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‘We did the how to teach it’: Music Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

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Abstract: The Australian Government recognizes that the Arts are a critical part of formal school education and it should not be viewed as subordinate or extra. This paper forms part of a wider research project titled “Pre-service teacher attitudes and understandings of Music Education” that started in 2013. The focus of this paper investigates music teaching and learning in a core unit within the Bachelor of Education (Primary) course at Deakin University (Australia). Using questionnaire and interview data gathered in 2014, I employ Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to analyse and codify the data. Three themes are discussed in relation to: Why it is important to include music in the primary school? What was enjoyable and what aspects were challenging in the music workshops? What can students integrate as generalist teachers into their future classrooms? Though the findings focus on “we did the how to teach it”, it also highlights some challenges and opportunities for students and staff. Tertiary educators are challenged to raise the capacity and status of music when preparing students to translate the music curriculum into their future classrooms.

Introduction and background

In Australia, the Arts curriculum (dance, drama, media, music, and visual arts) in schools is mandated as a key learning area in Federal and State curriculum. The Australian Curriculum (Federal) clearly outlines 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, p.4). Teacher education courses (programs/degrees) at Australian universities include some of the Arts. Arts education in pre-service education teacher courses are competing for time within the course (Garvis & Riek, 2010) and also competing for an equal space (Chrysostomou, 2011) within Arts curriculum. The reality of limited staffing, timetabling and resources and the crowded curriculum is not a new phenomena (Schippers, 2009; Jeanneret & Stevens-Ballenger, 2013; Parliament of Victoria 2013). In the light of this, universities are trying to manage the ever-crowded curriculum within teacher education courses. It remains a challenge to develop the necessary competencies and confidence to teach music in the primary school as a non-specialist. Research has shown that generalist teachers lack confidence to teach music (see Mills, 1989; Jeanneret, 1997; Hennessy, Rolfe, & Chedzoy, 2010; Heyworth, 2011; Russell Bowie, 2012). Research in Australia and around the globe reflects the little time students get in their course that prepares them for the classroom (Baldwin & Beauchamp, 2014). Given the limited timeframe allocated to the Arts (music education), it is not realistic for schools to expect early career teachers to have the necessary skills and confidence to teach music in the primary school. Unless there is pressure from teacher registration bodies like that of the Victorian Institute of Teaching (the governing body that accredits teacher education courses in Victoria and registers teachers), universities

will not provide more time and resources for music education within teacher education courses. The 2008 government initiative called NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy) a Federal government requirement continues to drive literacy and numeracy programs in teacher education courses and in schools. This pressure then makes it even harder to generate change in course structures in relation to time and resource allocation for the Arts (such as music). This situation is similar to the United Kingdom where the focus has been on literacy and numeracy and schools have selected curriculum areas in response to government initiatives. Despite years of research that show the myriad benefits of music education, researchers point out “music has remained a low priority” (Hallam, Burnard, Robertson, Saleh, Davies, Rogers & Kokatsaki, 2009, p.222).

The 2013 *Inquiry into the benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools* highlights the importance of music education in schools and recommends a guide to support schools to deliver “sequential and in-depth music education from Foundation to Year 10” (see Parliament of Victoria, 2013, p. xviii). The report found, “the current primary pre-service teacher training courses do not adequately equip teachers to deliver music education in their classrooms” (p. xxiii). The Parliament of Victoria Education and Training Committee has “decided not to recommend mandating the level of music study delivered within pre-service teacher training courses” (2013, p. 100). The Review of the Australian Curriculum Final Report (See Australian Government, 2014, p.212) recognizes that the “Arts are a crucial part of formal school education and should not be viewed as an ancillary or ‘add-on’ component of schooling”. The report proposes only two of the Arts strands be mandatory and “recommend music and visual Arts” (Australian Government, 2014, p. 217). Historically, music and visual arts were “mandated from the 1960’s” in Australia (Gibson & Ewing, 2011, p.11).

This article situates itself within the Bachelor of Education (Primary) (BEd [Primary]) at Deakin University (Burwood campus) in relation to a core unit (subject) Primary Arts Education (ECA409). The BEd (Primary) has the largest intake of students within undergraduate teacher courses at the university. In 2014, two hundred and forty three generalist primary students in their fourth year undertook the core unit. This was the last time the unit was shared between visual arts and music in the course. The new course iteration from 2013 now includes Dance and Drama. The debate surrounding which of the performing or visual arts is to be offered is not the focus of this article, rather, I discuss some of the pertinent findings in relation to pre-service attitudes and understanding of music education from a student questionnaire and from interview data with the music sessional that taught the unit in 2014. The paper also discusses the pedagogy used as an effective way to prepare generalist teachers in a short space of time. The hands-on approach of ‘we did the how to’ proved a useful and successful way to increase student confidence and build their music skills and understandings.

I was on Academic Research Leave (ASL) in trimester one (2014) hence a sessional took my classes. Percy, Scoufis, Parry, Goody, Hicks and Macdonald (2008, p. 7) point out “all universities depend heavily on sessional staff”, some in the region of 50%. My sessional was a well-informed music educator who had many years of teaching experience at schools and more recently at universities in Melbourne. As a practising music educator, she provides professional development in the area of music education for in-service teachers through a professional music association and seemed most suitable to employ for this unit. The sessional used a hybrid of face-to-face and online (Salamonson & Lantz, 2005) material during the trimester. Although I developed all the teaching material and assessment tasks for the unit, the sessional had much flexibility in how to deliver the content. She made her own decisions in relation to the choice of activities and resources used in class (songs, listening extracts, materials and games). Before the unit started in March 2014, I held a few meetings (face-to-face, telephone and emails) with her in December 2013. Though I was on ASL, the

sessional was still able to maintain contact with me as well as with the unit chair (the visual arts lecturer). I used qualitative research methodology drawing on questionnaire data from 143 students and interview data with one sessional music lecturer. I used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to analyse the data discussing attitudes and perceptions of preservice attitudes and understandings of music education. The data gathered contributes to the growing body of research regarding the benefits of including music education in primary schools. It also strengthens the argument for more time, staffing and resourcing for the Arts within teacher education courses. The data gathered serves as useful information in revising the unit material (content, delivery and assessment task) for the Bachelor of Education (Primary) course redesign and reaccreditation in 2016. This university has been a key provider with a long and successful history in teacher education in the State of Victoria. The findings contribute to discussions with government and professional organisations regarding the provision of music education at higher education institutes.

Music education within the Bachelor of Education (Primary)

Deakin University is known as a leading provider of teacher education (Deakin University, 2014a). In particular, the Bachelor of Education (Primary) is the flagship teacher education course within the School of Education. The four-year course comprises thirty-two units (credit points/subjects) including two core Arts education units each worth one credit point each. As the old course is pipelining, students in 2014 undertook ECA409 in trimester one. This unit is designed to introduce students to the theory and practice of Arts education in primary schools (Foundation to Level 6). In this unit, students developed skills in Arts practice and responding to the Arts, they gained skills to design and develop curriculum in the performing arts and the visual arts (Deakin handbook, 2014b). The unit in 2014 was shared with visual arts across eleven weeks of the trimester. The first week was an introduction to the Arts followed by four weeks of music workshops (three hours per week) and four weeks of visual arts workshops (three hours per week) leaving two weeks of school placement.

During the four weeks of music, students gained an introduction to the teaching and learning of the elements in music such as rhythm and duration, pitch and melody, dynamics, tempo, timbre, articulation, texture, form and structure. They learnt about the elements through active participation drawing on the Orff approach as one way to teach the elements. This hands-on way of teaching was done through singing songs, playing on classroom instruments, using body percussion, listening and moving to music and through creative music making. The Orff approach encompasses improvisation, movement, classroom instruments, creativity, and teaching techniques such as natural speech rhythms to promote rhythmic learning (Choksy, Abrahamson, Gillespie, & Woods, 1986). Songs were taught in a variety of ways such as call and response, rote and imitation, clapping the melody, saying the words to the rhythm and, singing line-by-line or phrase-by-phrase. The Song score was provided in order for students to follow the melody. It also enabled students to engage in discussion about the elements of music. A range of school songs such as 'Rain is falling', 'Land of Silver Birch', 'Funga Alafia', 'Haida' and 'The Lion Sleeps tonight' were used. Students also sang chants, greeting songs, counting songs, folk songs, Australian and popular songs that were suitable for the primary school level.

In addition to the above, the creative music approach was used to teach about the elements through composition using soundscapes (descriptive pieces using graphic notation symbols). The students drew on ideas from the leading Canadian music educator and composer Murray Schafer. They explored the sonic world using conventional classroom instruments such as bells, triangles, drums, xylophone and unconventional sounds from the

natural environmental such as human, animal, transport, weather, objects/materials. Students were taught how to compose which involved graphic notation, rehearsal and performance. This was done to model good practice in terms of how to teach composition, how to compose and how to perform the piece. A group assignment was attached to this aspect of the content. During the four weeks students were placed in groups to work on their soundscape using graphic notation for the assignment. This aspect of the unit content was intended to develop students' musical understanding and musical imagination as well as to enhance their critical thinking and attitudes, thus resonating with the three strands (Physical, personal and social learning, discipline based learning and interdisciplinary learning) in the AusVELS curriculum (VCAA, 2015). The unit included a comprehensive online presence where students undertook four weeks of self-directed readings and PowerPoint tutorial activities that correlated with the face-to-face workshops.

What does the research say about music education?

To a large extent, countries around the world offer music and/or visual arts at the primary school level. Music is either taught by a specialist or is integrated into other key learning areas of the curriculum by a generalist teacher. Alter, Hays and O'Hara (2009) found in many Australian primary (elementary) schools; it is the generalist teacher who is responsible for teaching the creative Arts (music). Music Australia (2014) found "most Australian kids are missing out on the many benefits of music education in school because as few as 23% of State schools are able to provide their students with an effective education. In the private system its closer to 88%". Though ongoing research shows the benefits of music education, music is not often perceived as an important part of primary education. Several papers have been written about this in regards to pre-service teacher attitudes and perceptions about music education (see Asmus, 2000; Yourn, 2000; Hennessy, 2000; Conway, 2002; Harrison & Ballantyne, 2005; Della Pietra et al, 2010; Jeanneret & Stevens-Ballenger, 2013). In Australia, The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) has driven the curriculum since 2008 (NAPLAN, 2013). Students at schools are assessed annually in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9; they undergo the national test twice during the primary years of schooling (Y3 & Y5). NAPLAN is made up of 4 areas (Domains) and tests reading, writing, language and numeracy (ACARA, 2011). Unfortunately, teachers' focus on preparing their students for NAPLAN and cut back on subjects like the Arts (music) that are supposedly not making children literate (Polesel, Dulfer & Turnbull, 2012; Gill 2011). Research by Caldwell and Vaughan (2012) in Australia found the involvement of students in Arts education in particular in music programs has been shown to increase academic achievement in NAPLAN results. When undertaking the 'The Song Room' program in their schools, students outperformed those students who did not participate in the program. They gained approximately one year in scores in NAPLAN in reading when undertaking 'The Song Room' program and did better on their school achievement tests. In Australia, a literature review completed as part of a research project into the impact of Arts education (*Bridging the Gap in School Achievement through the Arts*, Vaughan et al, 2011) found the "involvement of students in Arts and music programs has been shown to increase academic achievement (Bamford, 2006, Wetter, Koerner & Schwaninger, 2009) ... performance on standardised reading and verbal tests (Butzlaff, 2001) ... reading for pleasure (Uptis & Smithrim, 2003) and literacy (Bamford, 2006 & Hunter, 2011). The research clearly indicates the myriad benefits of including music at schools. Though the Arts (music education) is mandated in Australian curriculum, there continues to be little or no increase of time, resources and staffing in schools or within teacher education courses to prepare generalist teachers to effectively teach music in the primary school.

Baldwin and Beauchamp (2014, p.197) confirm several researchers have “attempted to seek an understanding of why teachers in the primary school have difficulty in their confidence of teaching music”. One reason may link to the fact that tertiary music educators do not have enough time allocated for music education within teacher education courses. Russell-Bowie (2009) found in her research that students in Australia (New South Wales) have little or no confidence to teach music education at the primary level. From my own experience at Deakin University (Victoria) this is similar to Russell-Bowie’s findings in that students say they had little and/or poor quality music education in their schooling. Hence, they do not feel it an important aspect of the curriculum and have little confidence to teach music. Campbell and Brummett (2007) suggest tertiary music educators can offer support and structured experience for their students as mentors to gain some confidence to teach music as a generalist teacher. My research highlights a positive and effective way to prepare students for the primary school as generalist teachers by focusing on “we did the how to teach it” in a short space of time, encouraging and empowering students to take risks, building their confidence to include music in their future classrooms.

Methodology

According to Yin (2013), exemplary case studies are interesting, complete and contribute to knowledge. In 2013, I gained ethical clearance from Deakin University to undertake the research (questionnaire and interview) in relation to my project *Pre-service teacher attitudes and understandings of Music Education*. This qualitative case study sought understandings with BEd (Primary) students through an anonymous questionnaire. Questionnaires are a cost effective method to collect data (Strange, Forest & Oakey, 2003), they also are an easy and logical option to collect information (Wisker, 2008). At the end of the trimester in 2014, I arranged with the sessional to visit her classes during which I explained the project, invited the students to participate and responded to any concerns or questions. I did this to encourage a higher response rate (Baldwin & Beauchamp, 2014). Although there were 243 students enrolled in the unit, only those students that attended the last workshop received a covering letter, the consent form and the questionnaire. On average the questionnaire took approximately 15min–30min to complete at the end of the class depending on the amount of detail students provided. The questionnaire had been piloted for reliability the semester before with a different cohort. The hard copy questionnaire provided enough writing space for students to provide answers to the open-ended questions. Twelve questions were asked, two focused on age and gender and ten were open-ended questions. Some of the opened ended questions include: why is music education important in the primary school? What did you enjoy about the unit? What was challenging about music workshops? What aspects would you like to learn more about? What were some of the highlights in the unit? Did you find the online material useful? Give reasons. The use of open-ended questions according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p.255) is “a very attractive device for smaller scale research or for those sections of a questionnaire that invite an honest personal comment from the respondents in addition to ticking numbers and boxes”. As participation was voluntary, students left their questionnaires at the end of the workshop on a table in the front of the room. In total, 143 students completed the questionnaire (61%).

In addition to the questionnaire data gathered from students, I invited the music sessional to be interviewed as part of the research. I wanted to explore her views, experiences, beliefs and motivations regarding the research topic (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). Interviews are widely used in qualitative methodology as a “powerful means of both obtaining information and gaining insights” (Hannan, 2007). Interviews provide a ‘deeper’ understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely

quantitative methods, such as questionnaires. Informed consent was gained by the sessional to undertake a one-hour interview at the university. The interview was recorded with her permission. Though the semi-structured interview was conversational in manner, key questions were asked such as: why is it important to provide primary generalist teacher education students with music in the course? What were some of the challenges? Was the online material useful? Did you feel the students were confident to teach some aspects of the music component of the unit? What was enjoyable for you? What was the standard of the assessments? The data questionnaire and interview were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). According to Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009, p. 1), IPA allows the researcher to understand how people make sense of their experiences and the meanings they attach to them. I analysed the data by reading the questionnaire and interview data making initial notes and grouping them in tables (Smith & Osborn, 2003). I re-read the tables by focusing on the most important and interesting data and clustered them into overarching themes. The questionnaire data provided me with useful information about student attitudes and perceptions regarding music teaching and learning in a core unit. The interview data gave the sessional the opportunity to “think, speak and be heard” (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005, p.22) in relation to how we prepare generalist teachers in the primary course for music education in a shared unit at Deakin University. The themes will be discussed in relation to: why it is important to include music in the primary school? What was enjoyable and challenging in the workshops? What can the students integrate as generalist teachers in their future classrooms? All data in the findings is illustrated using direct quotations (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006) to inform my discussion and support the theme analysis (Dallos & Vetere, 2006).

Findings

From the student questionnaire, 120 were female and 23 were male. The age groups ranged from 20-25 and 41-over. The majority of female and male students fell into the age group of 20-25. Six female students were aged 41 and one male student identified as 41 and over. As no statistical data was analyzed, generalizations cannot be made about the Arts (music) in primary teacher education courses in Australia.

Why it is Important to Include Music in the Primary School?

All students found music is an important part of the Australian curriculum. Most students included words such as “fun”, “important”, “holistic”, “inclusive”, “learn about other cultures”, “builds confidence”, “promotes creativity” and “caters for different learning styles” when asked why is it important to include music in the primary school. The sessional felt “teaching music is another tool, it is another technique, another approach for teachers, they can engage students and then hook them into where they are. It can add fun and variety to the way things are taught in the classroom”. Comments by students such as music “enriches students learning” and “you don’t have to be the smartest to enjoy and do well in music” was evident that students found music can be learnt, valued and appreciated by all children. One said, music “caters for all abilities in the primary school” and “builds confidence in children”. A few students remarked by including music in the primary school it “supports analytical and creative thinking”, “it engages left and right sides of the brain”, “it helps to integrate math’s and language in class” and “it contributes to the different learning styles”. Several students included “Gardner’s multiple intelligence” in relation to why it is important to include music in the primary school. For most of the students, the inclusion of

music in the primary school resonated with words such as culture and belonging. Comments such as “music can unite all cultures in the classroom” and “it opens our eyes to the acceptance of others” were clear indicators that music serves as a powerful platform to learn about other cultures, languages and people. One student remarked that including music is “important for students who are perhaps new or don’t speak much English”. Living in a multicultural society like that of Melbourne, many students added the word culture into their response, one student commented “music is a big part of culture and life and so it should be taught” another found “it provides opportunities for students to shine and feel they belong in the school program”. This sense of belonging resonates with words used by students such as “it gives children freedom” and “freedom to create and express themselves as children, which is important in learning”. The sessional added, “it is vital to prepare the students to be culturally responsive, I got a sense they knew that, they were sensitive and inclusive and they were sensitive to it”. Teaching singing, listening, instruments and movement is effectively used worldwide in primary classrooms. Music has no barriers and geographical borders; it travels without a visa and can serve as an effective vehicle to teach and learn about others.

A few students recognized that music could be used “for classroom management and control”, “warm up songs can be used to get their adrenaline running before the class started”, “clapping exercises can be used at the start of the year to get to know children’s names” another said “it could be useful to settle the students after recess”. The sessional pointed out:

Now there is also the urgency with the Australian curriculum coming up that every primary teacher has to be able to teach music... there is a lot more panic, I can see it with teachers in schools in primary at the moment that they have to deliver and assess an Arts curriculum and they don’t feel confident about it.

Hence, the need for more time to be allocated within teacher education courses is essential in order to prepare generalist teachers with the necessary music skills, knowledge and understanding. Given the short timeframe within the unit, the ‘how to teach’ as a practical hands-on approach in the delivery is an important aspect when preparing students to include music into their future classrooms.

What was enjoyable and what was challenging in the workshops?

There was an overwhelming response from students in that they all enjoyed the music workshops. Only a few stated they had prior music knowledge and could read or play an instrument or had undertaken music to year twelve (final year of high school/secondary school). Common words used by students to describe that they enjoyed the workshops were “fun”, “enjoyable”, “I liked singing”, “I enjoyed clapping” and “I like the music games”. The idea of “hands on learning in workshops with simple ideas can be used in any classroom” was positive feedback from a student that the activities learnt could readily be transferred to the classroom. The sessional pointed out “I loved the light bulb moments, I loved the moments that are not marked by verbal or written feedback. I love the moment when you look at them and they suddenly get it.” This was confirmed by a comment that “the workshops were fun, it makes me want to include it in my classroom because I can do it”. The notion of practical hands-on workshops made it easy for the generalist student to gain confidence and competency to be able to teach some music at the primary level. One student recognized the benefits of this by saying “I like that we were treated as kids in that we actually go to participate in the activities instead of just learning about it”, another added “I thoroughly enjoyed it, the energy and engagement was high, I learnt concepts throughout”. The practical activities also meant that students had to participate in class, one student pointed out “I had to work out of my comfort zone” and another added “it made me feel young again”. The sessional found giving them small doable tasks that were achievable

helped build confidence, she stated “I let them choose their groups at the beginning, they could choose people they felt safe with, I gave them tiny little tasks that layered up. The tasks were simple and achievable”. The hands-on learning in class “broadened my knowledge of learning to pass onto children”; said one student, another added it was “fun, educational and practical”. It was encouraging to note that many students enjoyed playing on the classroom instruments (melodic and non melodic instruments), they learnt simple graphic notation in order to compose a soundscape as one student pointed out “you don’t have to play an instrument to enjoy music”. The sessional confirmed:

They loved playing on the new instruments, we talked about how precious they were, how much they were worth and we talked about how to handle them and how to carry them. The rain stick was a bit of a hit, they loved the xylophones, they loved working in groups, and they loved singing with others.

Though students found the workshops a positive and useful teaching and learning experience, some found the workshops challenging. One student found “four weeks is a time constraint”; another student who had no music background felt “learning the elements from scratch was challenging”. This was similar to the sessional who found “you don’t get enough time with the classes to get through the work and to teach them what they need to know”. One student remarked, “coming from a non-music background was hard and just understanding the terms was difficult”. For many students who may have last experienced playing the recorder in primary school, “reading music was challenging”. “Performing in front of the class” and “singing in front of other people” was also a challenge for some. By engaging in a practical hands-on way in the workshops, students had a good idea of how children learn music at school. The sessional commented students had to “get over looking silly in the workshops” hence, trying the activities in class gave students the confidence to be able to teach it to their peers before they went out to a school.

The experience of doing is an important aspect of the learning process. One student pointed out “it took longer than I expected to feel confident and comfortable in this environment but it did come and this helped make the learning experience so much better”. Part of the music workshops was undertaking group work (composing a soundscape) which some students found challenging in relation to “what symbols to use, how to tell the story with sound”. It was also challenging to try to work as a team (4-6 students) in a short space of time to prepare a graphic score and soundscape as part of an assessment, as one student pointed out “group work was challenging to do when we had three weeks off (on placement) in our music block”. The sessional also found it a challenge when students did not attend the workshops, she said “they miss out on what to do and on the approach to adopt, the how to teach”. As attendance is not compulsory the sessional added, “I don’t like that there was an option of the no attendance”. She did also make the point that “coming to a new uni is always tricky, things are the same but slightly different, things that tripped me up was getting my head around things I didn’t know... marking in the Cloud did confuse me”. For sessional staff, the teaching content is generally not a concern, it can become challenging to use the online university cloud system. Nevertheless, sessionals are provided with professional development and cloud support from the university.

What can students integrate as generalist teachers into their future classrooms?

The passion, energy and enthusiasm of the sessional contributed to the positive environment. The sessional felt “doing tiny little short practical group tasks broke down

barriers where they don't have to be an expert at this but they could achieve doing it." Largely students felt the workshops provided them "with ideas for good activities to use within the classroom" and as one student pointed out "it gave me the confidence to do things I had thought I previously could not do or struggled with". The sessional addressed them as children in class even though she knew they could do it she said:

I know you can do this but this is the way we would teach. It takes them a little while to get use to this. I had to explain that I am teaching them how to teach the children because they don't get that; they think I am treating them as little kids.

The workshops in class and online material were structured to help non-music specialists adopt and adapt what they learnt in the workshops into their future classrooms.

The sessional used voice at every workshop she said, "we all have a voice, students have a voice, and even if you go into a school with no equipment you can use your voice, that's the basis of everything". One student identified "we sang a lot, I will definitely be utilizing it in my own classroom it was fantastic how the workshops were structured as it related directly to how you would deliver the content in a classroom". One student said, "it is practical things that we can actually take into the classroom and apply". This was confirmed by the sessional who said "I always used an Orff approach, I like it because it covers most things, it is singing, moving, playing, it's body percussion it's rhythmic and it is group work, it is experimenting, it is improvising". She further added, "I did lots of just modeling things" so students got the best of both worlds (teaching and learning). Students confirmed this by stating, "I love the body percussion and chanting, kids can catch on quickly and enjoy it" and "I would use some of the clapping and games". Having experienced composing in a group situation, some students commented "soundscapes is a great way to break up the written work kids learn", "soundscapes is great to integrate other learning areas" and "I can create a soundscape with the kids in my class as I did my own composition and worked with others so now I know how to do one". The in-class experience gave students the confidence to trial activities, which was an important aspect of the teaching and learning process. The sessional pointed out "you have to take risks to teach it". The range of activities, songs and soundscapes provided students with ideas of 'how to' integrate music into their future classrooms.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings from this small-scale study contribute to the dismal fact that there is not enough time allocated to the teaching of the Arts within the primary teacher course. Though time allocations for music education vary across universities in Australia, the data adds to the existing pool of knowledge regarding the provision of primary music education at tertiary level. The sessional confirmed this by saying "we don't have enough time to teach music education within primary teacher education courses" and students do not necessarily have the opportunity to trial activities when on placement. This is similar to what Hennessy (2006) found in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, the limited time on campus can be challenging for students in the music workshop who may have had bad music education experiences in the past. It is also challenging for the lecturer to change students' mindset and reluctance of 'I can't sing, play and create music' to 'I can'. It was most rewarding and informative for me to have the sessional take my class whilst on Academic Study Leave as it gave me the opportunity to talk to the sessional and reflect on unit content, assessment, activities and class attendance. Being part of a community of music practitioners is essential as I work in isolation on my campus as the only music educator (Joseph, 2014). Undertaking this study helps to improve my teaching and as a consequence my students' learning. It also serves an

aspect of pedagogic inquiry, which is essential to undertake in my role as a tertiary music educator (Gosling, 2006). It also reinforces the fact that it is not possible to equip primary education students with the necessary skills and confidence to teach music education in the primary school. Having a sessional proved beneficial. I found we both agreed that it is crucial to include music education in the primary school as it is known to contribute to both the left and right side of the brain (Music Trust, 2014). Students recognized that the Arts are important in children's learning; they also realized that the Arts are compulsory in the Australian primary school curriculum. As generalist teachers they will have to include music into their future teaching. According to the 2014 national government report, music and visual arts are the recommended mandatory Art forms to be taught at the primary level (Australian Government, 2014). In order to help students gain a practical hands-on experience in class that they can model in their future classrooms, a group assignment on creative music making (composing a soundscape) was included. This assessment task gave students the opportunity to work in-groups in class to complete the composition. The in-class experience provides students with the skills to explore and engage in teaching and learning music in a practical hands-on way. They gained assessment skills when the sessional teacher gave them feedback in class. Students gained an understanding of 'how to' write a graphic notation music score, 'how to' compose and 'how to' perform the composition in front of their peers. The creative music composition was initially taught and modeled by the sessional where she focused on the pedagogy, process and the product.

As the unit content is shared with visual arts, the sessional said "I love that moment when you just turn the whole class and the light bulb just goes on and they go aah (a long sigh) this can be fun. I can do it". The sessional found teaching the students "a lot of fun, energy, it is hard work...it is a huge responsibility". Though there were challenges to overcome, the student comments indicated that they enjoyed their music classes and said the sessional was "great". Key to the success of the workshops on campus was engaging the students in practical hands-on activities that they could try out in class, on placement or when they go out to teach as early career teachers. The short songs, little activities, games and composition skills learnt in class gave students some confidence and competencies to include music in the primary school. The sessional found by providing immediate feedback in class helped students realize how they could improve the activity or teach the same music concept to a higher or a lower grade. Hence, employing a sessional that had excellent curriculum and musical knowledge was important in order to develop students' competencies and teaching strategies as generalist teachers. Klopper and Power (2014) point out that sessional staff members add a range of skills and competencies to the workforce. Students also found the activities in class and the online material most useful when preparing their individual written assignment on 'how to teach an element'. The written comments and feedback on the assignment was personal as compared to just using a rubric. Students found over the four music workshops that their confidence had grown and they were willing to 'give it a go' as the sessional modeled in class 'how to teach', the teaching strategies given were sequential and developmental thus helping students to seek the need for continuous professional development in music education.

In conclusion, teaching music in the primary school is an important and rich component of the curriculum. As music and visual arts are largely offered at government schools in Australia, tertiary music educators are exhorted to provide engaging and enriching Arts education units within teacher educator courses. The paper has highlighted the importance of the Arts within primary education and discussed some aspects of 'how to teach' music in a practical and engaging way. It focused on a four-week music program where students recognized the need and importance to include the Arts (music education) in primary schools. Though students saw value of the music content within the unit, they also felt pressured and stressed to engage in music learning and teaching in a short space of time.

As this is a core unit within the course, most students work hard to pass the music component of the unit. Similarly, the music lecturer has to ‘rush’ through content and pedagogy in a limited time frame to try to prepare and equip the students with the necessary skills and confidence to teach music once they graduate. This situation is not ideal or realistic however, the basic skills learnt across the four weeks could be integrated into future classrooms. With so much to do in a little time, students are encouraged to undertake ongoing professional development in music education to increase their confidence and broaden their skills and knowledge base once they graduate. The sessional aptly made the point ‘we did the how to teach it’, providing students with some of the basic tools to teach music in the primary classroom. Hallam, et al (2009, p.237) writing about the United Kingdom, uphold as tertiary educators we need “to empower teachers so that they feel confident to successfully and effectively teach music and be receptive to new ideas”. Whilst this remains true, tertiary music educators continue to ‘fight’ for a place within the Arts and also within the crowded curriculum in teacher education courses. Nevertheless, as music tertiary educators we have a responsibility to continue to model good practice as we prepare our generalist students for the twenty-first century classroom.

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