrument but are frequently unable to do so either because such options are not offered in their school or because their families/carers are unable to afford the \$20-\$30 per week commonly charged for such lessons. At the present time, these one to one lessons are the only type of instrumental tuition available to many secondary students and the only option for students at the local secondary Catholic college. In many education facilities throughout the world, instrumental music tuition is subsidised so that students are able to undertake lessons at a discounted fee but teachers are still paid appropriate rates. One such scenario exists in Bendigo secondary schools where a program known as BIMP (Bendigo Instrumental Music Program) has been operating for more than 20 years. Approximately 15 instrumental staff teach brass, woodwind, strings, percussion and guitar across five high schools. In addition, the program offers students the opportunity to exercise their instrumental skills in a group music-making scenario in any one of two ensembles (orchestra or symphonic wind band). These ensembles tour to other schools promoting music education, participating in local competitions and concerts and are involved in a 4-day music 'camp' annually with guest conductors from Melbourne and interstate. Parents/carers contribute \$120 per year towards tuition fees and the remainder of the cost is covered by the DEECD's instrumental teaching fund. The department also operates an instrumental library from which families are able to hire an appropriate instrument for \$40-\$75 per year, (depending on the instrument) - this helps cover its cost and maintenance. There are now over 400 instruments in the library. Membership to ensembles and the camp are charged separately but are also subsidised. As a teacher in a Catholic primary school with children in state secondary schools, it seems grossly unfair that my children should have access to a program like BIMP while the children I am teaching have no such opportunity.