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Opportunities and Challenges

Preparing Generalist Teacher Education
Students in Music Education in Australia

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Opportunities and Challenges: Preparing Generalist Teacher Education Students in Music Education in Australia

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Abstract: The Australian Curriculum on 'the Arts' will be implemented across Australia in 2014. This curriculum is expected to replace existing State and Territory curricula where educators are given the opportunity to review, renew, and refresh their practice. Music tertiary educators are faced with opportunities and challenges to effectively prepare and engage pre-service teachers (PSTs) as generalist teachers. This paper focuses on PSTs within the Bachelor of Primary Education course at Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia). Within this course, PSTs undertake two arts units as generalist teachers: in trimester one, they are introduced to music elements and creative music making; in trimester two, they focus on pedagogical issues and classroom implementation. In 2013, I gained ethical permission to undertake a research project titled "Pre-service teacher attitudes and understandings of Music Education". This case study draws on semi-structured interview data with music lecturers who taught in trimester two at Deakin University in 2013 (ten three-hour workshops). Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, I analyzed and codified the interview data and reported on two themes: ways of teaching and creative music making. This paper also highlights the challenges and opportunities sessional staff face when preparing PSTs in music education as generalist teachers.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Music Education, Arts Curriculum, Sessional Teaching

Introduction

In 2013, the Parliament of Victoria, Australia undertook an inquiry into the benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools (see Parliament of Victoria 2013). The scope of the inquiry is based on research and stakeholder evidence highlighting the importance of music education in schools from Foundation to Year 12. Though this is not the focus of my paper, this report documents the many invaluable benefits and variability of quality in provision and resources in Victorian schools and tertiary institutions (universities). From the evidence gathered by the Parliament of Victoria, the majority of respondents felt "music education should be taught by a specialist at the primary level" (2013, 92). This was based on the premise that generalist teachers "lack the skills and confidence to effectively deliver quality music education" as few hours within primary teacher education courses are allocated to music education. In 2013, at Deakin University (DU), Melbourne, Australia, where this study was carried in out within the Bachelor of Education (Primary), pre-service teachers (PSTs) only received 12 hours in Trimester one (T1) and 30 hours in Trimester two (T2) for music education. This amounts to a total of 42 hours, such a far cry from other international countries that, for example, receive 270 hours in Finland and 160 hours in South Korea (Letts and McPherson 2011).

Many primary PSTs enter the course with limited or poor music musical knowledge and abilities; they also lack a belief in themselves to confidently teach music as generalist teachers (Parliament of Victoria 2013; de Vries 2011; Russell-Bowie 2009; Holden and Boutton 2006; Harrison and Ballantyne 2005). Nevertheless, teacher education programs at DU, like many other Australian tertiary institutes, are exhorted to prepare and provide PSTs with quality experiences for teaching. The Parliament of Victoria (2013, 98) confirms "preservice teachers need more music education if they are expected to deliver music in primary classrooms". In this paper, I specifically focus on the Bachelor of Education (Primary) as a case study in 2013 through interview data with two sessional teaching staff. The term 'sessional' is used in Australia for those who work on a contract basis and are part time (Anderson 2007). This study is exploratory

in nature, therefore, no specific hypotheses is tested. It only offers the perspectives of two sessional staff; highlighting some of the ways they taught a music core unit when preparing PSTs as generalist teachers. The findings may be similar to what other institutions may face globally. I invite international dialogue in regards to how tertiary music educators and course directors can improve the delivery and content of music education to generalist teachers given course restraints. This research contributes to the wider debates higher institutions face regarding staffing and resources. As the DU Bachelor of Education (Primary) will be reaccredited in 2016, the findings will be most informative to stakeholders reaccrediting the course and when I rewrite the unit content to meet national major reforms such as the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) and the Australian Professional Standards for Teaching (see AQF 2013 and AITSL, 2011) These reforms are not the focus of this paper.

Bachelor of Education (Primary): Music Education

The Bachelor of Education (Primary) is the flagship teacher education course (degree) at DU. The four-year course consists of thirty-two units (credit points), two of which are core for the Arts undertaken in the 4th year of study. Music falls under the umbrella of the Performing Arts (dance, drama and music) in Australia. The Australian curriculum for the Arts (dance, drama, media, music and visual arts) identifies that “learning in the Arts involves making and responding” (ACARA 2011, 5). According to Gibson and Ewing (2011, 11), music and visual arts were “mandated from the 1960’s”. Given this history, the first core unit (ECA409 Primary Arts Education) only included music and visual arts at the Burwood campus where I have been based as a music educator since 2001. The second core unit (EEA410 Primary Arts Education: Focused Study) offers all the Arts in T2 where students can self-select one of the Art forms (Deakin University, 2012b). The paper discusses the Music Focus Study in 2013 (EEA410 Primary Arts Education: Focused Study).

The music focus study is built on the knowledge, skills and understandings attained in T1. This unit introduces PSTs to arts education through the development of personal skills in Arts practice and responding to the Arts (aesthetics, criticism and contexts) and, secondly, in the design and development of curriculum implementation materials in the Performing Arts and the Visual Arts (Deakin University 2014c). The music content of twelve hours (4 x 3 hour workshops) introduces PSTs to the elements of music and music creativity (soundscapes). PSTs gain an understanding of basic music teaching approaches, which focus on: creative music, singing, classroom instrument performance, listening and moving to music. They also develop basic performance skills in classroom percussion, as well as elementary level skills in reading graphic scores and staff notation.

In T2, PSTs undertake 30 hours (10x3 workshops) where a range of approaches is explored (Orff, Kodály and Dalcroze) including multicultural music. They consider current music education curriculum frameworks with a focus on the AusVELS dimensions of ‘creating and making’ and ‘exploring and responding’ in the arts and designing music curriculum and assessment (VCAA 2014). The emphasis for this unit is on pedagogical approaches to music teaching and learning. A central component of this unit encourages PSTs to increase their confidence in teaching and implementing music in the primary classroom. In the following section, I offer some theoretical understanding in regards to PST attitudes to music education and employing sessional staff to teach within the context of PST courses.

Pre-Service Teachers Music Education

A wide range of research has been undertaken globally regarding PST music education preparation (generalist and specialist) and their attitudes to music teaching (Asmus 2000; Yourn 2000; Hennessy 2000; Conway 2002; Harrison and Ballantyne 2005; Della Pietra et al 2010).

The research has shown that most primary school teachers at some point will integrate music or include music in their classrooms. Some generalist teachers may even be appointed to teach music. In Victoria, school principals can appoint either a music specialist or generalist teacher at the primary school level, however, presently, not all primary schools have specialist music teachers (Parliament of Victoria, 2013). The Australian Curriculum also states “schools are best placed to determine how the learning in the Arts will be delivered” (ACARA 2014, 4). Given this reality, it is no surprise that the Parliament of Victoria (2012) makes the recommendation that “the Victorian Government work with universities to develop a postgraduate course for in-service primary classroom teachers to specialise in music education” (Parliament of Victoria 2013, 95).

Music education generally starts at birth, although some may argue even from pre-birth (Whitwell 1999). In the formal sense, it begins at kindergarten and/or primary schools where either generalist or specialist teachers provide engaging and enriching classes. This has been the case since the early 19th century (Della Pietra et al 2010). Given this legacy, PST attitudes towards music education develop long before they enter teacher education courses (Hash 2009). Research, undertaken by leading music researchers, confirms this phenomenon (Berke and Colwell 2004; Abril and Gault 2005; Hash 2009). Russell-Bowie (2009) found in her research that generalist PST's in New South Wales (Australia) were ranked lowest in confidence to teach music and did not rank music a high priority compared to PSTs from other countries such as South Africa, USA, Ireland and Namibia. This attitude may stem from PSTs lack of experience and also the poor quality of music education received at schools. This outlook may significantly be attributed to what Russell-Bowie (2009, 33) suggests is a “lack of personal musical involvement generally in Anglo-Australian culture compared with those from other cultures”.

Within teacher education courses, tertiary music educators face ongoing issues of limited time (Gifford 1993; Garvis and Riek 2010) provision, resources, timetabling and competing for a space with the other Art forms (Chrysostomou 2011). As the Arts are mandated as a key learning area in the Australian Curriculum, this then challenges higher education providers to prepare generalist and specialist teachers sufficiently and effectively to teach the Arts. The Australian Curriculum points out that young Australians are entitled to engage with the Arts and “should be given an opportunity to experience the special knowledge and skills base of each” (ACARA 2014, 4). The National Curriculum places emphasis on intercultural understandings in the Arts (ACARA 2014). As tertiary music educators, we are urged to provide inclusive programs for cross-cultural connections to be made, moving from monoculture western Classical music to “building on shared interests and commonalities” (ACARA 2014, 24) where “many musics and musical approaches are featured on equal footing” (Schippers 2010, 31). Given the multicultural society we live in, as in many other parts of the world, PSTs in Melbourne will no longer teach in Anglo-Celtic classrooms. According to Nieto (1992, 281), “we do our students a disservice when we prepare them to live in a society that no longer exists”. They have to be culturally responsive and inclusive of multicultural music. Much international research has been undertaken in this area that suggest the benefits of engaging with a wide range of musics and genres that embrace multicultural music and cultural infusion (Anderson and Campbell 2011; Belz 2006; Blacking 1995; Chen-Hafteck 2007; Erwin, et al 2003; Fredericks 2008; Joseph 2009; Joseph and Southcott 2011 and 2013; Senders and Davidson 2000; Volk 2004). PTS courses at tertiary settings engaging in music education are either taught by full-time staff or by sessional staff.

Sessional Teaching

Sessional staff is employed for a range of reasons at universities. For example, staff may be on leave or in my case, as a full-time music educator, the teaching was beyond my workload, hence I needed to find a sessional or two to take my unit. According to Percy et al (2008, Forward) a large number of sessional staff is employed at higher education institutes in Australian “between

40 and 50%”. I do not wish to in this paper focus on sessional staff in relation to standards and quality assurance practice (see Harvey 2013), rather, I fully agree that they “make a significant but largely invisible contribution to the quality of teaching and learning in higher education” (2013, 1). In December 2008, the Australian Government was presented with a report from a Review of Australian Higher Education known as the ‘Bradley Review’ (see Australian Government 2008). This review abolished the cap on university places in 2008 in order to increase the proportion of the population to attain higher education qualifications. The increase in student numbers around Australia calls for more sessional staff to be employed, ensuring quality assurance standards are maintained (Harvey 2013). Once my workload was confirmed, I sought sessional staff in T1 of 2013 to teach in T2. According to Harvey et al (2005) little research has been undertaken in Australia in relation to sessional academics, though a body of research is emerging from other international countries.

With the ageing academic workforce (Bexley et al 2011) and increasing numbers of students, sessional staff provide the majority of teaching in Australian universities. This is confirmed by Percy et al (2008, 7) where it is stated “all universities depend heavily on sessional staff”. Therefore, these lecturers need to be supported and managed by their institutions to ensure quality teaching and learning (Ryan et al 2011). They undertake a range of “teaching support duties...but are not necessarily paid for all the domains of teaching and learning” (Anderson 2007, 112). Some of these sessionals are postgraduate students or early-retired staff who have good content knowledge but “little or no background in education practice” (Rice 2004, 798). As more universities are moving toward blended teaching and learning options in many parts of the world, sessionals are challenged to work in online environments as some may have previously worked only in face-to-face learning environments. Recently, more induction programs and professional development support programs are in place to help sessional staff make the transition (Rice 2004). However, longer-term programs would be more beneficial as there is no evidence to support whether induction or short-term professional development programs “improve teaching or students’ learning” (Weaver et al 2012, 237). Though the norm of just face-to-face “is now somewhat outdated” (Rice 2012, 798), Torrisi-Steel and Drew (2014, 374) found in their study that “face-to-face, teacher-led encounters were highly valued” by students. The sessionals in this case study used a hybrid of face-to-face and some blended learning (Salamonson and Lantz 2005) with an emphasis on practical hands-on music teaching and learning as the unit was an on-campus offering. Fortunately both sessionals were experienced tertiary educators. Their approach to teaching and learning took into account that learning is a constructive process where active learning takes place on the basis of experience (Christie 2005). As instructors they embedded learning in authentic tasks within a social setting where knowledge is dynamic, building on what students know to develop their music skills and understandings. When using a constructivist approach the students learning styles are considered, the emphasis shifts from teaching to learning in order for students to develop processes and skills (Christie 2005, Clarkson and Brooke, 2004, Thirteen Online 2004). This “usually means encouraging students to use active techniques (experiments, real-world problem solving) to create more knowledge and then to reflect on and talk about what they are doing and how their understanding is changing (Thirteen Online 2004). In this way, PST’s become engaged in the practical hands-on activities offered during the course in the hope they will apply their existing knowledge to new skills and understandings for classroom practice.

Methodology

In 2013, I sought ethical clearance from Deakin University to undertake a research project entitled *Pre-service teacher attitudes and understandings of Music Education*. This article discusses one phenomenological qualitative case study from the wider research as it sought in-depth understandings of the participant’s world. Phenomenological research involves exploring

participants' insights, experiences and understandings (Brocki and Wearden 2006; Reid, Flowers and Larkin 2005) that takes into account a process of interpretation by the researcher (Braun and Clarke 2006). At the end of 2013, I invited two sessional music academics through email to take part in the study as both taught a core unit in T2. I emailed them the Plain Language Statement, outlining the project with a few sample interview questions such as:

- How do you effectively prepare and engage PST's as generalist classroom teachers in music education?
- What are some of the challenges and opportunities you faced as a sessional member when preparing PST's in music education as generalist?
- What are some of the key things we need to include in our music teaching and how do you prepare the pre-service teachers to be culturally responsive?

Interviews are an effective way to gather qualitative data (Creswell 2009). Once the participants agreed to be interviewed we negotiated a time and place to meet in December 2013 that was convenient to each of them. It was also coincidental that both interviews took place on the same day at different times and places. Each was approximately one hour. Both interviewees were "assured that their participation was voluntary and that anonymity would be preserved" (Kokotsaki 2012, 137). The interviews only took place after their contract with the university had concluded, and, only once marks were submitted and available for the trimester. Two sessionals were employed to teach, as one could not take the entire trimester due to other work commitments for two sessions. Both knew each other and did not have to team-teach.

The semi-structured interview allowed for us to be conversational in manner (Kitchin and Tate 2000). With the permission of the interviewees, the conversation was digitally recorded and professionally transcribed by a research assistant (Steward and Rae 2012). No names are used in the paper; rather I refer to each as Interviewee A and Interviewee B. The small sample of two interviewees may be referred to as 'exploratory' as they provided me with a means to generate insights and information about my specific teaching unit (Denscombe 2010). Hence generalizations cannot be made to other sessionals and or to other teaching units. Having a small sample is a limitation itself as no "significant differences" can be shown. (Fakis, Hilliam, Stoneley, and Townend, 2004, 154). In addition, undertaking an interview allows the interviewee to accurately self-report, hence only a limited amount of information can be drawn at any one moment (da Costa and Remedios, 2014). Interviews can be time consuming and expensive in relation to transcription fees (Burns, 1998). The transcriptions were emailed to both interviewees to confirm the accuracy of the interview transcript as I was directly involved in the interviewing process (de Vries 2012) and knew both interviewees professionally. I analyzed the interviews using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which is a "qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences" (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009, 1). According to Eatough and Smith (2006) interviews that are in-depth, conversational and semi-structured are the most effective data collection strategy when using IPA. The transcripts allowed me to analyze and codify the data into themes. For this paper the themes: ways of teaching and creative music is discussed using direct quotations from the two transcripts (Larkin, Watts and Clifton 2006).

Discussion and Findings

I initially approached the sessionals through email and telephone contact to consider whether they had the time to teach the unit across ten weeks. Once they had agreed they then met with the administrative officer at DU to do the necessary paperwork, which can be time consuming and frustrating as pointed out by Interviewee A, who taught eight sessions, and Interviewee B, who taught two sessions. Both of them have many decades of teaching experience at schools and university settings and are internationally recognized as composers and leading music educators

with extensive publications. Having taught in teacher education courses over many years in their previous institutes, they had excellent content knowledge and years of experience in education practice. This is not always the case as Rice (2004) points out. As the full time member of staff, I did not have to mentor them in their role *per se*, rather, prior to T2; we had face-to face, email and telephone meetings regarding the unit guide and the 'online system called CloudDeakin. We regularly kept in touch throughout the trimester (face-to-face, email, telephone) regarding student issues, assignment questions or any other concerns. As I have attended music education workshops previously by both interviewees over the years, I knew that my PSTs would greatly benefit from their breath of experience and expertise, as they were dedicated, passionate, enthusiastic and well informed about music teaching and learning locally and globally.

A Snapshot of Ways of Teaching

I call this section ways of teaching as other music educators may find the opinions of the two interviewees useful for their own teaching. Similarities or differences of how to teach or ways of knowing and teaching may be common across music educators in educational settings. Interviewee A strongly felt that "there's just not enough time" to build PSTs confidence. Her approach to delivering the unit was based on "singing and active music making". Interviewee A firmly believed that active music making is through doing, indeed it is "key" for her. As generalist PSTs she believed "they need to sing and they need to move and they need to play instruments. You cannot learn this by watching a video or by listening to some audio about it." The hands-on practical approach through making and creating sounds resonated with interviewee B who was influenced by Murray Schafer who has written that the only way one can learn about music is by making music. She comments "one learns about sound only by making sound. The sounds may be crude, they may lack form and grace but they are ours". Further, interviewee B believed that practical music making for generalist student teachers is a good way to build their confidence and competency to 'give it a go' (an Australian idiom). Interviewee A found once PSTs developed a repertoire in class, their confidence improves. Research has shown that confidence to teach music education as generalist music is ranked low (Russell-Bowie 2009).

Working in groups is another way to build their confidence (Hogg 1994). Interviewee A found given the "limited time, we would sing a few songs, do a few dances, we played some pieces, and then once they had that repertoire they are ready to work in small groups". They learnt through seeing, hearing and doing in class, through the active music making, which is echoed mostly in the Orff approach. Both interviewees believed that the Orff approach was easy to adopt for PSTs who do not necessarily have any music background. It also involves including games. Interviewee A said "I often, though not always, start my lessons with a game; they love it because you get them laughing, their defenses drop, the walls break down and you are able to establish a connection". I firmly believe that it is in the actual doing that learning takes place (hands-on), by making connections and also having some fun. Through socialization in blended environments, connections can be made with the content, lecturer and peers.

The online environment included weekly readings and resources, which was then discussed and unpacked in practical music making terms. It provided support and reinforced what was learnt or what students missed if they were absent as attendance was not compulsory. Interviewee A pointed out once the PSTs had absorbed the readings "we made sure we talked about it the following week". Interviewee B in her two sessions uploaded online material in what she called "a few tempting things to grab their attention, a taster of what to expect in class". The in-class activities, online resources and notes on ways to teach provided PSTs with an initial repertoire of songs, body percussion, games and so forth. Interviewee A makes the point that "it takes years to develop a whole swag of strategies that you can use to engage students in learning". Engaging PSTs involves active communication. Interviewee A pointed out that "communicating with each other, learning interpersonal, intrapersonal skills, which you can only do by working with others,

collaboration and communication is very, very important". These skills are essential for teaching in any discipline area not just in music education.

Teaching has to be fun and exciting for the teacher and learner. Both interviewees used voice and instruments to show and tell of ways to teach music as a generalist. Interviewee B, for example, used a simple song, "Grandfather's Clock", to show PSTs how to turn something very simple into a piece. As she explained: "I sang it and then broke it up and showed them how you can turn it into a piece using rhythm patterns and ostinato (repeated pattern) from words". Interviewee A in her workshops said she used:

a combination of singing, saying, moving, dancing and playing. I believe that movement and dance is wonderful to integrate with music and I think that it's the best way to teach music through using your body, through body percussion, through movement, through folk dancing. This way we can learn all the musical concepts.

Both interviewees spoke of the importance of teaching about approaches to music teaching and of philosophies, however, they felt for generalist PSTs it was important to build their confidence to sing and be creative than focus largely on the theoretical basis of various approaches to music education. Working hands-on through active music making and creating with a small group proved beneficial for the teaching and learning environment. Kokotsaki and Hallam (2007, 107) point out there are "clear benefits to be gained, not only musically, but personally and socially".

Creative Music Making

Both sessionals advocated the importance of creative music making when preparing generalist or specialist PST's. It is "the heart and soul" (Interviewee A) of music making where music can be experienced by all. As Interviewee A elaborated:

That's what it's all about... music is for everyone. We can all do it, and derive immense joy from that and have an incredible connection, even a heart connection. I always talk about the 'heart connection' it is so much more than just developing a few skills and concepts.

This was similar to what Interviewee B felt about creativity, noting that "it is the basis of music making, and you can learn so much music through it". She strongly believed everyone should be "able to engage with music through sound making... using voices, available classroom instruments, digital sounds, and sounds from the natural environment. This can be easily achieved, as Interviewee B points out "by using ones imagination, creating animal and bird sounds". The emphasis here is on music making that is 'do-able' and achievable for the generalist PST. Interviewee A found creative music most joyous when the PSTs had the opportunity to work in small groups and create a simple task. She stated that:

It might have been singing or playing instruments and working on some of the techniques - maybe creating a piece using a rondo for example, or using some of the musical concepts, maybe incorporating rhythm, or tempo, or dynamics. Working like that and then rehearsing and performing, there's a sense of great achievement, especially when they've done work well and they have the opportunity to watch each other and learn so much from each other.

This was similar to what Interviewee B experienced in her two workshops where she had given the PSTs a model to work from. They worked in small groups and, as she noted:

They had come up with some things - words, ostinato, and rhythms. I went round to the class and found one group who were trying to do a free piece in rhythm and it wasn't working, so I said to them: "Why are you doing that? Why are you counting it in four?" They didn't really know so I said: "Don't bother doing that, just, do it in free time" and it was much more interesting after that.

Creative music making lends itself for PSTs to explore, improvise and create their own sounds and music. Creativity for both interviewees resonates with holistic learning. "It is interactive, incorporating discussion, social context, sensitivity to others and the acquisition and improvement of literacy (music) skills" (Banaji et al 2013, 63). The face-to-face learning episodes gave PSTs the opportunity, according to Interviewee A, to "learn so much about our music and ourselves and we can also learn about other cultures". Both interviewees strongly felt the importance of including multicultural music. Interviewee A commented:

Music and the arts are one of the most wonderful ways to reach and engage with students from all over the world regardless of whether they can speak English. Whether they understand our culture, or not, this is one of the ways that we can make them feel that they are part of the class. Help to build their self-esteem, their confidence.

Music is an effective vehicle for including all children from different languages, ethnicities, religions and cultures. It can also offer a "viable solution" to problems facing youth in schools (Legette 2003, 58). Interviewee B pointed out in her two workshops "at no point did I mention Mozart, Bach or Beethoven. I simply didn't mention their names. We were just working in sound - that was the whole thing". Creative music making transcends socio-cultural barriers and borders. Interviewee B gave the following example: "If you've got an Ethiopian child or a little Arabic kid, they can make the sounds that relate to them and the music that they know". This exploration of sound aligns with the Australian curriculum (ACARA, 2014) that promotes creativity and includes music from Australia's First Peoples, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and from around the world. As music educators we are "expected to promote creativity through the national curriculum for music" (Philpott 2001, 216).

Final Thoughts: Directions and Implications

This study presents a snapshot of some of the ways tertiary music educators can prepare generalist PSTs to teach music in primary classrooms. Whilst the current case study of two sessional staff reveals considerable insights, generalizations cannot be made in relation to sessional staff or full-time staff preparing PSTs in music education. Additional research across other tertiary institutes is essential. Working with sessional staff gave me the opportunity to review the unit content, assessment and delivery. It helped me see things in a different light as the music educator based at the Burwood campus. The liaising through email, phone calls and face-to face meetings relieved feelings of isolation and offered me the chance to be part of a community of practice, keeping me up to date with classroom practice (Hunter 2011, Bresler 2002). According to Wenger 2006 "communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly". This resonated with how interviewee A felt as a sessional. She stated "there was no community... there's no one else that actually engaged me". Interviewee A found having me on board as a full time member of staff provided support her comment "it was lovely having you there" was beneficial for both of us as we reflected on the unit and workshops. It is through reflection we can improve our own music practice as many of us work in isolation as music educators (Joseph 2011).

Given the time constrains within the course, it is not possible to expect PSTs to develop a wide range of knowledge and skills in music education. However, interviewee B noted, it is

necessary to “learn about and recognize the elements of music as they sing, play and compose a range of music of their own and from other cultures”. She elaborated that student teachers also need to be able to “record and share music that they sing, play and create”. By doing this, PSTs “can connect music to other art subjects and learning areas”. Therefore, it is important to know not only how to create and make, but also how to explore and respond to music. I agree with Kokosaki (2012, 150) that exploring music creativity needs to be “maximized and encouraged by both the schools and the training establishments”. As creativity in music is a multifaceted concept, its definition has changed over the years allowing everyone to explore, express and experience music making socially. The notion of creativity is socially and culturally situated (Kokotsaki 2012, Burnard 2012). Hence, valuing and acknowledging PSTs creative music products is an essential part of teaching and learning. This reinforces and builds their confidence as future teachers. It is hoped that they will “become active producers and thinkers rather than consumers and reproducers of knowledge” (Kokosaki 2012, 130). With an increasing demand of PSTs wanting to specialise in music they can do so in the new accredited course for Bachelor of Education (Primary) (2013-2015), which offers a pathway of a suit of six music units called the Middle years (years 7-10) study option. This prepares them for teaching in primary and also in secondary schools with a twenty-day secondary school placement. The cohort discussed in this paper is pipelining where no music specialism was offered, rather two arts education units are core within the course as they graduate as generalist primary teachers.

As there is so much to teach in so little time, the opportunity to always engage and mentor PSTs was not possible as students were not required to attend regularly. As attendance is not compulsory, the interviewees found it frustrating, it left gaps in the PSTs learning when they missed class. Interviewee A strongly felt because PSTs are learning about active music making “attendance should be at least 80% compulsory”. The unit was attached to school placement during the face-to-face time. Nevertheless, the teaching and learning experience was delivered in a practical way where PSTs ‘role played’ primary children at times through active music making, giving them some ideas to trial in regards to engaging and experiencing music making in a creative way when on placement after the unit delivery. Youn (2000, 181) found in her study that “beginning music teachers require supported and structured experiences”. As tertiary music educators, we are exhorted to be mentors to PSTs (Campbell and Brummett 2007). The PSTs were encouraged to make contact with the sessional staff (email) or myself (email or telephone) during the unit and also when on placement should they require additional assistance to trial a music lesson.

Finally, when asked how both sessionals found the class interaction and engagement, they commented: “they [PSTs] were a lovely class, they were terrific students, very approachable”, “there were some beautiful students” and some “were terribly engaged and were wonderful”. With such positive responses about the class, I hope that the PSTs will put into practice what they learnt from the sessionals. The Arts domain within the Australian Curriculum will be implemented from 2014, giving teachers the opportunity to review, renew and refresh their practice and be inclusive of the diverse Arts practices and peoples in multicultural Australia. The cohort of PSTs undertaking the unit in Trimester two graduated in December 2013. A future follow up study with these PSTs would be worth investigating in regards to the process and practice of class-music as generalist or as music teachers. The challenges, concerns and successes about ‘making and responding’ to music in creative ways would be insightful and informative in relation to the ‘general capabilities’ of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts (ACARA, 2014) and may assist tertiary educators to prepare students to be effective teachers (Rohwer & Warren, 2004).

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