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Arts Education Partnerships in Australia
Spaces and Places for Teaching and Learning

DAWN JOSEPH AND HELEN CHAMPION
Arts Education Partnerships in Australia: Spaces and Places for Teaching and Learning

Dawn Joseph, Deakin University, Australia
Helen Champion, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Australia

Abstract: The arts over the centuries have continued to pervade, direct and define our societies. In Australia, they are seen as an important and influential mechanism of pedagogies. In arts education students explore and express their identity and build understanding of their worlds through learning by doing and social interaction. This long-established position is endorsed by contemporary arts education pedagogies that encourage students to look, listen, learn, think, and work as artists in new places and spaces. The forthcoming Australian Curriculum: The Arts (dance, drama, media arts, music, and visual arts) will require consideration of the students’ own cultures and the cultures of their communities, region, and the wider world. Interaction between the students and the wider arts community are central to this approach. Using narrative inquiry, reflective practice, and document analysis as our methodologies, we describe ways of seeing, knowing, and learning between artists, students, schools, education authorities, and universities in the Australian state of Victoria. The authors contend that collaborative partnerships take many forms and provide opportunities for exploration of pedagogies that foster strong relationships between arts education and the arts industry.

Keywords: Arts Education, Community, Pedagogy, Teaching and Learning

Australian Context

Over the centuries, the Arts continue to pervade society; they illuminate our past and shape our future. The Arts are known to communicate our thoughts, emotions, and feelings and express a range of opportunities to learn about others (Nathan 2008). This paper situates itself in the state of Victoria, Melbourne (Australia) where the Arts have both a ‘place’ and ‘space’ in education settings and in the curriculum. The preamble of the Melbourne Declaration Educational Goals for Young Australians states that the Arts contribute to understanding “the spiritual, moral and aesthetic dimensions of life; and open up new ways of thinking” (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs 2008, 4-5). Through the lens of the Arts we explore ways of engaging children at school and students at universities “to become confident and creative individuals, as well as active and informed citizens” (Arts Victoria 2012a). According to Arts Victoria, there are more than 110 Arts organizations working in the education sector within Victoria, offering a rich and diverse array of learning experiences to students and teachers (Arts Victoria 2012b). These organizations offer partnerships with schools and communities as a way to foster and enhance the Arts in society. Though some partnerships may offer professional development to teachers, this is not the focus of this paper, rather, the authors agree with Easton that collaborative partnerships “help teachers to see their students in alternative ways, and they inspire [their] teacher partners to use a wide range of artistic modalities and pedagogical approaches in their practice (Easton 2003, 19).

In July 2013 the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood endorsed Australian Curriculum: The Arts for implementation. Following publication by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) each State and Territory will implement according to local timelines. The curriculum includes content for dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts and is expected to replace existing state and territory curricula. The Shape paper which sets the direction for this curriculum identifies that “learning in the Arts involves making and responding” (ACARA 2011, 5) and that “The Arts industry and community are essential to a twenty-first century Arts curriculum that seeks to strengthen the opportunities the Arts offer to young Australians” (ACARA 2011, 25). The rationale in the draft curriculum describes how students learn as artists and audience through the intellectual, emotional and...
sensory experiences of the Arts. They acquire skills specific to the Arts subjects and develop critical understanding that informs decision-making and aesthetic choices. Through the Arts, students learn to express their ideas, thoughts and opinions as they discover and interpret the world (ACARA 2013, 1).

Although the Arts are considered key areas in the curriculum in Victoria and the other Australian states and territories, not all schools offer each of the five Art forms. To a large extent, music and visual arts are offered in schools in Australia, as this has been the case since they were “mandated from the 1960’s” (Gibson and Ewing 2011, 11). There are a number of ways Arts education is provided at Government, Independent and Catholic schools in Victoria: by specialist teachers who have training and expertise and by generalist teachers in the primary school who have no specialism in the Arts. In addition, some schools employ community artists who provide artists-in-schools programs and at times schools may contract arts providers or professional groups or organizations to deliver Arts education programs to students. In this environment, community partnerships are developing as a key strategy in Arts education, linking schools, practitioners, students and artists. In Arts education, partnerships provide valuable resources that allow schools to offer diverse experiences to students and teachers and to embed Arts practice as central to the school culture.

For the purposes of this paper, partnerships in Arts education are seen as having a plethora of forms and purposes. They may include individual artists and/or Arts organizations that offer creative and aesthetic experiences based on industry practice (Chen 2013). In the authors’ experience the scope and nature of Arts and education partnerships is fluid and dynamic and is shaped through personal and professional networks. A common feature of the partnerships described in this paper is that through reflection and documentation, the experiences of the partners are shared within Arts education and wider communities. This connected or partnered way of working aligns with the strategic direction promoted by Deakin University (workplace of Author 1) through the LIVE the Future Agenda 2020, which seeks to “maintain and enhance the quality and integrity of our research, teaching and learning and how we engage with the communities we serve” (Deakin University 2013). The notion of partnerships or professional connections is also reflected in comments by the Hon. Martin Dixon, MP, Minister for Education in Towards Victoria as a Learning Community that

We are now embarking on a ‘third wave’ of school reform, targeting universal excellence that improves the life chances and contributions of all young Victorians. This third wave will be driven by local responsibility for system improvement. The best systems achieve this through a highly professional and networked workforce: a community of professionals where the best make everyone better (DEECD, 2012 1).

Towards Victoria as a Learning Community is a policy document that is informing the work of Author 2.

The forthcoming Australian Curriculum: The Arts requires consideration of the students’ own cultures and the cultures of their communities, region and the wider world. Hence interaction between the students and the wider Arts community is central to effective implementation of the curriculum. An exciting development in the implementation of this curriculum will be a focus on the rich and diverse Arts practices that are central aspects of the histories and cultures of Australia’s First Peoples, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Schools will work in partnership with community representatives to explore these artworks and practices and to consider the enduring place of these Arts traditions in contemporary Australia. The authors provide a few succinct examples using reflective practice and narrative inquiry of Arts education partnerships in their respective work settings, where ‘spaces’ and ‘places’ for teaching and learning co-exist between artists, students, schools, education authorities and universities. The authors assert that collaborative partnerships take
many forms and provide opportunities for exploration of opportunities to foster strong relationships between Arts education and the Arts industry.

Theoretical Perspectives

Extensive research has been undertaken in Australia and internationally regarding the benefits and importance of the Arts in society and within educational settings (Deasey 2002; Catterall 2009; Ewing 2010; Gibson and Ewing 2011). In Australia, the National Review in School Music Education was undertaken in 2005, this review articulates “the emotional, physical, social, and cognitive growth of all students” through music engagement (Pascoe et al. 2005, iii). Later in 2008, First We See: The National Review of Visual Education report recommended that “the potential of partnerships between schools and appropriate external agencies/organizations to contribute to visual education be explored and a programme of implementation determined” (Davis et al. 2008, xi). According to Freedman and Stuhr writing specifically about the United States of America “arts education can help future generations learn about themselves and their community” (Freedman and Stuhr 2013, 4). They further point out that Arts education “preserves and transmits heritage, helping students to recognise and appreciate the diverse perspectives they will encounter in an increasingly global community” (Freedman and Stuhr 2013, 4). Writing a decade earlier in Australia, Aspin points out the importance of having schools work closely with communities and artists as invaluable experiences that contribute to their lifelong learning in the Arts (Aspin 2000). In 2009, Donelan et al. undertook research in Victoria exploring why Arts partnerships are important. They identified that schools and Arts sector partnerships “contribute to improving the social, creative and cultural life of the schools and communities in which they take place” (Donelan et al. 2009, 7). Although “learning in schools occurs both in the arts and through the arts…partnerships between schools and the professional Arts sector can take either form and are a growing area of education in Australia and around the world” (Suggett and Hutchinson 2009, 1).

In the curriculum, the Arts contribute a notion of time and place that exists within a multicultural space that is a “world saturated with imagery, sounds and performances” (VELS 2011). Through this rich and engaging interaction we become “more cognisant of the broad spectrum of human experience” (Ewing 2010, 56) in Victoria by the people who come from more than 200 countries, speaking 260 languages and dialects, following 135 faiths (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2013a). The Victorian Multicultural Commission confirms “Victoria's current position as the most multicultural state in Australia was forged on successive waves of migration. As time progressed, new arrivals changed the makeup of our society, introducing new cultures, languages, religions and faiths” (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2013b). This state is among the fastest growing and most diverse in Australia, a place where the rich diversity of the Arts and artists can promote stimulating ways of teaching and learning as new pedagogies evolve that connect schools, communities and educational institutions. Community based partnerships serves as an effective way for pre-service teachers to learn more about students and their cultures. The cultural immersion challenges pre-service teachers’ poor beliefs and stereotypes about the cultures of the students they teach, their families and locations (Cooper 2007).

Methodology

In this paper the authors draw on narrative inquiry, reflection, life interactions and web-based resources to provide examples of Arts education partnerships. Through reflection, they explore their own experience and action that opens up possibilities of purposeful learning (Amulya n.d.). Reflection is “central to the theory and practice of learning” as it involves thinking “about past or ongoing experience and events, situations or actions” (Reynolds 2011, 5). Reflective practice and narrative enquiry as methodological approaches are becoming more common and accepted.
contemporary forms of research. Leggo refers to narrative enquiry as a story, interpretation and discourse (Leggo 2008). Similarly Riley and Hawe recognise it is a story being told through the eyes of the actor/storyteller (Riley and Hawe 2005). It situates itself in the “way in which people view, understand, and make sense of their experiences” (Abril 2007, 23). Author 1 is a senior lecturer in music education and education studies at Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia) and Author 2 is the performing arts manager of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (Melbourne, Australia). Both authors in their respective jobs see themselves as “agent[s] of social change” (Katz 2008, 42) as they prepare Arts education curriculum in their various settings with pre-service teachers, schools, communities and artists. In this paper through narrative inquiry they present examples of initiatives and pathways that exist across universities, schools and the wider community. The authors’ narrative is shaped by cultural conventions and reflects their present lived world (Bruner 2004). Narrative inquiry resonates with an exploration of experience and identity (Chase 2005; Clandinin and Connelly 2000; Clandinin 2006). The findings and discussions highlight the authors’ voices in relation to the Arts in Victoria. Though much research has been undertaken globally to justify and support the Arts in the curriculum, the authors strongly agree with Bolstad “that it is still inherently difficult to measure” (Bolstad 2010, x). The purpose of this paper is not to advocate for the Arts as a plethora of research has been undertaken in this area, rather, the examples illustrate the contribution partnerships offer in Victoria and maybe replicated in other locations.

**Findings and Discussion**

The partnerships selected have all been formed through a combination of professional networking and intention of the practitioners involved to diversify pedagogical approaches available for Arts education. The outcomes and value of these partnerships include building the profile of the Arts in specific school (location) settings; enhancing professional practice for both educators and artists; providing models of practice for pre-service and generalist teachers and connecting Arts education with the Arts industry and the Arts in community. A common feature of these partnerships is the use of collaborative pedagogies where the process and journey are as important as the finished product. Across the partnerships the practitioners involved are exploring a range of emerging pedagogies such as blended learning, flipped classroom and messy teaching. Whilst these pedagogies are fundamental to the partnerships they are not the focus of the paper. The examples of partnerships discussed in this paper align with recent research commissioned by Arts Victoria and conducted by the Graduate School of Education, the University of Melbourne (Arts Victoria 2009; and 2011). This research considered the impact of school/Arts partnerships on student engagement, student voice, social learning, creative skills and Arts-related knowledge and skill (Arts Victoria 2009; and 2011).

**Music Educator’s Voice**

Deakin University is a multi-campus university with sites in metropolitan Melbourne and the regional cities of Geelong and Warrnambool. This is the only university in Victoria that offers all of the Arts subjects in the curriculum as a specialism for teacher education. Author 1 has been the course director for the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary) at Deakin University from January 2008 - February 2013. Within the teacher education courses, Arts education units can be undertaken as located teaching and learning or within CloudDeakin (an online learning environment). The teaching courses have strong connections with communities and schools where pre-service teachers are prepared to enter the profession as early career teachers. Working with schools and educational partnerships helps pre-service teachers move towards the profession as they become more fully aware of their teacher formation and transformation. As they work towards the profession, “they use these principles to inform their pedagogical practice” (Sutherland, Scanlon and Sperring 2004, 80). As a music educator teaching
and researching in the area of the performing Arts, Author 1 offers examples from Music, Dance and Drama, where effective ongoing partnerships foster teaching and learning spaces for community, student and lecturers to link theory to practice. Often these Arts education partnerships are linked to an assessment task for the pre-service teacher. Brief descriptions of some of these partnerships are highlighted below.

Deakin University has a strong partnership with Box Hill Institute, a leading provider in contemporary and applied music education music, where Deakin undergraduate students undertake a suite of six units as part of their cross-institutional enrolment within the Bachelor of Teaching (secondary) course. “This partnership is well established and diverse in its reach” (Box Hill Institute 2013). Since joining the university in 2001, Author 1 has made links with schools where strong partnerships have been fostered over the years linking theory studied at the university with music in schools and the community. Although the school-based partnerships take place over a short time during the course of the trimester, students experience hands-on practical teaching onsite. It is hoped that the experience will incline them to “teach constructively” (Bleicher and Lindgren 2002, 12). These partnership experiences have been efficacious for lecturer, student and music teacher as all engage in inquiry-based questioning and reflect on issues about professional learning (Joseph and Winspear 2008). Pre-service music education students also work onsite at a school in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne for special needs students. At this school students observe and participate in music lessons with a music teacher and music therapist in a new place and a different space. Pre-service teachers are challenged in such settings to learn different pedagogies to meet the diverse needs of the students. In a similar way this also applies when Author 1 takes her students to an aged care facility. In this space pre-service teachers learn how to teach and engage with older people through songs alongside an artist-in-residence. Over the years Author 1 and her students have also performed at this aged care facility giving another aspect to the partnership. Through online and anecdotal feedback from students, Author 1 has found the partnerships to be an effective way for her students to gain intergenerational music teaching and learning experience. Students have commented that the hands on experience is valuable, they gained more from the teaching and learning ‘onsite’ than hearing about it or reading about it. Although the music partnerships have proven to be suitable and effective immersion experiences, Author 1 agrees with Conkling and Henry (1999, 22) that “no matter what we do in our teacher education programs and no matter how well we do it, at best we can only prepare teachers to begin teaching”. Research has shown that music education partnerships if designed and planned well can improve music teaching and learning (Myers and Brookes 2003; and Robbins and Stein 2005). This way of working allows Author 1, practitioners in the partner organizations and the pre-service teachers to enrich each other’s learning thus establishing partnerships and collaborative professional relationships.

The Dance Educator involves pre-service teachers in local community festivals including: Youth theatre groups (Courthouse Geelong), Cultural development units in shires (Surf Coast, Moyne), Pako Festa, City of Geelong, Geelong High Tide Arts Festival, Rhythm of Africa with Wild Moves at Werribee Open Range Zoo; Return of the Kingfisher Festival for CERES environment park; Polly Kettle Festival for City of Geelong and Geelong Performing Arts Centre, Youth centres and working with Ausdance (Victoria). Through their engagement in these festivals, students engage in “choreographic methods of improvisation, learnt work and group work to facilitate the development of new movement vocabulary and an appreciation of how dance communicates in both a past and present context” (Deakin University Handbook 2012). Feedback from pre-service students and the dance educator indicates that these partnerships provide a range of individual benefits and community benefits. The onsite teaching and learning validates the creative and expressive work undertaken in the community where the pre-service teachers’ work is valued and appreciated. Community festivals serve as spaces where multicultural dance is celebrated and provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to further their understanding of the diverse cultures in their communities. In addition, students have the
opportunity to work with the Weave Movement Theatre as guest Arts practitioners where the visiting artists teach movement to dancers with intellectual and physical disabilities and those with additional needs. Author 1 in a recent article interviewing the dance educator at Deakin University, reported the wide range of dance styles and genres that the students experience and how this diversity takes them out of their comfort zone to explore something new and different such as African dance. Joseph argues “by providing rich multicultural programs for our pre-service students in dance education, we can foster positive experiences that promote diversity and enhance intercultural and cross-cultural understanding” (Joseph 2013, 135).

Similarly, the drama educator at Deakin University has formed a partnership with Fusion Theatre Company. This partnership provides pre-service teachers with opportunities to observe the impact of multisensory teaching techniques in learning programs for people with disabilities. These drama-based workshops use a range of techniques that help people to learn through more than one sense. These multi-sensory techniques can be applied across educational context and settings. This experience takes the Deakin students beyond a typical university teaching situation where they workshop ideas as peers to a learning site where they can observe the impact of specific multisensory techniques on learning outcomes for people with a range of abilities. This partnership allows students to explore ideas for effective inclusive education in schools and the community. The pre-service teachers further explore these pedagogies in their work with students at Presbyterian Ladies College and Mount Scopus Memorial College as well as with the Malthouse Theatre and Melbourne Theatre Company where onsite teaching and learning takes place with the lecturer. This combination of partnerships across community, theatre and education settings builds students’ confidence and competence in using a variety of teaching techniques to engage students with diverse learning styles and abilities. The learning process for the Deakin students involves ongoing reflection allowing them to develop understanding of the flexibility that can be incorporated into teaching practice through the use of multisensory teaching techniques. Deakin students who worked with the Fusion Theatre Company reflected the experience as both “positive and productive” (Raphael and Allard 2012, 219). A more recent partnership has formed in 2012 with Drama and cultural institutions where pre-service teachers visit the Jewish Holocaust Centre (Melbourne) and meet with education staff to develop learning activities using drama as pedagogy. They also incorporate these activities in their work at Presbyterian Ladies College and Mount Scopus Memorial College.

The partnerships used by Author 1 in relation to pre-service education for music teachers described above provide students with “experiences from which they can construct their own understandings of music,” (Wiggins 2007, 36). The partnerships offer ‘hands on’ opportunities for them to “develop an initial repertoire of teaching competencies, comprehend the various dimensions of music experience and understand student learning” (Campbell and Brummett 2007, 52). By engaging in community and school partnerships tertiary Arts educators enhance the quality of the learning experiences they provide for pre-service teachers in relation to “what they value, believe and understand” (Hayes 2010, 1).

Performing Arts Manager’s Voice

Author 2 is the performing arts manager of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). In this role she works with schools, school sectors, universities, government agencies, Arts industry practitioners and organizations to develop and implement curriculum for primary and secondary school students (approx. 5-18 years). In this section of the paper, she focuses on pedagogies evident in partnerships formed to implement Arts curriculum. The three partnerships described represent examples from the range of work Author 2 regularly undertakes. In her managerial role she works collaboratively in partnership to provide strategic advice and contribute to research and resource development projects.
In the State of Victoria there is a strong and dynamic relationship between the Arts and Education ministries. This relationship has taken on new importance with the publication in 2012 of *Towards Victoria as a Learning Community* by Minister for Education, Hon. Martin Dixon MP. In this policy statement, Minister Dixon states that “meaningful engagement within and between schools, with families, school sectors, and the wider learning community will be essential to drive sustainable system-wide gains in Victoria” (DEECD 2012, 25). Since 2008, Arts Victoria and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) have worked collaboratively to commission and publish a two-part report *Partnerships between schools and the professional arts sector* (Arts Education Victoria 2009; and 2011). The report, published by Arts Victoria is supported by a resource *Great Partnerships* that advocates and fosters deep learning through powerful learning experiences in the Arts (Arts Victoria 2012c). Author 2 has supported this partnership by providing strategic advice across each stage of the project regarding curriculum planning and delivery. This collaborative approach supports delivery of high-quality Arts education programs by illustrating collaborative practice and student-centred pedagogies. The second part of the report, *Partnerships between schools and the professional Arts sector: Evaluation of impact on student outcomes* identifies a positive impact on student outcomes relating to student engagement, student voice, social learning, creative skills and Arts-related knowledge and skills (Arts Victoria 2011). These research findings highlight positive student responses to a range of pedagogies including: active student participation in Art-making, student involvement in program design and planning, humour and fun, engagement with Arts professionals who encourage student input and take on student opinions, well-structured and mediated group work, involvement of parents and local community, modelling by arts professionals of creative approaches to generating ideas and problem solving and building on prior experiences in the Art form. *Great Partnerships* (see Arts Victoria 2012c) is an online resource that illustrates effective Arts education partnerships in action and provides information that schools and artists can use as they plan future partnerships. The online resource poses a range of questions for prospective Arts education partners to consider, for example, ‘what would an Arts and education partnership look like? What might it achieve? What will it take to make it worthwhile? And the bigger question…Why partner at all?’ Although partnerships have become a buzzword, it is acknowledged that working with partners “brings more resources and expertise to projects, enables creative and innovative solutions to issues, develop the skills and capacity of both partners and expand the practices of the partners” (Arts Victoria 2012c, 6).

Recently a new partnership has formed between the Australian Ballet and VCAA with funding support from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Strategic Partnerships Program (SPP). The program is known as the *Professional Learning Cluster Model* program (see The Australian Ballet 2013a). Author 2 is directly involved in this project which is designed to develop the ability and confidence of generalist primary classroom teachers to deliver dance education in their classrooms. Over three years, she has worked with the Education Director from the Australian Ballet where they have established connected networks each of about 12-15 primary teachers in a cluster of regional schools. The program involves site visits and uses the social networking tool ‘NING’ to give the teachers the opportunity “to participate and value dance as a form of artistic expression, recreational activity and entertainment” (The Australian Ballet 2013b). This combination of learning places and spaces provides flexible communication options and is building a strong community of practice. Each group of teachers undertakes a series of kinetic movement workshops using a model developed by the Australian Ballet Education Director and curriculum planning workshops delivered by Author 2. This approach empowers participants to build their own movement skills and to use their expertise as teachers to teach in new ways. Findings from this research will be available through the SPP Arts Network at the end of 2013 and into 2014. Initial feedback from teachers and school principals indicates that outcomes and value of the project include enhancing teachers confidence in working in a curriculum area where they do not have specialist training, building collegiate
relationships and using kinaesthetic activities to connect with other learning areas such as literacy.

Author 2 uses a partnership approach when mentoring early career teachers and teachers working to design and establish new learning environments in their schools. These partnerships involve discussion of curriculum related issues specific to the teacher’s situation and are often reported through publication of articles in professional journals or workshop presentations for local teacher professional associations including Ausdance (Victoria), the Association of Music Educators and Drama Victoria. These relationships both empower the teachers and inform curriculum and assessment policy development by providing authentic feedback about enacted curriculum.

Many schools in Victoria are working collaboratively in partnership with their communities, Arts industry organizations and not-for-profit organizations to enhance access to Arts education for students. Author 2 in her public service role acts as a critical friend in response to invitations from organizations such as Musica Viva (www.musicaviva.com.au), the Song Room (www.songroom.org.au/) and Bell Shakespeare (www.bellshakespeare.com.au/) that work across Australia to provide live and digital Arts education experiences for students. Musical Futures (http://www.musicalfuturesaustralia.org) is a program that began in the United Kingdom but now has a growing presence in Australia and Victoria. Author 2 was involved with the program in relation to briefing the founder David Price about the music context in Victoria focusing on the curriculum, particularly the senior secondary study Victorian Certificate of Education Music which allows students to focus on group or solo performance, contemporary or classical styles and to use a diverse selection of instruments from orchestral instruments to electric guitar, bass and drumkit or non-western instruments such as Gu Zheng or Tabla. As it has evolved in Victoria the Musical Futures program has expanded to incorporate both primary and secondary learning settings. In seeking advice from Author 2, these organizations are aiming to ensure that the programs they develop align with curriculum requirements in Victoria. These conversations contribute to partnerships between teachers, Arts industry and not-for-profit organizations and researchers seeking to enhance the quality and extent of Arts education programs.

The partnerships outlined by authors 1 and 2 can be seen as a powerful medium in building and strengthening communities in new places and spaces. The Arts can “act as a catalyst for personal and social transformation in schools and the community” (Ewing 2010, 2). Through such engagement new Arts education pedagogies can be adopted and enhanced as we look, listen, learn, think and work in dynamic ways as Australia embraces and implements a new national curriculum for the Arts.

Conclusion

This paper reports a few examples in Victoria, Australia where Arts education partnerships and collaborative ways of working in partnerships serve to foster and improve effective teaching and learning practice. Ewing (Ewing 2010) and Gibson and Anderson (Gibson and Anderson 2008) rightly point out that there has been a void of research in the area of the Arts as no longitudinal studies have been undertaken in Australia like those in Europe and the United States for example. Ewing in her recent review of the Arts in Australia provides robust research on the role the Arts play in transforming students’ learning processes and practices in schools and the community (Ewing 2010). This resonates with the new national curriculum where all children have the right to a meaningful Arts education program that is inclusive and celebrates diversity. The Multicultural Arts Victoria Annual Report argues that, “the arts are great catalysts that connect people in a deep and powerful way” (Multicultural Arts Victoria Annual Report 2010, 4). Not only do the Arts transcend social, cultural and linguistic barriers, it is hoped that people through their engagement with the Arts will have a “greater cultural appreciation, understanding and respect” for each other in the wider community (Multicultural Arts Victoria Annual Report 2010,
4). It may be argued, “communities that embrace diversity, creative expression and cultural activity are richer, stronger and better able to deal with social challenges” (Pope and Doyle 2006).

The examples described by the authors provide a few succinct ways of exploring, experiencing and engaging in the Arts. Through the examples the authors showcase some effective ways of enhancing Arts teaching and learning practice and the benefits and value of partnerships and working in partnership. Many of the partnerships discussed in this paper are being developed as models that can be taken up in other locations. The longer term development of these partnership models across educational settings, communities and the arts industry will open up many opportunities for further research and discussion of the benefits and characteristics of effective Arts education partnerships. Though brief, these diverse examples demonstrate that Arts education practice at all levels and in all contexts offers opportunities for rich partnerships that empower all involved. “Arts and education partnerships foster critical thinking, creativity and collaboration, bringing vital skills to 21st century teachers, artists and students... they create opportunities for people with diverse needs and they deliver strong learning outcomes” (Arts Victoria 2012c, 3). Through interaction between schools, communities, education authorities, university settings, and artists we can develop new ways of seeing and knowing in and through the Arts in order to “deepen our knowledge and understanding of them” (Russell-Bowie 2009, 4).
REFERENCES


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**ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

**Dr. Dawn Joseph:** Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

**Helen Champion:** Curriculum Manager, Performing Arts, Arts Curriculum and Assessment, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
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