

Education and Training Committee of the Parliament of Victoria
Inquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of
Music Education in Victorian Schools

Submission from Associate Professor Robin Stevens
Principal Fellow, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne
and formerly Associate Professor of Music Education, Faculty of Education,
Deakin University

Introduction

I have been involved in teacher education in music for nearly forty years. I have focussed on the training of generalist primary teachers in music, on training specialist secondary classroom music teachers and more recently on postgraduate training of specialist instrumental music teachers. Aside from other professional involvements including membership of the School Music Action Group, I was Principal Investigator for the Music Council of Australia's research project on "Trends in School Music Education Provision in Australia" (2002-03) and have served as a member of the Steering Committee for the National Review of School Music Education (2004-05), on the Australian National Music Workshop Advisory Group (2006), and was a member (2007-09) and then chairperson (2008-09) of the Australian Government's Music Education Advisory Group.

I have also contributed to the submission to this Inquiry made by the School Music Action Group and will therefore not reiterate the points already made there. The focus of my personal submission will be on those aspects of the Inquiry dealing with: (i) *Evidence supporting music education in schools: Term of Reference 3 – Benefits to student academic performance as a result of music education* and (ii) the *Future optimum provision of music education in Victorian schools: Terms of Reference 8 – 11* with specific reference to (a) classroom music instruction in government schools, (b), pre-service teacher education in music for primary school teachers, and (c) instrumental music instruction in government schools. Note that all of my comments are made in relation to the government school sector in Victoria.

Relevant Historical Background to Music Education Policy in Victorian Government Schools

When planning for the future of music education policy and practice, it is essential to consider the "lessons of history" which, not only highlight many of the current strengths and weaknesses of school music education provision, but also enable informed decisions to be made that will hopefully avoid many of the mistakes of the past.

Music was included in the model curriculum to be taught in Victorian elementary (primary) schools from the beginning of state support for school education in the early 1850s.¹ The impetus for the inclusion of music (i.e. Vocal Music) in the curriculum was the widely-held belief that the subject had a humanising and civilising influence as well as providing a means of inculcating moral, patriotic and social values in children.

¹ The source of the historical information provided here is Robin Stevens, *Music in state-supported education in New South Wales and Victoria, 1848 – 1920*, PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1978.

Given the lack of musical skills and knowledge among generalist teachers, a system of on-staff or more usually itinerant singing teachers was adopted which resulted in a comparatively large percentage of children learning music—in 1892-93, 33.1% of school children were receiving instruction in music from visiting singing masters and on-staff teaching licensed to teach singing.² Several attempts had been made to charge fees for children receiving musical instruction, but by 1972—when “free, secular and compulsory” education under the Department of Public Instruction came into being—the idea of charging fees for singing had been abandoned and musical instruction was provided through (often itinerant) specialist teachers. However, with the economic depression, all singing masters together with the Inspector of Music were retrenched in 1893 and a system which required generalist primary teachers to teach music was instituted, albeit that the system was largely ineffective due to the lack of competence to teach music among generalist teachers.

By the 1920s, the lack of classroom music teaching in Victorian government primary schools saw the appointment of a Supervisor of Music and the employment of specialist music teachers in Melbourne and major rural centres. The continued employment of specialist music teachers to teach music in primary schools resulted in the formation of the Music Branch which, including the Supervisor of Music, numbered 107 personnel of whom 17 were Resource Centre staff (providing in-service education, curriculum resources and publications, recording and library services, etc.) with the remaining 90 comprising the Field Work Force of music teachers providing class music instruction in primary schools. However, with the move towards school-based curriculum delivery, the Education Department disbanded the Music Branch in 1978 and created 236 new specialist music positions including 186 positions for “Music Assistant [Teachers]” to teach music at one large school or in a group of smaller schools, and 50 positions for Music Advisors (attached to the then 50 School Inspectorates) to assist primary schools to develop and implement music programs, to provide in-service education, etc.

Since the 1980s, the Inspectorates have been abolished and there has been increasing devolution of responsibility for curriculum development and implementation and this has resulted in the situation where (i) there have been no music advisory / supervisory services available in Victorian Government schools for several decades, and (ii) it is entirely in the hands of school principals, schools councils and school teaching staffs whether or not they employ a specialist music teachers from their staffing allocation for their school. The consequence has been the gradual decline in the employment of specialist music teachers in government schools and a reliance on generalist teachers—the vast majority of whom lack both the competence and confidence in music—to implement a classroom music program.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that the optimal means of providing for music teaching in government primary schools for specialist music teachers to be appointed to all primary schools (as has traditionally been the case in government secondary schools) to enable students to receive a sequential, developmental and continuous music education during their primary school years. The “fallback position” is to at least ensure that schools designate one member of staff as a Classroom Music Coordinator with the responsibility of (i) coordinating the development of a whole school music curriculum, (ii) assisting his/her colleagues to implement the music curriculum, and (iii) to assist with on-going professional development in music for all classroom generalist teachers (see proposal below).

² Stevens, p. 373.

Evidence supporting music education in schools

Term of Reference 3 – Benefits to student academic performance as a result of music education

There are numerous overseas research studies that have documented the benefits of a music education for the general academic development of students, particularly the development of literacy and numeracy at the primary school level. A little recognised but highly significant Australian study undertaken in the West Metropolitan Region of Sydney during the mid 1970s of the development and implementation of a Kodály-based primary music curriculum³ clearly demonstrated that the 234 Year 6 students who were part of the music program achieved significantly higher in several non-musical areas of the curriculum than the 251 children at otherwise equivalent schools who did not receive this form of musical training. The tests undertaken by both the experimental and control groups included the Tests of Learning Ability (Australian Council for Education Research), Paragraph Understanding, Spelling, and the Primary Education Project (ACER) tests in Reading and Maths.

This study, although undertaken almost forty years ago, provides irrefutable evidence that music can be of significant benefit to the development of a wide range of non-musical understandings and skills for primary school students. It may therefore be extrapolated that if students were provided with a sequential, developmental and continuous music education during their primary school years, standards in literacy, numeracy and associated skills and understandings as measured by NAPLAN testing would be considerably enhanced.

Future optimum provision of music education in Victorian schools

Terms of Reference 8 – 11

(a) Classroom music instruction in government schools

- Overall governance and oversight arrangements—although the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) is at least nominally responsible for the provision of curriculum services (including for Music as a subject within The Arts Learning Area), the implementation has been entirely a school-based matter (the pressure of NAPLAN testing has frequently seen schools give disproportionate emphasis to literacy and numeracy at the expense of subjects such as music). This has led to gross inequities of opportunity, especially at the primary school level, for young people to receive a musical education in the government school system. Accordingly, DEECD should mandate minimum standards of music education provision and monitor school performance through a Music Curriculum Implementation Manager (or similar designation). Moreover, given that there is currently no DEECD officer responsible for or able to advocate for music, the creation of such a position is essential to ensure that all young people attending government schools receive their entitlement to a musical education.
- School Music Advisory Group (or similarly designated group) should be established to provide advice to the government through the Music Curriculum Implementation Manager. Such as group should consist of representatives of practising music teachers (both classroom and instrumental teachers), VCAA, music teacher professional associations, teacher training institutions, tertiary music institutions, the music industry, etc.

³ See D.B. Hoermann and G.F. Herbert, *Report and evaluation: A developmental programme of music education for primary school (Kodály-based)*, Educational Supplies Pty Ltd, Brookvale, NSW, 1979.

- Provision of classroom music in primary schools should ideally be taught by specialist teachers. However, the likelihood of this being funded in the current economic climate is not strong. A fallback and *pro tem* position may be that DEECD mandates the following arrangements. Schools should be required to nominate a member of the teaching staff who is competent in both musical skills/knowledge and music pedagogy (curriculum development and implementation) as its Music Coordinator. In addition to other teaching duties (e.g. fulfilling the role of a generalist classroom teacher), the Music Coordinator should be responsible, in consultation with teaching colleagues, for developing an appropriate sequential, developmental and continuous (P to 6) music curriculum⁴ and for assisting teaching colleagues at the school to implement the program through in-school teacher professional development. If no existing member of staff is competent to undertake this role, the school should be required to obtain such a person in the next round of staff appointments by setting both musical skills/knowledge and music pedagogy as criteria for one of these appointments. To ensure accountability—i.e. that they are implementing a music program—Music Coordinators could be required to submit a six monthly report to the Music Curriculum Implementation Manager who, in collaboration with music teacher professional associations in Victoria (e.g. aMuse), should ensure that appropriate teacher professional development courses are made available for Music Coordinators.

(b) Pre-service teacher education in music for primary school teachers

Pre-service teacher education for primary teachers employed in government schools

- A recent (2009) national audit of mandatory music discipline and music education content within pre-service generalist primary teacher education courses, commissioned by the now-disbanded Australian Government's Music Education Advisory Group and prepared by the Music Council of Australia surveyed 28 universities offering teacher education qualifications.⁵
- The audit found that, on average, 41.75 hours are devoted to creative arts subjects, but only 16.99 hours are given to the study of music. The quantum of compulsory music content expressed as a percentage of the total credit points for teacher education courses was, on average, only 1.51%. Anecdotal information indicates that in one teacher education course at a Victorian University, students could receive as little as six hours of contact time devoted to classroom music teaching; these students were graduated with the expectation that they were competent to teach all subjects forming the primary school curriculum and subsequently gained VIT registration as such.
- New AITSL (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership) requirements for the accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses, which will also be adopted by the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), will increase the minimum length of course from one to two years (or equivalent). Despite the continuing problem of the "overcrowded curriculum" both in school and teacher education curricula, there should be additional time available within primary teacher education courses for increasing the number of hours allocated to the study of music content and music pedagogy which should (i) be mandated by VIT

⁴ Note that musical activities, such as participation in the annual school musical production, do not constitute a sequential, developmental and continuous music education; nevertheless, such activities do represent worthwhile extra-curricular musical experiences for students.

⁵ See Rachael Hocking, *National audit of music discipline and music education mandatory content within pre-service generalist primary teacher education course*, Music Council of Australia, 2009. http://www.mca.org.au/images/pdf/mca_preservice_finalreport.pdf

through set of minimum standards for music for primary teacher registration, and (ii) be mandatory for all pre-service primary teacher education institutions.

- In addition, all providers of pre-service primary teacher education course should actively encourage incoming students who may have a music background to undertake music enrichment subjects to better prepare them for possible music coordination roles in the primary schools to which they are appointed (music enrichment subjects are currently being offered as part of the MTeach[Prim] course being offered by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne).

In-service teacher professional development for primary teachers employed in government schools

- Teacher professional development in music should be facilitated by a school's Music Coordinator in collaboration with the principal and teaching colleagues at the school level and with the proposed Music Curriculum Implementation Manager at DEECD level.
- Music teacher professional associations (e.g. aMuse) and other PD providers should be encouraged to make professional development courses available both in face-to-face learning situations and in the online environment which will offer many possibilities for enriched professional learning in music as the NBN comes online.

(c) Instrumental music instruction in government schools

- In order to ensure uniform provision and therefore equality of opportunity for students to have access to learning a musical instrument in government schools, instrumental music instruction should be offered only from the beginning of secondary schooling except for strings which, where possible, should be offered from year 5 in primary schools.
- The current levels of funding for and therefore provision of instrumental music instruction should be fully maintained—i.e. the annual allocation of \$27 million to “musical instruments [instrumental music instruction]” in the DEECD budget should be retained.
- The principle focus of instrumental music instruction provided in government schools should be on giving instruction in those instruments that require higher level instructor skills such as traditional orchestral instruments, piano and voice. Other instruments—such as contemporary popular style guitar, drums, etc—may be provided through classroom music programs, by schools employing local tutors, by schools providing opportunities for students to have access to “fee-for-service” instrumental tuition, through online courses or where schools specifically request it, tuition given by a member of the proposed Instrumental Music Service (see below).
- For registration as a [classroom] teacher whose role is defined as “delivering and/or assessing student participation in an educational program”, VIT requires an approved pre-service teacher education course in addition to or inclusive of appropriate discipline studies. Although many current providers of instrumental music tuition are VIT registered teachers, there is a significant number of providers of instrumental music tuition who currently do not meet VIT registration requirements. VIT policy (2011) states that “... Instrumental Music Instructors ... whose duties relate to co-curricular or extra-curricular programs are not considered to be undertaking the duties of a teacher”.
- Regardless of VIT registration or otherwise, providers of instrumental music tuition are generally not engaged in teaching classes but rather teach students on a one-to-one or small group basis and/or undertake the role of director of musical ensembles which involves rehearsal and leadership of musical performances, a role which is more akin to that of professional conductor than a teacher *per se*.

- Unlike classroom music teachers, providers of instrumental music instruction require not only advanced level instrumental and/or vocal performance skills but also highly specialised industry-based skills such as aural and visual perception applied to music performance situations, conducting and interpretative skills, composing and arranging abilities, ensemble coordination and concert management skills, etc. These advanced level skills are not those that may be developed within the usual three year undergraduate music degree; development of these skills requires years of industry experience and/or higher degree level discipline-based study.⁶ The requirements for providers of instrumental music instruction are therefore qualitatively different from those of classroom music teachers.
- According to van Oosten, “Historically IMT’s [instrumental music teachers] were employed and allocation by the region and could be moved from school to school at the end of the year based on needs across the region. The Department of Education allocated an amount of teaching time (in days, according to instrument type) to each school. Now [2009], schools are allocated a dollar amount ... with which they employ their own IMT’s. The IMT’s are solely the responsibility of the individual school/s”.⁷
- Given that most instrumental music instruction—individual and small group lessons as well as music ensemble rehearsals and performances—relate to co-curricular or extra-curricular programs, instrumental music instructors, both VIT registered teachers and non-registered instructors, in government schools could be employed by an Instrumental Music Service without requiring VIT registration.
- Appropriate merit-based recognition for teacher training qualifications and/or advanced level industry-based performance qualifications and/or experience should be given to instrumental music teachers/instructors currently employed as school-based personnel by the DEECD. In many respects, the specialised role of an instrumental music instructor could be thought of as being akin to a Protective Service Officer whereas the classroom teachers would parallel the broader role of a Police Officer.
- Aside from the rationale based on the unique professional role of an instrumental music instructor, there is a strong case for establishment of an Instrumental Music Service within DEECD given that instrumental teachers currently appointed to regions and attached to base schools may well be declared “in excess” due to varying enrolments in particular instrumental areas. This results in instrumental music instructors having to re-apply for their other teaching positions and other significant administrative problems. An Instrumental Music Service independent of the current base school arrangement with established positions of a State Manager and Regional Coordinators for each of the four Regions would allow for a far more cost effective and educationally-worthy deployment of the highly skilled professional instructor-musicians currently employed in the DEECD.⁸ Members of the Instrumental Music Service could be assigned to work in an individual school or in a cluster of schools within a particular region.
- Instrumental music instructors should be appointed at appropriate levels, taking into account both their musical and educational qualifications as well as teaching and industry-based performance experience using the Teachers and Paraprofessional pay scales.⁹

⁶ Note that an MMus[PerfTchng] course was introduced by the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne in 2012 as a higher degree by coursework to provide advanced level studies specifically for instrumental music instructors.

⁷ van Oosten, Y., *Eastern Metropolitan Region Instrumental Music Teacher Induction Guide*, 2009, p. 5.

⁸ Note that some regions had (in 2009) well-coordinated arrangements in place for instrumental music—see van Oosten, 2009.

⁹ See http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Salary_Rates.xls for details of Teachers and Paraprofessional pay scales.

- The duties of instrumental music instructors should include provision of one-to-one and small group instrumental tutorials, developing and implementing online teaching through interactive NBN-enabled communication systems (particularly in regional and remote areas), and facilitating associated aural and notational (music theory) knowledge and skills, arranging for, conducting and managing music performance ensembles, etc.
- The Instrumental Music Service through its State Manager and Regional Coordinators should be responsible for all aspects of employment (including assessment of qualifications and skill levels), for continuing professional development for instrumental music instructors, for regional instrumental music co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, research into and development of instrumental teaching resources. Given that it will be infeasible to provide regular face-to-face instrumental music tuition to instrumental students in regional and remote areas of the state, the Instrumental Music Service should develop instructional expertise in the use of NBN-facilitated online instruction as one of its research and development priorities.

Contact details:

Associate Professor Robin Stevens, BMus, BEd, PhD *Melb*

Principal Fellow, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne



12 February 2013