

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

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SCHOOLS OF EMPLOYMENT:	McClelland College, Karingal, Frankston (M.S.C). Hampton Park Secondary College, South East. (H.P.S.C).

Evidence supporting music education in schools;

(1) Benefits to society and to individual students wanting to pursue music as a career

My past students have gone on to become instrumental teachers and classroom music teachers. Presently I have a student at H.P.S.C wishing to enter the armed forces. She is considering using her instrumental skills on the flute to enter as a musician in the armed forces. The past 5 years of her training on the flute may now help in creating a career path to joining the armed forces and contributing towards society.

Many other past students have gone on to teach both instrumental music and classroom music with others continuing their learning of instruments after leaving school. Some have gone on to become kindergarten teachers and have been able to use their skills acquired in my instrumental lessons with their classes in incorporating music into their kinder program. Past students at H.P.S.C have continued to perform in community bands such as the Cranbourne Concert Band and the Grainger Wind Symphony. Such music ensembles contribute to society in providing access to the arts to the general public via the concerts they present to the public.

A few of my past students at M.S.C have gone on to teach privately at music teaching studios/shops and some have continued their study to University level. They have become part of the future generation of musicians/teachers as a result of receiving free/subsidized instrumental tuition in Secondary Colleges in Victoria. Without receiving this tuition it is doubtful if they may have chosen this career path due to the financial constraints of their families and the socio economic problems in the areas in which they live. If these students were asked to pay for their instrumental lessons at their schools it is doubtful their parents would have been able to have afforded to pay for the lessons.

All of my students have contributed to society via performing annually in the wider community such as in primary schools and elderly citizen's homes. They have provided a link with the outside world in many elderly care homes where the residents may not normally have contact with the younger generation or the world outside of their care homes. The music they played did produce emotional responses in elderly residents. In one case it was noted by a care assistant that a resident

had not spoken for years. This particular resident spoke for the first time via singing the Christmas carols which the students performed. If I recall correctly, the song was 'Silent Night'. Music obviously had the power to help this individual reach out and communicate once more in their life.

Numerous times I have glanced across a crowded community room where all the residents are listening to my students perform Christmas Carols and noticed a gleam in the resident's eyes. The music may have produced recollections of a past life and their younger days with their own families before they became older. Anyone with a heart would realize the impact of these students performing to their elders in society. This is a result of free instrumental tuition provided in the state system in Secondary Schools. Without such a service then it is doubtful if those elderly residents would have experienced such joy at a time which can be very lonely (Christmas). Again the students came from a low socio economic area in which parents could not provide or afford the cost of private instrumental lessons outside of school. This does support the need to continue and increase instrumental funding in schools. If funding is to continue to be cut back then the hidden impact on the wider community would not be obvious at first. However it would impact upon the wider community in the future.

I would really like to emphasize the importance of continuing to provide access to free instrumental lessons in schools. Without access then future elderly generations may not have the opportunity to experience students performing. In addition if funding continues to be cut back with parents being asked to contribute more financially (which many cannot at the moment) then future new generations of musicians and instrumental teachers may be reduced.

(2) General benefits to students as a result of music education;

A past student at M.S.C. started the instrumental program learning clarinet. He was a very shy boy who would speak very little and with little confidence. He came from a large family and thus had a lot of extra responsibilities at home which affected his performance at school. After one term this student started to open up and speak more. In his second year of learning he had made so much progress he wished to learn another instrument. By his 3rd and 4th years of study he was performing regularly in school ensembles such as the band and choir and assisting the music department with admin and organizational work which required confidence and team work skills. He gained these skills over the years by learning his instrument and working as a team member in the music department. He is now a very confident young man and his confidence has grown and as a result he now wants to pursue a career in instrument repairing. Learning an instrument increased his confidence, team building skills and demonstrated his intelligence and commitment to the rest of the school. Without learning the clarinet the wider school community and teachers may not have been aware of his capabilities.

At H.P.S.C I have had the pleasure of teaching students with an aspergers/autism condition. These students have displayed communication skills not normally seen in large classrooms. The individual tuition and one to one tuition improved the students' communication skills and eye contact. Music had the power to increase their communication skills without having to actually talk as many autistic students find it difficult to communicate verbally. Instrumental lessons were the only educational lessons they experienced in their school in small groups or individually. No other subject area offered this support.

In England in the early to mid 1990's in Manchester instrumental funding was cut. It was cut to a point where no students received free instrumental tuition in state schools. The Education Department decided to open up specialist schools for students to receive lessons after school. The problem was that these extra-curricular schools didn't attract students to their programs. Numbers

dwindled until 'peripatetic' instrumental teachers were re introduced back into primary and secondary schools a decade later. The government and education department realized their mistake by cutting funding and rectified it in the area in which I grew up. I know this occurred as I was an instrumental music student in the 1980's in Manchester England and when I graduated in 1995 as a music teacher, little funds were available for instrumental teachers to be employed in schools. Therefore I came to live in Victoria Australia to obtain employment as an instrumental teacher.

The area in which I grew up in Manchester now has a music teaching department/service which is funded by the government – Tameside Music Service. Students learning an instrument there have improved self-confidence, esteem and social skills which have promoted a more positive attitude to school and standards in music and also in the greater curriculum. It is well known that music improves a child's concentration in addition to many other benefits. For these reasons this is why we need to ensure that all children in Victoria have access to instrumental lessons in their schools in the future.

Current provision of music education in Victoria:

(3) music education provided through specific funding for music education;

Sick leave is covered in my ongoing contract with the department of education. However when an absence of 2 or more weeks is required due to ill health my schools do not necessarily replace me with another teacher. Therefore the students miss out on their lessons. This is a result of the schools budget being continually reduced. The schools I work in cannot afford a CRT teacher to cover.

Superannuation is supplied via the schools I work in. If I was to work in a private school or if instrumental teachers were to be made to sub contract to state schools in the future then teachers would be responsible for their own superannuation. To be quite honest I couldn't afford to sacrifice my self employed salary in putting away superannuation. Therefore I would have no funds for retirement age.

I am not paid for the ensembles I run at lunch time. This is part of my job but does not count as 'face to face' teaching time. I and all other instrumental teachers perform this role as the organizer and conductor of such ensembles without hesitation. This displays our commitment to our subject area and love of music which we foster and display to the students via volunteering our time. In some private schools teachers are actually paid for their extracurricular work as it is a specialist subject.

Scores and equipment are generally funded by the school. If the school runs out of money towards the end of the year and my students need books I tend to purchase them out of my own pocket as many of them cannot afford to purchase themselves due to their economic background.

I am lucky in that I work in purpose built departments with access to large concert areas in the schools I work in. If funding for instrumental teachers continues to decrease then these areas will not be in use as much as is occurring at the moment. This would be a waste of the schools building budget which has supported the building of the departments. Two schools I have worked in the recent past have had many issues with leaking roofs, damp floors and mould. This is a health hazard for the teachers and students which really needed to be rectified but due to low budgets the problems were not addressed straight away.

I work in a team with other instrumental teachers, however sometimes I do find myself working on

my own.

In both schools I work in there are instruments available for hire. They are maintained in generally ready for use. If instrumental teaching budgets are cut then these instruments may end up sitting idly in the store room cupboards.

I find it very difficult to access school funds to attend PD. As I only work for only one day in each school the schools are reluctant to give money from their budgets. Most of the time it is expected that we fund our own PD.

(4) music education provided through parent contribution

My work is directly paid for by the Department of Education which funds the schools to employ instrumental teachers. The schools I work in are in areas with low socio economic status. Parents could not afford to contribute directly for their children's lessons and the actual teaching. However, they are asked to make a small contribution (a levy) to cover the hire of the instruments and their subsequent repairs. A user pay system would not work in these schools as it is difficult enough to obtain \$100-150 a year in the levy parents are asked to pay.

A very few parents donate their time. Those that do are always the same parents who help on concert tours and they are generally the ones helping with everything else. For example one parent at HPSC recently took down all of the old curtains and washed, sewed and repaired them. She did this voluntarily. This is a very rare thing to occur.

The parents at the schools I work in cannot afford to contribute to incursions or visiting artists or workshops. The schools are not always willing to financially support these activities due to their limited budgets. I have many times asked the schools I worked in to subsidize or pay for my students to complete AMEB external exams. All the time it is declined by the schools.

The extent and quality of music education provision in Victorian schools;

(5) QUALIFICATIONS AND VALUE OF MUSIC IN SCHOOLS

Music is valued in the schools in which I work . Generally the lessons are delivered by a qualified music teacher. My training consisted of acquiring a Degree in Music Performance, followed by a one year teacher training certificate/diploma (in England) and more recently I undertook a Masters in Music Education degree. This was a part time off campus course which took 6 years to complete.

I believe that my qualifications have enhanced the pedagogy that I employ in my teaching. There are however many teachers who have obtained a degree in music but not in teaching. These teachers may have completed a 3 or 4 years arts degree but not followed it up with a teaching qualification. These teachers are still employed in schools and in particularly employed via private music teaching companies which contract out to primary schools. The level of tuition in these primary schools is sometimes sub standard as the teachers are not actually trained to teach students. Yes they have trained on their instruments but they may have a limited knowledge of differentiation, classroom management and child development and pedagogy. It is a 'user pays' funded system in the primary schools and therefore not only are the students receiving sub standard tuition but many cannot even

be presented with the opportunity to try to learn an instrument as parents cannot afford to pay for lessons.

To improve this situation, primary schools need to receive funding to employ qualified instrumental teachers. Also it should be mandatory for music graduates to have undertaken at least a term of learning how to teach instrumental music and actually incorporate instrumental teaching work experience into Bachelor Music Degrees. Not enough practical experience in teaching an instrument is given in undergraduate Music Degrees.

Future optimum provision of music education in Victorian schools:

(6) optimum governance and oversight arrangements;

In the future I would like to see more funding for state secondary and primary schools for instrumental teachers so as more teachers can be employed. At Hampton Park Secondary School the program has build up so quickly and so well that we are nearly at full capacity. I am the only woodwind and brass teacher at the school and therefore students will now be placed on a waiting list. Many students will miss out on learning an instrument at the school as the school had funding withdrawn for a second woodwind teacher two years ago.

(7) optimum use of targeted funding;

Instrumental music funding and administration should be returned to being 'centrally' funded by the Regions. The fact that schools are now having to administer instrumental music is causing many problems regarding staffing. Last year I was employed in 3 different schools as an instrumental teacher. One school lost funding for the program and I was therefore made in excess to requirements. Therefore because my base school administered my pay and all other paperwork I was automatically returned back to my base school. Unfortunately my base school also could not fund me as an instrumental teacher due to budget cuts but they have to employ me/find alternative work at the school even though they have no allocated funding for me as a teacher from the department of education. This impacts upon their overall budget and cuts may have been needed in other areas in order for the school to pay my wages.

This is occurring all over the state of Victoria where teachers are being returned to their base school as it is the base school that looks after and administers instrumental music.

In the past instrumental music was administered by regional music coordinators who allocated instrumental teachers to specific schools based on the requirements of the schools. If a member of staff became in excess to requirements in one school then the regional music coordinators had the power to place the member of staff in a school that required an instrumental teacher. Teachers were

therefore not in excess for very long and were not returned to their base school. This is a huge problem at the moment and will only get worse as we predict that future funding will continue to be cut for instrumental teachers. It must be addressed as soon as possible before schools become overloaded with excess instrumental teachers. When a teacher is returned back to their base school the school has to sometimes return another teacher back to their base school in order to make way for the new employee. This is resulting in a domino effect across the state. The teaching union and the Department of Education is aware of the problem but has not acted on resolving the dilemma yet.

(8) optimum balance of music specific funding, non-music specific funding and parent contribution.

In the schools that I work and have worked in the past parental contribution to funding programs is virtually non-existent due to the fact that the students come from socio economical deprived areas. The majority of parents have to make the choice between feeding and clothing their children or paying for extra-curricular activities such as instrumental lessons. They cannot afford to pay for the teachers wages if lessons were to be a 'pay as you go' system as occurs in private schools. Therefore the students are very fortunate to receive funded lessons financed by funding from the Department of Education. Otherwise they would not be able to receive the benefits of learning a musical instrument and performing in groups/ensembles. The parents are asked to contribute a small 'levy' fee to cover books and instrument hire and repairs. Even if the levy is as low as \$100 for the year parents sometimes say they cannot afford to pay this up front and a payment plan is set up for the year. If they were asked to pay \$30 for each weekly lesson it is extremely doubtful if instrumental programs would run in the schools.

It must be remembered that some students who study an instrument go on to play and teach professionally and these students may have broken the poverty trap in their life as a result of receiving lessons in the state school system. If funding is withdrawn from state schools in more economic deprived areas the results could be very discouraging for students from disadvantaged areas. This could result in an elitist system where only students from middle class backgrounds or private schools enter the music profession as teachers and performers. This would be disastrous as some of my teaching colleagues come from disadvantaged backgrounds and they may not have become teachers themselves if a 'user-pay' system was in use in the past when they went to school. I myself would not have been able to receive instrumental lessons as my single parent mother would not have been able to afford to pay for lessons on my flute and clarinet and oboe when I was at school. Therefore I would not have been here today writing this from a teacher's point of view.

My vision and that of all instrumental teachers in the state system is that every child in Victorian schools has access to a quality music education. If a 'user pays' system is introduced or funding continues to be cut then this will be impossible to achieve. Students will be deprived of the benefits of learning an instrument which will impact upon their learning in other subject areas. It will have greater ramifications on society and future generations.